

SAMPLES

from:

*Thirty
TV Type
Scenes
for
Two People*

*This document includes the start of each scene,
plus some samples of the introductory text.*

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Chez Jim Books • North Hollywood, CA

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What are “TV Type” scenes?

If you watch TV regularly, you may have noticed a suspicious similarity between scenes on, say, one cop show and another. While the best shows always have their original premises, there are few shows which have not re-used some basic set-ups which occur in the most common genres. How many times, for instance, have you seen the police on a show finally get the goods on a criminal only to have some higher power – the FBI, Homeland Security, etc. - step in and say the person has to be released, because they're key to an on-going investigation? Since I first (in 2006) wrote a scene here using that premise (already well-worn at the time), I've lost track of how many more times I've seen some variant of the same twist.

It was noticing such recycling that inspired me to write the original group of “TV Type” scenes – that is, scenes of the type one sees, repeatedly, on TV shows. This is especially true on those mainstays of the medium, police and hospital dramas. To some degree, this is a natural outgrowth of the realities of those professions: the police DO lead suspects to unwittingly give themselves away, doctors DO lose patients. Others may be simply too tempting to writers, given the inherent drama of such environments. Whatever the reason, pay attention and you'll start to notice them yourself.

Comedy is a little different in that many of its set-ups are centuries old. Watch a Shakespeare comedy (even a Roman comedy), Moliere, “I Love Lucy” and one of the better current sitcoms and you'll find – be it in togas, doublets, stockings or jeans - people undone by their own schemes, talking at cross-purposes, mocking another's foibles, etc.

These scenes are all my own original contributions to this grand old tradition of recycling. For actors – students but also others – who would like to practice scenes of the sort one sees on TV, here is a wide variety of situations of the sort frequently found there. For writers tempted by the medium, the broad lines of these scenes may serve as models for their own practice runs – or at least point to something to look for in watching actual shows.

Police Drama

Has there ever NOT been a cop show on the air? Not only does police work involve many inherently dramatic situations, but the grittiness not only of the lives they visit, but often their own, can add texture to the inevitable solving of a mystery which is typically the spine of a “police procedural”. More and more too the moral dilemmas and personal struggles of individuals struggling to combat the dark side of society have added complexity to such shows.

Probably one could fill a whole book like this one with all the standard situations which sooner or later are used by just about every long-running show: the detective who gets rough with a particularly evil suspect; the case that gets sabotaged by organizations with more clout; the suspect whose lie is suddenly laid bare. Several newer shows, too, feature a quirky “consultant” who not only brings an outsider's perspective to police work, but often says or does things that border on the outrageous – and yet ends up helping to solve the case.

At least some scenes in police drama always take place in several key parts of the police station itself. Most of these imply a certain situation: the interrogation room is almost always used for that purpose; the captain's office is basically the boss's office and often the site of one-to-one talks; the morgue is typically the site of some key discovery. Most of the scenes here are grouped by such locations, with the exception of interaction between partners – which can occur in a number of places – and the one example of a quirky consultant, since shows starring such figures represent their own sub-genre.

Crime scene

There are of course innumerable possible settings for crime scenes. Often we first see them at the start of the show.

It is not unusual for one of the people we see in such scenes to make some comment that strongly suggests either guilt or innocence. As often as not, this first “clue” turns out to be misleading.

The Super [self-incrimination]

INT. - APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

The detective is looking around when the super pokes his head in the door.

SUPER

He got it? He got it, that bum?

DETECTIVE

This is a crime scene, sir.

SUPER

I just heard. He's dead, right? That no good weasel.

DETECTIVE

You a friend of the deceased?

SUPER

Me, a friend of his? Do I look like a deadbeat?

DETECTIVE

So you're -

SUPER

The super.....

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The interrogation room

This is the arena, the boxing ring, of the police drama. While most hour-long shows include several conflicts of different kinds, it's rare that at least one major confrontation does not happen in the interrogation room.

An obvious way to maximize conflict in such confrontations is to make the suspect in question maddeningly sure of him or herself. Part of the fun for the viewer is in watching how the detectives manage to undermine such infuriating assurance – usually through wit rather than violence. But it's a rare police show that at one point or another does not have one of the main characters lose it and get physical with a suspect.

