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## A Gricean analysis of a situation comedy

Derrick James Taberski

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A GRICEAN ANALYSIS  
OF A SITUATION COMEDY

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
Derrick James Taberski

June 1998

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OF A SITUATION COMEDY

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Derrick James Taberski


June 1998

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## ABSTRACT

Grice (1975) posited a theory of conversation in which speakers are assumed to cooperate with each other. In order to do this, they are said to follow four maxims: the Maxim of Quantity (be informative), the Maxim of Quality (be truthful), the Maxim of Relation (be relevant), and the Maxim of Manner (be clear). When speakers violate one or more of these Maxims, an implicature is created, and the hearer must work out the meaning. If, for example, a man asks me for directions and I reply, "Do I look like I live here?", I violate the Maxim of Relation and create an implicature. The man must interpret my response to mean that I do not want to give him directions.

Conversational implicature has been used to account for humor (Dolitsky, 1992) and in particular the genres of jokes (Yamaguchi, 1988) and wit (Hunter, 1983). However, the genre of situation comedy has thus far not been explored in the pragmatics literature. Is the humor in situation comedies purely situational or does there exist some part of it which comes from conversational implicature? In this thesis, I intend first to investigate what part of the humor in sitcoms may be attributed to violations of Grice's Maxims and second, to possibly amend the list of established motivations for using implicature. At present, there are

three motivations for using implicature: the Politeness Principle (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), the Self-Interest Principle (Chen, 1993), and the Expressiveness Principle (Chen, 1993). In other words, these scholars argue that people use implicature to be polite, to protect their own interests, and to express themselves figuratively. Yet, if at least some of the humor in situation comedy involves implicature, these three Principles may not be enough to explain the motivations of implicature which results in humor. Thus I propose to investigate the possible existence of this other reason to use implicature with its effect of eliciting laughter. This motivation I propose as the Humor Principle.

In chapter 1, I will present Grice's theory of conversational implicature and discuss its use as a tool for explaining humor. In chapter 2, I will review some of the basic schools of thought regarding humor theory and place Grice's theory within one of the frameworks. In chapter 3, I will explain how I identified the humor events within a situation comedy, *Friends*, and show evidence of the humorous violation of Grice's Maxims within it. I will also discuss what evidence I found regarding the existence of a Humor Principle. In chapter 4, I will discuss the problems that I had with identifying the sources of humor, make some general

observations about my data, and point to areas of further research.

To my father, *in memoriam*,  
who is there when I laugh



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## CHAPTER 1 - CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

In his article, "Logic and Conversation," philosopher H. P. Grice posited a theory of conversation in which he argued that participants in a talk exchange recognize the purpose or direction of the conversation and thus choose or reject certain conversational moves based upon the suitability of said moves at any stage in the conversation. Grice baptized this tendency of participants to work together under the constraints of a conversational purpose the Cooperative Principle. Specifically, he wrote that participants would be expected to observe the CP as follows:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (45)

Working from this premise that participants in a conversation cooperate, Grice then elaborated certain rules or maxims which the participants would follow in order to be cooperative. The maxims fall into four categories: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The details of each category are as follows:

### Quantity

- 1) Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the

talk exchange).

- 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Grice commented that a transgression of the second maxim of quantity could at times simply be a waste of time and not a true transgression of the Cooperative Principle or that it could also be misleading, as the hearers of excess information might think that the speakers were intending to make some point with it.

Quality - Try to make your contribution one that is true.

- 1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation - Be relevant.

Manner - Be perspicuous.

- 1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
- 2) Avoid ambiguity.
- 3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- 4) Be orderly.

While it is expected that participants in a conversation follow the Cooperative Principle and the maxims, Grice states that this does not always occur and that in fact participants have certain choices that they may

make in regard to subscribing to these rules. A participant has four options:

- 1) He may *violate* a maxim and thereby possibly mislead the hearer;
- 2) He may *opt out* of the conversation, that is he may refuse to follow both the maxims and the Cooperative Principle;
- 3) He may be faced with a *clash* in which he is unable to fulfill the requirements of one or more maxims without breaking the requirements of another or others;
- 4) He may *flout* or blatantly fail to fulfill a maxim. When a person flouts a maxim, his audience must realize that it is not for any of the above three reasons and that the speaker is still following the Cooperative Principle. Such a situation gives rise to a conversational implicature whereby a speaker imbues a special meaning to his utterance that is different from the literal meaning of the words stated.

