

Bangers and Cash
by Fareine Suarez and Cory O'Brien

Daniel leads Laurel blindfolded across the stage to a table adorned with flowers and two artfully arranged McDonalds meals. Next to the table is an easel with a blank canvas.

Daniel removes the blindfold from Laurel.

DANIEL
Happy anniversary.

Laurel stares at the easel and forces a smile.

LAUREL
What is this?

DANIEL
I recreated our first date. One quarter pounder with cheese for me – you remember how I made that clever and timely Pulp Fiction joke? – and I tried to get McRib but the cashier told me it's not back again yet even though I said it was for our anniversary, so I had her put two fillet of fish patties on a roll with –

LAUREL
No, you know what I'm talking about. The easel.

DANIEL
Oh! Well ... it's been awhile since you've painted, and I figured—

LAUREL
That what? I'd pick up a paintbrush, stick it in my b-hole and magically shit out a painting people actually liked?

DANIEL
I mean far-be-it for me it question your creative process.

LAUREL
I don't have a creative process. Art Snob bi-weekly described my work as “what would happen if crap could paint, but it used crap instead of paint.”

DANIEL
Crap can't paint, it doesn't have hands.

LAUREL
Well neither do I! I mean, I do, but –

DANIEL
You don't have to paint if you don't want to.

LAUREL
I don't.

Pause

DANIEL
Well the filet of fish isn't very good cold, in fact it's not very good warm, and I actually had to pay extra to get her to use the dinner roll -

LAUREL
Yeah, great, okay.

They eat in silence.

LAUREL
You know while we're on the topic of things one of us doesn't do anymore ...

DANIEL
Laurel that was a bad segue ...

LAUREL
You don't write anymore.

DANIEL
I write every day.

LAUREL
That's not what I meant. You don't write about the world anymore. You write about how sausage is made.

DANIEL
I'm a copywriter for Bangers and Cash, the midwest's leading sausage manufacturer.

LAUREL
But you didn't want to be a copywriter for the midwest's leading sausage manufacturer, you wanted to be a journalist.

DANIEL
Yeah, well you wanted to be a painter and here we are.

Laurel tensely bites into her food. They continue eating in silence.

DANIEL
We're introducing a new sausage flavor next quarter, you know. The turducken link. It's chicken bits stuffed into a duck stuffed into a turkey which gets shredded and stuffed into a sausage so it doesn't really matter what order they're in, but anyway if I play my cards right, I might get to work with our agency to write the package description instead of just the ingredients...

Laurel continues eating, disinterested.

DANIEL

I've been thinking up tag-lines. What do you think about "A chicken stuffed inside a duck, stuffed inside a turkey, stuffed inside your *face*." Or how about "A barnyard of flavor." ... "All hands on duck"?

Laurel plays with her food.

DANIEL

I overheard our CEO talking to our finance director in the bathroom yesterday. Apparently we didn't make our profit goals for Q3, so the CEO gave him permission to ... massage the numbers a little. Add a zero here, move a zero there...

LAUREL

So Bangers and Cash is committing fraud.

DANIEL

I'd call it creative accounting...

LAUREL

Fraud. Jesus Christ, look how far we've come. Laurel and Daniel, corporate sellouts. Except any halfway decent corporate sellouts wouldn't be eating off the secret menu at McDonalds and living in a condemned loft full of terrifyingly smart mice who—

DANIEL

I'm doing what I can—

LAUREL

Remember when you used to write about things that mattered? About Africa and Birth Control and how Goku could definitely beat superman in a fight because if he dies he'll just come back to life? And now you're defending a company that sells raw sausage while it *cooks its books*.

Beat.

LAUREL

The old Daniel would have said something to those men in the restroom.

DANIEL

I did. I said "hey guys, could you keep it down, it's hard for me to pee when people are talking."

LAUREL

The old Daniel wouldn't have sat back and let them get away with it.

DANIEL

I was standing, actually. At the urinal. Easy to make that mistake, I know, because women's restrooms – hey, what are you doing?

Laurel is packing up the food.

LAUREL
Nothing, I'm just cleaning up.

Daniel stands.

DANIEL
What if... what if I write a story about the company and expose the CEO for the liar he is?

Laurel stops packing up.

LAUREL
I'm listening.