This may or may not be the same scene in which we see the moment which comes, if not every, most police procedurals – the Gotcha. The scene in which the person being interrogated discovers the police are holding the trump card may in fact appear very low key right up until that moment; the real drama of such scenes lies not in their tone, but their outcome.

Shaking Shock [a cocky suspect]

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Detective Arch is questioning SHOCK, a tough street kid.

DETECTIVE ARCH

So, what do they call you again?

SHOCK

Shock, man. As in "Shock and Awe".

DETECTIVE ARCH

Well, Shock, we heard you might be able to help us out.

SHOCK

You heard wrong, Holmes. I don't help no police.

DETECTIVE ARCH

That's not very friendly of you, Shock.

SHOCK

Don't need no friends, man. I got lots of friends.

DETECTIVE ARCH

Like Eddie Kicks?

SHOCK

Man, I don't know no Eddie Kicks.....

See Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People for the full scene

Let's Worry About You [getting rough]

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Detective Kleps is questioning Lovelace.

LOVELACE

It kills you, doesn't it? You'd love to make me tell you.
But you can't.

DETECTIVE KLEPS

Why not do the right thing? Just tell us where the girl
is.

LOVELACE

You know, I don't think I will. If you don't mind
terribly.

DETECTIVE KLEPS

Is she OK?

LOVELACE

Oh I wouldn't be too sure about that. Might be running
out of air about now. Poor little dear might be in quite
some distress. Just hoping against hope with all her
sweet little heart that help will come. Sad, isn't it?
Really, really sad.

DETECTIVE KLEPS

You son of a bitch!....

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Marble Dust [the gotcha]

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY
Detective Willet ushers in Collins.

DETECTIVE WILLET

Thanks for coming in.

COLLINS

Sure. Though I don't think I can help much.

DETECTIVE WILLET

Every little bit helps. You knew the victim, didn't you?

COLLINS

A little. She lives in my building.

DETECTIVE WILLET

You live on the third floor, right?

COLLINS

That's right.

DETECTIVE WILLET

Ever been up to see her?

COLLINS

No...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The morgue

What is more dramatic than a room filled with dead bodies? And yet, ironically, it is relatively rare that scenes of conflict and/or high emotion occur here in police drama. Rather, the victim's bodies most often become volumes to be read in search of clues. When a pivotal moment is set in the morgue, it is usually one of discovery rather than emotional drama.

The Spices Speak [reading the evidence]

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Evans, a detective, is talking to Walchek, the medical examiner.

EVANS

Find anything?

WALCHEK

Other than that big wound on the left side? Not yet. I just finished checking the stomach contents.

EVANS

Yeah? What was for lunch?

WALCHEK

Something ethnic, looks like. Some kind of pea puree with, would you believe, cinnamon?

EVANS

Cinnamon? Did you find any other spices?

WALCHEK

Yeah. Several in fact.

EVANS

Let me guess. Nutmeg? Ginger?...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The squad room

The squad room is the public square of the police station. It is where the most people interact, where there is the most chance of unknown people appearing, etc. Some relatively intimate scenes are set in squad rooms, such as interactions between partners, but it is also the place where encounters with unwelcome visitors are likely to be set – as, in this case, with a person whose interests conflict with those of the detective.

Catch and Release [the important informant]

INT. SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Detective Warren is standing by his partner's desk when he sees the FBI AGENT come in and look around.

FBI AGENT

Could I speak to Detective Warren please?

WARREN

That's me.

FBI AGENT

I understand you've arrested Little Timmy?

WARREN

Yeah. It was touch and go for a while. But we've got him now. We've got him dead to rights.

FBI AGENT

I need you to let him go.

WARREN

What? Are you kidding me?

FBI AGENT

I couldn't be more serious, detective...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The captain's office

Is it a good thing to be called into the boss's office? Sometimes, as when you're being given a promotion or maybe a little extra support in a difficult situation. And such scenes do occur in the captain's office in police dramas. But it's also a place where superiors tell subordinates things they don't want to say in front of others, like telling them they're out of line.