Grice differentiated conversational implicature from conventional implicature in that conventional implicatures depend upon the literal meaning of the words uttered to

determine what is implied, whereas in conversational implicature this is not the case. Grice illustrated the concept of conventional implicature with the example, "He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave" (44). He asserted that in this utterance it is implied that the person's being brave stems from the fact that he is an Englishman. A conversational implicature, on the other hand, is not bound by the literal meaning of the utterance. Grice gave the following example to illustrate conversational implicature:

A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, 'Oh quite well, I think: he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet.' (43)

Grice noted that at this point, any number of possible implicatures are possible. It may be that C may be the kind of person likely to steal, given the nature of his job, or that C's colleagues are treacherous people, etc. It can be said, however, that the implied meaning, whatever it may be, is distinct from the literal meaning of the words used.

Very often the meaning of implicatures like the one above is not clear without a knowledge of the context in which they take place. Grice used the following example to illustrate the importance of context: "He is in the grip of

a vice" (44). Given that the hearer had a knowledge of the English language and no knowledge of the context in which this statement was uttered, he would still know something about what the speaker had said, based upon a literal interpretation of what he had heard. That is, he would think that at the time of utterance, a male person or animal X has a particular body part Y caught in some type of tool or instrument Z, or that X had a bad character trait that he was unable to correct. However, in order to fully understand what the speaker had said, the hearer would have to know: 1) who or what X is; 2) the time of the utterance; and 3) which of the above two meanings of "he's in the grip of a vice" holds at the particular time of the utterance.

In order for a speaker to say some proposition, p, and conversationally implicate some other proposition, q, there must exist the conditions that 1) he is presumed to be following the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; 2) he must suppose that q is required so that his saying p is consistent with the above presumption; and 3) the speaker thinks (and expects the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) the hearer can understand what is required and to work out the meaning of 2. Grice illustrated this process using his already mentioned example of A and B talking about their friend C,

who works in a bank. B's remark that C had not yet been to prison might be worked out by A (in the appropriate setting) as follows:

'(1) B has apparently violated the maxim 'Be relevant' and so may be regarded as having flouted one of the maxims conjoining perspecuity, yet I have no reason to suppose that he is opting out from the operation of the CP; (2) given the circumstances, I can regard his irrelevance as only apparent if, and only if, I suppose him to think that C is potentially dishonest; (3) B knows that I am capable of working out step (2). So B implicates that C is potentially dishonest.' (50)

Grice argued that conversational implicatures had three basic characteristics. The first feature is cancelability. In other words, conversational implicatures may be canceled or negated, as in the following example:

A: Am I fat?

B: You have been eating a lot recently.

A: So you think I'm fat.

B: No, that's not what I meant.

Here we see that A takes B's first response to be an implicature that A is fat. Whether B meant it as such or not, A challenges B based on A's interpretation of B's



utterance. B then denies this meaning, thereby canceling the implicature and its attendant offense.

The second feature of CI is that of non-detachability. That is, by *ceteris paribus* one may change certain surface-level features of the utterance without detaching the implicature so long as the semantics of the utterance are not changed. To illustrate this concept, consider A, a man, who is having dinner in a restaurant with B, his girlfriend. A notes his girlfriend flirting with the waiter and voices his displeasure with the comment, "I'm sorry, I didn't know your boyfriend worked here." A could have made any number of other utterances and still have implied the same thing. For example, "Who's your boyfriend, me or him?" or "Perhaps I could leave you alone with your boyfriend" or some other remark along the same vein can be said without detaching the implicature.

The third aspect of CI is calculability. An implicature must be worked out by the hearer and the process by which this occurs can be seen in Grice's example of B's remark that C hadn't been to prison yet.

In addition to his discussion of particularized implicatures, Grice included cases in which no maxims were violated, maxims were violated due to the supposed clash with another maxim, and maxims were exploited to produce

figures of speech. In his treatment of the figures of speech, he elaborated on how the maxims could be flouted to produce irony, metaphor, meiosis, and hyperbole.