DANIEL
This can be my big break, yeah. All I have to do is sneak into the CEO's office, download the data from his computer, and send it to my contact at the Tribune! People are itching for another reason to shut down those big corporations—

LAUREL
And then you could quit your job and start working for the Tribune—

DANIEL
And we can move out of this studio apartment and go to *Bucktown*—

LAUREL
And we can get a dog—

DANIEL
We can get *several houseplants* –

LAUREL
We can get a *dog* –

DANIEL
We can get a *small dog* that doesn't bark too much, and I'll win the Pulitzer Prize—

LAUREL
And I can finally open my own art gallery!

He spins her around. They kiss.

DANIEL
I'll do it tonight. And soon... we'll be ordering off the secret menu at *Chipotle*.

Daniel bids her farewell. She smiles and picks up her paintbrush and begins painting, though the audience can't see what she is painting. She keeps painting throughout the following scene.

Daniel crosses to the other side of the stage, where there is a desk and a computer. Dim the lights as he crosses.

Daniel starts messing around with the computer. After a moment, the lights turn on. HUNTER is watching him, as if he was in the room the entire time.

HUNTER
Why hello, Daniel.

DANIEL
I, uh, um, I was planning to work from home and forgot to download a few documents—

HUNTER
From *my* computer?

DANIEL
It was dark and I got confused!

HUNTER
Oh Daniel. Don't think I don't know what you're doing.

Daniel is still struggling with downloading the files. Hunter crosses behind the desk and clicks into the correct folder for him.

DANIEL
Um.

HUNTER
Sit down, let's have a little one-on-one. I want to check in, see how you're settling in as part of the Bangers and Cash family. I remember your first day at the company, two years ago. You had just moved to the city. You wanted to be a journalist, right? Fight the man, save the world?

DANIEL
...No?

HUNTER
Daniel, Daniel, Daniel. You can be honest. Don't think of me as your boss. Think of me as a relaxed dude who just happens to have a better office than you.

DANIEL
Your office was actually pretty easy to break into...

HUNTER
And what about your office, Daniel? Two years in and you still have the same desk in the same cubicle on the ninth floor. Is this where you saw yourself when you joined up?

DANIEL
Who aspires to write the nutrition info on the back of sausage packages? What about you? Don't tell me you've always dreamed of being a tube meat millionaire.

HUNTER (*laughing*)

You're right. I certainly didn't aspire to be the CEO of a sausage company at 32, but my father needed someone to run the business, and you know what they say: when life gives you sausages

...

DANIEL

You ... make sausage-ade?

HUNTER

No Daniel, you sell sausages. You sell them. So that's what I did, and now I have a condo overlooking the lake, unlimited vacation days, first class travel anywhere in the world, and oh, I can afford to GIVE TO CHARITY. Yeah, that's right Daniel, I donate to the local food bank and several after school tutoring programs in the south side. You wanted to know how the sausage is made? Well, this is it.

DANIEL

Is the sausage in this metaphor life, or work, or ...?

HUNTER

Let's talk about your five year plan here, Daniel. You take this thumb drive, write your story, win a Pulitzer, and then what? Best case scenario you spend the rest of your life working the local desk at the RedEye trying to follow up on your one big success, and every day Laurel resents you just a little more because you're at least pretending to follow your dreams while she's stuck painting pictures that no one likes. Oh yeah, I've seen her Instagram. She's not good.

As Hunter says this, Laurel finishes her painting with a satisfactory nod and turns it towards the audience. It's bad.

DANIEL

You ... follow my wife on Instagram?

HUNTER

I follow all my employees' spouses on Instagram, Daniel, because I'm a cool millennial boss who understands social media. And I'm prepared to be very cool to you, if you let me.

Beat.

DANIEL

How cool is very cool?

HUNTER

I promote you to senior copywriter. You take the lead on the Turducken Links account, get a nice raise so you can afford an apartment in the Loop. In exchange, you leave the math to our friends in accounting. Laurel won't be happy, but she won't be starving either. And you won't be doing what you love, but face it, Daniel: no one does what they love.

He hands the USB drive to Daniel.

HUNTER

Or, you can take a chance. Follow your dream. Spend the rest of your life wondering where your next paycheck is coming from. Live that romantic artist's life.

Hunter holds his hand out and Daniel reluctantly places the USB drive back in Hunter's hand. They shake on it.

HUNTER

We all have to grow up some time.

Daniel crosses the stage back to Laurel.

DANIEL

Hey.

LAUREL

Hi! That was quick.

DANIEL

Oh, yeah.

LAUREL

How did it go?

DANIEL

There ... were too many people there. I'll try again tomorrow.

LAUREL

I finished my painting. *(She shows it to Daniel.)* Do you like it?

DANIEL

...it looks great.

Blackout