It's not surprising that many episodes of police dramas find one of the main characters getting too deeply involved in a case – far more involved, in fact, than would be probably be allowable in real life. In drama, the more personal, the better, and if the writers can give the character higher stakes, so much the better. Better yet, they get to have their cake and eat it too, since almost always one of the higher ups ends up giving the person a talking to – thereby creating yet more (good for drama) conflict, even as (inevitably) the person continues to do exactly what the captain said not to.

Off the Case [too involved]

INT. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Captain Barker brings Detective Gant into his office and steps around behind his desk, facing him.

CAPTAIN BARKER

I'm taking you off this case.

GANT

What the hell? Why?

CAPTAIN BARKER

You're too involved.

GANT

I know where to draw the line.

CAPTAIN BARKER

Do you? You're mighty close to it now.

GANT

Captain, I need to work this case.

CAPTAIN BARKER

Which is exactly why you shouldn't...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Partners

Aside from conflict with criminals, much of the drama in police shows comes from the interaction between two partners. In this sense, they might as well be shows about marriage, since the dynamic between any two people who are bound to each other and care for each other is often similar. And so one partner may try to reign in another's worst impulse or make them aware of a problem they didn't know they had; or they may, as close as they feel to them, begin to have doubts about them.

Since all this happens while they are out pursuing suspects, the specific locales can vary; it is the bond and interaction between the two that matters the most.

Don't Do It! [the vigilante impulse]

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Brock is standing next to Perch who has a gun aimed at a person in front of him.

BROCK

Wait!

PERCH

He's got to pay!

BROCK

He will! He will pay!

PERCH

Will he? A good lawyer, the right jury...

BROCK

Not this time. This time we have the goods on him.

PERCH

I'm not taking the chance.

BROCK

And what kind of chance will you have? Tell me that! Do you want to throw everything away for this scum?...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

What's In the Cup [confronting an alcoholic]

INT. COFFEE ROOM - NIGHT

Sturgis is seated at a table, holding a cup as Masters comes in.

STURGIS

Come on in! Have a seat!

MASTERS

Mind if I close the door?

STURGIS

No problemo. - Hey, thanks for covering for me, buddy.

MASTERS

That's I want to talk about.

STURGIS

You don't have to say another word. It won't happen again.

MASTERS

Funny. You said that last time. And the time before that. But it did happen again. And again.

STURGIS

Geez. You're right. It's just that...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Not Good Enough [distrust creeps in]

INT. POLICE Car - NIGHT

Mellenkamp and Walton have just gotten back in their car.

MELLENKAMP

What was that about?

WALTON

I said what I thought.

MELLENKAMP

Is that what you think, that I -

WALTON

I don't know what to think.

MELLENKAMP

How long have you known me?

WALTON

That's the thing. I'm not sure I do know you.

MELLENKAMP

Whoa. You can't be serious.

WALTON

Look. I want to trust you. I do. But that old man says he saw you...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The quirky consultant

On shows where a “consultant” works with the actual police, typically the former's disregard for what is appropriate or conventional is part of the show's charm – especially when it is played off against the latter's concern with official proprieties. An especially popular way to illustrate this is to have the consultant say or do something shocking, only to redeem themselves with a telling insight.

The Grieving Husband [shocking but sharp]

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Crannock and Rikki have just come out of the interrogation room.

CRANNOCK

I was only trying to help.

RIKKI

By asking the husband if he'd been having an affair?

CRANNOCK

I wanted to see his reaction.

RIKKI

See it? If I hadn't stopped him, you would have felt it... Right in your face.

CRANNOCK

Who knew he was the physical type?

RIKKI

Crannock! His wife was just murdered two days ago.

CRANNOCK

Oh. And when that happens, it's never the husband.

RIKKI

I'm not saying that...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Hospital Drama

Where do you find more life and death situations than in a hospital? It is not surprising then that hospital dramas continue to be made and often to succeed. In this context, some subjects are too obvious not to be used: a doctor losing a patient, for instance. Some grow out of the human situation: bitter rivals close to the patient showing up at the same time; unfinished business for someone with little time left; surprises revealed by medical tests. You've seen all this on TV before and you'll see it again, because medical dramas will be with us for a long time.