Although Grice never elaborated on how humor might be produced through violations of the Maxims, it may be done. In "Aspects of the unsaid in humor," Dolitsky notes the importance of the unspoken word in humor. According to her, "the place where unsaid communication takes place...[is] the point in the joke where its 'funniness' resides" (1992, 33). In other words, humor includes a pragmatic component that utilizes implicature as its means. She states that there are two main aspects of the unsaid in humor. The first is what Dolitsky calls "the speech act of humor," which is a kind of step-brother to Searle's (1975) notion of indirect speech acts. Entailed in this idea of a humorous speech act is the understanding that language use is pragmatically based so that rules for felicitous communication control the choice and interpretation of the said such that the unsaid may be expressed. The second aspect of the unsaid in humor regards the quality that humor has of breaking societal rules. Dolitsky observes that members of a society have internalized a set of rules governing their behavior, both verbal and physical, and that humor may also come from the breaking of these rules.

Other scholars have observed that humor does indeed break Grice's maxims. Raskin (1985) has proposed a script-based theory of humor in which the Gricean maxims are broken, but he also argues that jokes constitute a non-bonafide mode of communication in which hearers do not expect true information to be conveyed. As such, humor is then a somewhat uncooperative act in terms of Grice's CP. Yamaguchi (1988) also has noted the violation of maxims in jokes, but he takes the position that the narrator of the joke is guiltless of such transgressions. Instead, he proposes the "Character-did-it" hypothesis in which it is the characters within the joke who violate the maxims.

Grice's theory of conversation has also been applied to cases of wit. Hunter (1983) in "On Misapplying the Maxims: A Gricean Look at Wit," takes the view that witticisms occur when Grice's maxims are uncooperatively and deliberately applied by the hearer to promote misunderstanding. For example, when a speaker makes an implicature, instead of working out the intended meaning of the speaker, the respondent (Hunter's term for such an uncooperative hearer) might "assume" that the speaker is not following all of the conversational maxims, take the statement literally, and make a witty remark that exploits the figurative/literal ambiguity in the intended and interpreted meaning.

Although no one has, as yet, analyzed a situation comedy in terms of pragmatically based humor, Koln (1994) has undertaken a study of a playwright's wit in "Comedy and Menace: A Gricean Look at the Dialogue in Joe Orton's *Loot*." In this study, Koln examines Orton's particular style of humor and shows him to have violated Grice's maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner to humorous effect.

Humor is often regarded as either being intentional or unintentional. The obvious case of intentional humor is, of course, the formal telling of jokes while unintentional humor may result from anything from a slip of the tongue to a case of mistaken identity. Still, humor cannot all come into being accidentally, nor do people always preface a funny utterance with "I'm gonna tell you a joke." Therefore there must be cases of humor in conversation that exist outside of these specific types. It has been shown that humor in jokes may come from the violation of Grice's maxims. However, to use implicature a character or person must often be properly motivated to do so. Previously established motivations for violating Grice's conversational maxims are the Politeness Principle, the Self-Interest Principle, and the Expressiveness Principle (Brown and Levinson, 1987 and Leech, 1983; Chen, 1993; Chen, 1993).

The exact details of the Politeness Principle differ

among researchers. Leech (1983) describes it as "...maintain[ing] the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (82).

Alternatively, Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that:

...politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol (for which it must surely be the model), presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties. (1)

As it may be seen in the above quotations, the function of the Politeness Principle is to promote or maintain social harmony. A person motivated by the Politeness Principle would tailor what and/or how something is said to the particulars of a situation in order to appear polite. For example, if a person is asked what he or she thinks of a performing artist's new musical album, and the person replies, "Sometimes it's hard to appreciate the work of a genius," then that person's negative opinion of the recent album can be conveyed through conversational implicature. By not directly stating this opinion, the person appears polite, even to the artist, whom the person may or may not personally know; and if pressed further, the person might,

in the interests of politeness, respond with (a lie), "I don't understand it" instead of that person's true opinion, "I don't like it."

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that people follow an actual politeness strategy because:

[i]n general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. That is, normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces, it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each others' face... (61)

In following a politeness strategy, speakers undertake politeness work to maintain the face of those against whom a potentially face-threatening act is committed. Face has two aspects, positive and negative. The former concerns a person's self-respect or self-image, and the latter concerns a person's autonomy. Generally speaking, positive face is to be promoted, while negative face is to be minimized. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose the following framework for performing a potentially face-threatening act, with the

first option being the most face-threatening and the last being the least:

- (1) Bald on record— say the FTA clearly, directly, and concisely;
- (2) Positive politeness— use strategies designed to redress the addressee's positive face wants;
- (3) Negative politeness— use strategies designed to redress the addressee's negative face wants;
- (4) Off-record— say the FTA in a way that is ambiguous so that the speaker cannot be held to one intent (i.e, use implicature); or
- (5) Withhold the FTA.

By use of these strategies, participants may choose the amount of face negotiation that takes place in a conversation.

The second principle, the Self-Interest Principle, holds that what and/or how speakers say things is motivated by a desire to avoid the negative consequences of what they say. According to Chen (1993), "By its very nature, language commits its users to whatever they say" (62). For example, if someone were to ask about the whereabouts of a male colleague, to which the person asked replies, "He is in

the library," then the informer becomes committed to the belief that the person is in the library. If the person who asked the question goes to the library and finds that the person is not there, then the questioner will have the right to accuse the informer of saying something not true. The Self-Interest Principle also guards against things that, if said, would have negative consequences regardless of their truth value. Chen (1993) illustrates this with an example of Bill, who hypothetically asks him if he knows who started a certain rumor. Chen asserts that, although he knows who started the rumor, he states simply, "I don't know" in order not to involve himself in the affair.

The Expressiveness Principle, as formulated by Chen (1993) governs the use of implicature when the speaker (or poet) has strong emotions about the thing being conveyed and wants to pass on these emotions to the hearer, "leaving as much impact, psychological, aesthetic, or otherwise, [a]s possible..." (63). Chen formulates the Expressiveness Principle to deal specifically with metaphor. His theory relies on the mutual knowledge,  $m$ , shared between poet and reader that enable the reader to understand the poet's meaning. He elaborates the following steps that a reader goes through to work out the metaphoric meaning of a poet:

1. The poet wrote  $p$ , which is not true, thus



violating the Maxim of Quality.

2. However, there is no reason for the poet not to cooperate with me. Therefore, by writing p, she must have meant something else.
3. From m between the poet and me and the assumption that the poet is cooperating, she must have meant something like q by writing p.
4. If the poet had written something like q, she would leave less impact on me than she desires (the Expressiveness Principle). Therefore, she wrote p instead of something like q.
5. By deciding that the poet means something like q, my interpretation of p is consistent with the meaning of the poem as a whole. Therefore, I take the poet to mean something like q by writing p. (64)

Chen states that in interpreting metaphor, the violation of the Maxim of Quality alone is sufficient for the reader to identify the metaphor, to conclude that the violation is motivated by the Expressiveness Principle, and to understand that the interpretation is often not exact. Chen's Expressiveness Principle can be applied to other figures of

speech, such as irony. It serves also to distinguish metaphor from simile because simile presents a literal comparison through its use of *like* or *as*.

While the three existing principles offer motivations for using implicature in a wide range of situations, there may yet be some undiscovered factors which motivate implicature. Considering its intentionality and basis in pragmatic language use, the desire to create humor might be sufficient motivation for a person to violate the conversational maxims. To the list of established motivations for violating the Gricean Maxims I propose to add a Humor Principle, or the motivation to use implicature based on the explicit desire to be funny or to arouse laughter in one's hearers.

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Humor is a word that has a wide range of meanings. In the wider, informal sense, it applies to anything done, written, or said with the object of arousing laughter or amusement in whoever experiences it. In the narrow sense, it denotes a very selective category of those things which cause laughter/amusement and may be differentiated from such things as wit, satire, and farce. According to D. H. Monro (1988), humor "is less intellectual and more imaginative than wit, being more concerned with character and situation than with plays upon words or upon ideas; more sympathetic and less cruel than satire; [and] more subtle than farce" (349). Theories of humor attempt to explain what makes us laugh as well as why and how it does so. This being the case, humor theories follow the wider definition of the term. Generally speaking, theories of humor are one of three main types: superiority, incongruity, or relief. In addition to these three general approaches to humor, it is also useful to discuss the related notions of wit and sarcasm, as they are often heavily employed in situation comedy.

## 2.1 SUPERIORITY

Superiority theories contend that we do not laugh with, but rather laugh at people. We laugh at them because of some failing or defect that they may possess or because they suffer some sort of misfortune. The pleasure taken from laughter comes from our feeling of superiority over those at whom we laugh. This group of theories may have begun with Aristotle. He described the laughable as part of the ugly and comedy as "the imitation of inferior things and people" (trans. 1963, 415). However, Hobbes is most often credited as the originator of this theoretical approach to humor. According to Hobbes (1969/1651), "Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves" (93). The clearest example of this theory is comic vice in which a character causes us to laugh because of his or her failure live up to conventional notions of morality, which makes us feel superior to the character. Monroe (1988) notes two shortcomings in Hobbes' superiority theory—its inability to account for nonsense such as that found in the literature of Lewis Carroll and its failure to explain the humor in incongruity.