The patient's room

While all kinds of scenes can happen in hospital rooms, if a scene requires a doctor to have a heart to heart talk with a patient, it is especially likely to take place here. Also, with many illnesses or conditions, it is the only place the patient will be for a while, making it a natural location for much of the action.

How many real life doctors give patients advice on their personal lives? Whatever the answer, in a TV drama, this seems like the most natural extension of a doctor's professional air, especially when the patient is dying and has issues which remain to be resolved. Given a doctor's healing mission, it is also natural enough that doctors should want patients to accept whatever help medicine can offer, even when the patient has reservations. Such scenes, dramatically, have the further advantage of showing the doctor (who may or may not be likeable in other contexts) as caring (which, in someone people watch on TV every week, is a good thing).

The patient's room is also typically the place where they will hear their test results. While mysteries and revelations may be less central to hospital than to police shows, both are always good for drama and medical test results present a golden opportunity for the writers to suddenly introduce new information - to, as they say in improv, “drop a bomb”.

Call Your Mother [last chance at reconciliation]

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Wallace is talking to Hawkins who is lying in bed and clearly very ill.

DR. WALLACE

Sure you don't want to call your mother?

HAWKINS

How many times are you going to ask me that?

DR. WALLACE

It's not like I'll have many more chances.

HAWKINS

You don't mince words, do you?

DR. WALLACE

Not when time is short, no.

HAWKINS

It's been so long. What would I say to her?

DR. WALLACE

"Hi, Mom"? "This is your son. I know it's been ..."

HAWKINS

Twenty years. It's been twenty years...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

What Humans Do [resisting treatment]

INT. HOSPITAL BEDROOM - DAY

Elizabeth is lying in bed. Dr. Wilson is standing beside her.

DR. WILSON

This could save your life.

ELIZABETH

How many times do you think I've heard that?

DR. WILSON

You're discouraged. I understand.

ELIZABETH

Do you? Do you understand what it's like to be prodded, pricked with needles, cut into, all your life? To be weak and nauseous for days on end? To never go anywhere or do anything because you're sick all the time? And may never get better?

DR. WILSON

It's awful. I can't imagine it's being anything but awful. But you have to have hope.

ELIZABETH

Do I? Why?

DR. WILSON

Because you're human, Elizabeth. And hope is part of what makes us human...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Every Way But One [the test results twist]

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Richards enters, holding a chart.

DR. RICHARDS

We got the results.

BLAKE

And I'm a perfect match, aren't I?

DR. RICHARDS

No. Not exactly.

BLAKE

How can that be? You said any close relative.

DR. RICHARDS

Yes. Yes, I did.

BLAKE

I'm her father. How much closer a match could I be?

DR. RICHARDS

Mr. Blake, before Melinda was born, how long had you and your late wife been together?

BLAKE

What? What's that got to do with anything?....

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

In the hallway

In a hospital drama, the hallway is a bit like the squad room in a police drama – it is where, on the hand, the staff is used to encountering each other but, on the other, strangers can suddenly appear. It is also the natural place for a relative or someone else who wants to talk about a patient without the patient being there to confer with the doctor.

The hospital environment offers an opportunity to address some important social issues as, here, child abuse. It also shares with funerals the fact that it is a place where different people from a person's life may meet – not always happily. How can any writer miss such an opportunity to introduce conflict?

Hardly a Mark [uncovering abuse]

INT. Hospital hallway - DAY

Doctor Lee comes out of a patient's room. Ellen Burke comes up to him.

ELLEN BURKE

Doctor? My daughter. How is she?

DOCTOR LEE

You're Samantha Burke's mother?

ELLEN BURKE

Yes. Will she be OK?

DOCTOR LEE

We're doing some tests.

ELLEN BURKE

Tests? But she only has -

DOCTOR LEE

Internal bleeding. Maybe worse.

ELLEN BURKE

No. That can't be. She hardly had a mark on her when I brought her in....

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The Wife and the Mistress [awkward encounter]

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Nurse Ellis and MRS. DUNCAN are looking through a window to where Mr. Duncan is lying on a stretcher with a woman standing next to him.

MRS. DUNCAN

What's *she* doing here?

NURSE ELLIS

Why, that's his wife.

MRS. DUNCAN

Is that what she told you?

NURSE ELLIS

Not exactly. But she...

MRS. DUNCAN

Took charge? Did his talking for him?

NURSE ELLIS

Pretty much, yes.

MRS. DUNCAN

Isn't that just like that little...

NURSE ELLIS

Wait a minute. Are you - ...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The break room

With rare exceptions, the break room is for staff only and so private scenes between the main characters (typically doctors or nurses) are often set here.

One of the harder realities of a doctor's life and a natural subject for a dramatic scene is the loss of a patient. The loss itself is often portrayed on-camera, typically in a fast-paced scene, but there's always a lot of dramatic mileage to be gotten, too, from the reaction of the doctor responsible. One common way to show this is in a comforting discussion with a more experienced colleague.

Hospital shows often reflect a reality that is more and more in the news: the expenses associated with medical care and the limitations these impose. This theme also allows the writers to show something equally popular in both police and hospital dramas: a character who has to choose between following their emotions and the rules of their profession.

Every Chance You Could [losing a patient]

INT. HOSPITAL BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Rush is listening to Dr. Connor, who is preoccupied.

DR. CONNOR

I gave him false hope.

DR. RUSH

You gave him hope.

DR. CONNOR

What good does that do him now?

DR. RUSH

Did you do everything you could medically? You know you did. You know you gave him the only reasonable course of treatment.

DR. CONNOR

And still...

DR. RUSH

Still, you didn't get a miracle. And that's what it would have taken: a miracle. What happened isn't your fault.

DR. CONNOR

Don't you think I know that?

DR. RUSH

Intellectually? I'm sure you know it...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The Cost [compassion vs. procedure]

INT. BREAK ROOM - EVENING

Dr. Dolan and Dr. Rich are standing, talking.

DR. DOLAN

He's in pain. And it's only going to get worse.

DR. RICH

Don't you think I know that?

DR. DOLAN

There must be something we can do.

DR. RICH

With what money? He doesn't have insurance.

DR. DOLAN

What if it were life-threatening?

DR. RICH

But it isn't.

DR. DOLAN

In his case, it might be.

DR. RICH

What do you mean?...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Sitcom

It has been suggested in recent years that situation comedy is dead. But all it takes is one fun, well-written show to belie that. As original as some of the best shows are, sooner or later they all use tricks which go back hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Comedy is largely a way for us to laugh at other people's weaknesses (which is ultimately a safe way of laughing at our own) and so the characters on sitcoms often have some obvious flaw: deviousness, arrogance, incompetence. Half the fun is watching them get tangled up in their own lies, attempts to hide things, complicated schemes, etc.

There is nothing new about all this: Shakespeare's clowns and the harlequin in *Commedia dell'Arte* made people laugh in the same way, centuries before television. But the old tricks still keep'em laughing, however contemporary and clever the situation where we see them.

Lies

Imagine comedy without lies. Unthinkable, no? A lie is like a loose floorboard in the floor of the truth and, just as such a loose floorboard can make for great physical comedy when a clown (or the TV equivalent) steps through it, so a lie sets the liar up for a fall. Sometimes the expectation of that fall is what creates comedic tension; sometimes the fact that it comes out of nowhere, suddenly trapping the person in their own contrived situation, is the whole delight of the scene.

Lies play such a central part in comic situations that such simple lies are only the start. Comedy revels in sub-classifications of dishonesty: lies to hide something, lies that are part of some ornate scheme. Separate groups present some of those here.

The Dog Paddles [a lie backfires]

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT - EVENING
Nicky is in the middle of a phone call.

NICKY

Vanessa, I'd love to go with you and your friends. But I can't swim. Sorry. You know how much I'd love to see you.

He hangs up just as Lance comes in.

LANCE

Nicky! You know how to swim, right?

NICKY

Sure. Who doesn't know how to swim?