Another superiority theorist is Henri Bergson, although he is also counted by some as an incongruity theorist as well. Bergson notes the feelings of superiority inherent in humor by saying that "...it is the *trifling* faults of our fellow-men that make us laugh" (1917/1899, 136). Also, Bergson's notion of the "mechanical encrusted upon the living" can be seen as another aspect of superiority. As living things by their very nature are flexible, the notion of a living thing constrained to unnatural rigidity is something to laugh at. In such cases of comic rigidity laughter is sparked from feelings of superiority as the comic character is unable to adapt himself to life's many and changing demands. Bergson adds that this laughter is society's defense against the eccentric who refuses to adjust to its rules.

Another follower of superiority, Rapp argues that ridicule is one of the basic elements of humor. According to him "we laugh at misfortunes which are not serious; and we do not laugh at misfortunes which are serious" (1951, 35). Simply put, we laugh at life's small misfortunes and those who are subject to them.

## 2.2 INCONGRUITY

Incongruity theories, unlike the superiority theories,

argue that humor comes from paradox, verbal or social inappropriateness, and the presentation of markedly dissimilar ideas. Kant (1986/1790) is considered one of the "founding fathers" of this school of thought. According to him, "Laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing" (538). It may be inferred from this passage that humor results from one's somehow being led astray into a false expectation. Along a similar vein, Schopenhauer (1958/1819) states that "In every case, laughter results from nothing but the suddenly perceived incongruity between a concept and the real objects that had been thought through it in some relation; and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity" (59). Victor Raskin (1985) aptly illustrates this notion of incongruity with the following 20<sup>th</sup> century American joke:

'Is the doctor at home?' the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. 'No,' the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. 'Come right in.'

(32)

Raskin explains the elements of the preceding joke as being quite congruous to a point—the patient wants to see the doctor and whispers, presumably, because of illness. However, incongruity is introduced by the wife's whispered invitation to come in when the doctor is not at home.

Raskin himself puts forward an incongruity theory of humor which he calls *script theory*. Script theory involves the evoking of scripts or schemata, which are cognitive structures internalized by the native speaker representing his knowledge of a small part of the world. A native speaker has a large repertoire of scripts, for example, of everyday situations, manners, standard protocol, etc. that form part of his "common sense." Incongruity in this theory is introduced by evoking some element incompatible with the script. Humor comes then as a result of the realization of the presence of a second script.

Raskin (1985) considers Bergson's well-known account of humor to fall into the category of incongruity theory, as it is based on the superimposition of the inflexible/mechanical onto the flexible/living. The incongruity comes from these two diametrically opposed aspects' co-existence in the same time and space. For example, such an incongruous marriage of opposites could be seen in the actions of a man eating breakfast like an automaton.

It may be noted that suddenness is a recurring theme in many theories of humor (Hobbes, 1651/1696; Kant, 1790/1786; Schopenhauer, 1819/1958). In incongruity theory the importance of suddenness is exemplified in the punch line of jokes. This importance attributed to the punch line in

incongruity theories is due to the fact that, as Fry says, "It frequently presents a seemingly irrelevant idea, or it may seem incongruous with respect to the main body of the joke" (Fry 1963, 19-20 cited in Raskin 1985, 33). Thus the punch line is the lynch pin of incongruity.

### 2.3 RELIEF

Relief theory, also called psychoanalytical theory, originates with Sigmund Freud (1993/1905). Freud studied the various techniques of jokes and concluded that, for many types, the pleasure experienced was the same as for a child at play. However, as people grow older, the intellect or reason places restrictions on this pleasure principle so that the convoluted forms of jokes become a way of "sneaking" past the censor of reason. Slips of the tongue (also called "Freudian slips") and double entendres are examples of this kind of self-subterfuge. Similarly, there exist to Freud a group of jokes called tendency jokes, which do not have so innocuous a source of pleasure. These jokes typically are of a sexual or a malicious nature. By joking about these things, repressed impulses can be aired. Laughter is evoked by the relief that comes from the removal, albeit momentary, of a restraint.



## 2.4 DISTINGUISHING WIT AND SARCASM

General theories of humor attempt to explain humor in the broadest terms possible, and so subsume the different types of humor into their explanatory paradigms, blurring their distinctions in the effort to achieve far-reaching accounts of humor. While these theories can be used to explain the various types of humor, it is useful to distinguish two specific types, wit and sarcasm, as they are commonly considered separate entities in their own right, apart from the general category of humor.

Max Eastman (1936) offers some insight into the notions of wit and sarcasm (as it turns out, a close relative of irony). He makes a distinction between the terms *ludicrous* and *witty*, saying that "ludicrous describes something that 'looks funny' [;] [w]itty describes something that happens to your mind and makes you laugh" (49). He divides the work of previous theorists into two groups, those who talk about perceptions (with words like "incongruity," "distorted," "ugly," etc.) and those who talk about courses of thought or action (with words like "disappointment," "relief," etc.). Just as there are two kinds of unpleasantness that a person may encounter— failure to get what you want, and getting what you don't want— there are two types of humor— "taking a frustrated (thought or) action playfully, and taking an

unpleasant presentation playfully" (51). It is worth a small digression to note that Eastman views a playful attitude to be the *sine qua non* of humor. Of the two types of humor above, Eastman likens the first to be in the category of practical jokes and labels the second as perceptual and poetic humor. Wit falls within the first category, for, according to Eastman, "wit is nothing but a practical joke played quickly, spontaneously, without too much self- and other-consciousness, and played upon the mind" (1936, 54). He adds that wit is a word or series of words that "...pretends to be heading toward a certain meaning, and which 'leads us on' in the direction of that meaning, fails abruptly and with playful intent to get us there at all" (54).

According to Eastman (1936), the term *irony* has enjoyed many different definitions. However, he contends that its meaning is primarily one of understatement and draws this argument from the interaction of two Greek comic stock characters— the *eiron*, soft-spoken and restrained, who always had more in mind than he was actually saying, and the *alazon*, a loud-mouthed braggart. The humor in Greek comedy came from the clash of characters playing off of each other and the *eiron* "taking down" the braggart (193). In Eastman's estimation, it is the comic character's

understating himself that causes the audience to laugh "at the man who overstates himself" (1936, 197).

In his discussion of irony, Eastman notes the subtlety with which it may produce humor. He cites a passage from Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* and shows two characteristics of irony. The first is the degree to which irony can be subtle, such that a "humorless" person would completely overlook it (1936, 200). The second is that the victim of irony need not be terribly "victimized," as in the passage, it is Twain himself who is the victim of irony, and the playfulness with which he conveys the situation makes his readers laugh *with* rather than *at* him (1936, 200).

In contrast to irony, sarcasm is less subtle and done with the intention of victimizing its target. Sarcasm, according to Eastman, is "attacking a person by praising him in a false tone" (205), and, considering this definition, a sarcastic comment must necessarily mean the opposite of what is said. There is never any doubt about who the victim and the victimizer are because sarcasm is a highly personal affront carried out by the aggressor against the target. The goal of sarcasm is, of course, to personally ridicule and/or to get others to ridicule the person at whom it is directed. Irony, on the other hand, can be impersonal at times, as it may be perpetrated against its victim either by

a person or by the impassive "hand of fate."

Although Eastman's views of sarcasm and irony are quite illuminating, his description of wit seems to share a striking resemblance to many people's concept of a joke. Two psychologists, Long and Graesser (1988), offer a somewhat more useful definition of wit, as they distinguish it from humor and jokes. They first define humor to be "anything done or said, purposely or inadvertently, that is found to be comical or amusing" (37). They then define jokes to be "anything done or said to deliberately provoke amusement," (37) and add a special distinguishing characteristic in that "jokes are also *context-free* and self-contained in the sense that they can be told in many conversational contexts" (37). In contrast to jokes, they define wit as "anything deliberately said that provokes amusement in a specific conversational context (i.e., *context-bound*)" (37). They say that while jokes can be transported easily from context to context, wit relies more heavily on previous conversational context, topic of conversation, shared knowledge, and social situation such that in the retelling of a humorous incident, some essential factors of the humor are lost and the teller must conclude that "you had to be there." In further distinguishing jokes from wit, Long and Graesser put forth a taxonomy of wit, the

data for which came from an analysis of twenty "Tonight" shows and ten "Phil Donahue" shows wherein a remark was counted as a witticism if it was a statement made between the guest and host and the audience laughed at it. They categorize the taxonomy of wit by the speaker's intent or style. The following list represents their classification of wit and a somewhat shortened version of their definitions (Long and Graesser, 1988, 41-44):