LANCE

Great! I've got a job for you.

NICKY

Good thing. I'm running out of ramen.

LANCE

That's what you get for quitting your last job.

NICKY

But I had another one lined up, working at home...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Secrets

In both comedy and drama, secrets add tension; they're like little bombs, waiting to go off. In comedy, we can especially enjoy someone's attempts to hide something, knowing that at any moment everything could go terribly – though not tragically – wrong.

To have a secret is to hide it and the act of trying to hide something is often what drives a comic scene. The hiding, in turn, if it does not always involve verbal dishonesty, is a form of physical lie; that is, a way of keeping another from the truth. When the thing being hidden is material – a broken object, a person – , the attempt to hide it becomes all that much more physical and visible. But it's not unusual either for someone in a comedy to try to hide some kind of relationship – that is, something more abstract – from another person. This does not always involve direct dishonesty; in fact, sometimes the whole humor lies in a character's trying to hide this *without* actually lying.

The Weasel (hiding a relationship)

INT. JOSH AND PATRICK'S APARTMENT - DAY
Josh comes in, eager to talk to Patrick, who is preoccupied.

JOSH

Patrick! I just got a date with this great -

PATRICK

Not now, Josh. I have to plan a murder.

JOSH

A murder? Who do you want to kill?

PATRICK

The weasel who asked my girl out.

JOSH

Girl? You have a girl?

PATRICK

Almost! I had dibs on a girl.

JOSH

Dibs?...

See **Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People** for the full scene

The Crystal Chrysanthemum [hiding damage]

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cassidy is talking to her roommate, Hobart.

CASSIDY

Did you see my Crystal Chrysanthemum?

HOBART

You mean that glass flower on the bookshelf?

CASSIDY

Not glass. Crystal.

HOBART

Are they different?

CASSIDY

Is a steak different from a hot dog?

HOBART

Well, they do have one thing in common.

CASSIDY

What's that?

HOBART

You can't break a steak. Or a hot dog either...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

She's Got His Number [hiding someone]

INT. ELTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Elton opens the door to Madge, who marches right in.

MADGE

Where's your brother?

ELTON

My bro-. Hey, before I forget: that friend of yours is really cute!

MADGE

Yeah, she liked you too.

ELTON

No way! Can you give me her number?

MADGE

I can't imagine why not. But first - where's your brother?

ELTON

My brother?

MADGE

That's what I said. Your brother...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Miscommunication

The best miscommunication in comedy becomes an exquisite dance, as in Abbot and Costello's classic "Who's On First?" routine. Often though it is less complex, a simple result of one party's being obtuse or not quite honest. For the audience, the result is like an awkward two-step where each partner just misses stepping on the other, as words and phrases accidentally take on new meanings, meanings which wind around each other like DNA strands while tension builds as we wait to see if these will meet in understanding at last or end up splitting down their separate ways.

Computer Soup [slow to get it]

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Trixie is standing by her desk while Scooter examines her PC.

SCOOTER

Your hard drive looks lacerated.

TRIXIE

"Lass aerated"? What's that mean? Sprayed with Irish girls? Sorry. I don't speak nerdish.

SCOOTER

That's not nerdish. "Your root's been compromised" would be nerdish.

TRIXIE

Actually, that sounds kind of dirty.

SCOOTER

Let me put it this way. Imagine your data's written on alphabet blocks. Lots and lots of alphabet blocks, stacked up really high, into long skinny walls. Lots and lots of skinny walls, twisting around in this giant maze.

TRIXIE

That makes sense, I guess. In a Sesame Street kind of way...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Gourmet food (talking at cross purposes)

INT. GOURMET FOOD SHOP - DAY

Trixie is holding up a large sausage to a CUSTOMER.

TRIXIE

But it's from Italy.

CUSTOMER

It's a sausage.

TRIXIE

An imported sausage.

CUSTOMER

You mean, a high-priced sausage.

TRIXIE

Buy it for a special occasion.

CUSTOMER

What kind of special occasion requires a sausage? -
Please. Don't answer that.

TRIXIE

What about a nice cheese?

CUSTOMER

I'm lactose-intolerant.

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

The Mix-up [faking it]

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - DAY

Martin is sitting at a table, finishing a phone call.

MARTIN

Could you tell her Martin called? Thanks.

He hangs up and starts checking for other messages as WENDY comes in.

WENDY

Hi. Are you Gerald?

MARTIN

(still looking down)

No, I'm sorry, I 'm (*looking up*) Whoa! Why yes. Yes, I am.

WENDY

It's so nice to finally meet you.

MARTIN

Yes, finally.

WENDY

I'm so eager to discuss your screenplay...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Character traits

So much great comedy comes out of nothing more than one character's one extreme trait: Jack Benny's tight-fistedness; Lucy's ditziness. Something that might drive us crazy in an actual person proves hilarious on-screen.

Take, for instance, the person whose logic is completely flawed, yet unshakeable. And of course self-importance of any sort has always been a tempting target for satire. Then there's the person who only ever notices others when they need something from them.

Whether or not these specific traits have been addressed on different sitcoms, the underlying principle of playing someone's foibles up to an extreme degree is a classic comedic ploy.

Bad Car [skewed certainty]

INT. STANLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
Parchman has just come in.

PARCHMAN

Stanley, lend me your car.

STANLEY

What happened to yours?

PARCHMAN

It's indisposed.

STANLEY

It's got a headache?

PARCHMAN

Sure. That works.

STANLEY

How does a car get a headache?

PARCHMAN

Say you walked into a lamp post - you'd get a headache,
right?

STANLEY

It would hurt, yes.

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Vanity, thy name is Storm [mocking pretense]

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Storm and Tricia are talking.

STORM

Do you ever wish you were really good-looking?

TRICIA

You mean, instead of just being ungodly hot?

STORM

Uh... whatever.

TRICIA

You do wonders for a person's ego, you know?

STORM

I do?

TRICIA

Absolutely. As long as that person is yourself. Anyway, what's your point?

STORM

It's really hard sometimes.

TRICIA

Being perfect, you mean?

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

A Friend In Need [unpleasant trait]

INT. CARLTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
Shelly comes in the front door.

SHELLY

Carlton! How are you doin'?

CARLTON

What do you need, Shelly?

SHELLY

So, how are things?

CARLTON

Things are fine. What do you need?

SHELLY

Wow. I haven't seen you for so long.

CARLTON

No. No, you haven't.

SHELLY

When was the last time?

CARLTON

That would be... the last time you needed something...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene

Schemes

Schemes are by nature complicated and complication is almost always fun in comedy. This is all the more true when a character has been established as regularly coming up with some complicated scheme that just as regularly fails. (Is the viewer's delight in that failure just a tad sadistic? Yes. There's more than a little sadism tucked away in comedy.)

Part of the fun, when such a character has been established, is in watching another more rational character, who by now should know better, get seduced, step by step, into such a disaster-in-waiting despite their better judgement.

The schemes themselves don't have to involve dishonesty, but when they do, that's all the more reason for the audience to revel in their failure, indulging in an ancient, if slightly self-righteous, pleasure in seeing justice done.

One More Time [a big idea]

INT. LARRY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Slump and Larry are standing in the kitchen.

SLUMP

I've got an idea.

LARRY

Oh no. Not again.

SLUMP

Trust me! This time I know what I'm doing.

LARRY

Even worse.

SLUMP

I'm telling you, this can't fail!

LARRY

That's what you said the last time.

SLUMP

I was lying last time.

LARRY

What? Why?...

See **Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People** for the full scene

Dying to Meet Her [planning a lie]

INT. SEYMOUR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Seymour and Wesley are in the middle of a conversation.

SEYMOUR

Just one thing. When you meet her, you have to say you're dying.

WESLEY

What? Why?

SEYMOUR

I said I was nursing a dying friend.

WESLEY

Why'd you say that?

SEYMOUR

She goes for the caring type. Now she thinks I'm a saint.

WESLEY

I have to be dying so you can be a saint?

SEYMOUR

Is that so much to ask?...

See *Thirty TV Type Scenes for Two People* for the full scene