1. Irony- the speaker expresses a statement in which the literal meaning is opposite to its intended meaning.
2. Satire- critiques some aspect of society by poking fun at social institutions or social policy.
3. Sarcasm and hostility- a speaker targets an individual with the intention to chastise.
4. Overstatement and understatement- the speaker often repeats the last statement made in a conversation and changes the intended meaning by inflection; the speaker's attitude toward the statement is indicated by tone of voice and inflection.
5. Self-deprecation- remarks which target oneself as the object of humor.

6. Teasing- the object of amusement is another person's appearance or foibles and is unlike sarcasm and hostility because it does not seek to seriously insult, offend, or chastise.
7. Replies to rhetorical questions- violate conversational expectations and surprise the conversational partner because there is no expectation of a reply; the intention is often simply to amuse.
8. Clever replies to serious statements- clever, incongruous, or nonsensical replies to serious statements or questions; statements are deliberately misconstrued so that the listener replies to a meaning not intended by the speaker or the listener replies to an intention which was not meant by the speaker.
9. Double entendres- a statement or word is misperceived or misconstrued on purpose so as to entertain a dual meaning, often sexual in nature.
10. Transformation of frozen expressions- transforming adages, well-known phrases, or shared knowledge into novel statements.

11. Puns— the humorous use of a word that evokes a dual meaning or the use of words that have the same sound but different meanings.

It can be seen here that, although a bit lengthy, Long and Graesser have a useful mechanism that not only distinguishes wit from other forms of humor, but also distinguishes the types of wit from each other.

## 2.5 GRICE AND HUMOR

Generally speaking, a pragmatic account of humor falls into the category of incongruity theory, as the violation of Grice's conversational maxims is an act incongruous with the behavior expected of interlocutors. Grice's Cooperative Principle expresses the condition that interlocutors observe the submaxims, and if they do not, then it is to convey some non-literal meaning by their utterance and not because they have opted out of the conversation. Grice shares this common point with the other incongruity theories, that being that the joke must be "worked out" by the hearer.

However, implicature may also be the mechanism by which some failing in a character is revealed, thus lending itself to superiority theory; and its allowance for ambiguity, especially in word play and double entendre, may also make it the servant of relief theory.

In chapter 3, it will be shown how implicature may at times be the vehicle or even the source of humor, as it is understood by one or more of the above theories of humor.



## CHAPTER 3 - A GRICEAN ANALYSIS OF A SITUATION COMEDY

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will examine specific parts of a transcript from a situation comedy, *Friends*, to show how humor may come through violations of Grice's Maxims. First I will discuss how I identified the humor within the text and analyzed it according to discrete events. Secondly, I will briefly discuss how implicature might be used to create humor and offer evidence that the laughter in some cases does indeed come from violations of Grice's Maxims, and that in fact all four Maxims are violated with humorous effect in this episode. Finally, I will address the notion of there being a humor principle, and offer what evidence I could find of characters using implicature motivated by such a principle.

### 3.1 HUMOR EVENTS AND CANNED LAUGHTER

At the onset, an unwieldy problem existed regarding my being able to identify what was funny and what was not. Since most people will agree that a sense of humor is at best an individual trait of a person, and at worst an idiosyncratic one, I needed to find a non-biased indicator of the existence of humor. Humor often leaves the obvious footprint of laughter and therein I found a sort of litmus

test for its existence— the laugh track.

Situation comedies always have laughter playing in the background. This laughter is called either "canned laughter" or the "laugh track." The creators of sitcoms long ago realized the truth in the adage, "Laugh and the world laughs with you." Their instinct is supported by the observations of humor researchers such as Freud (1993/1905) and Bergson (1917/1899). According to Bergson (1917/1899), "You would hardly appreciate the comic if you felt yourself isolated. Laughter stands in need of an echo" (6). In other words, we appreciate humor more when we share the laughter (real or faux) with others, whether the others truly be with us or merely be ghosts in the machine.

As before mentioned, the laugh track was the key to identifying the humor events, as the laughs it held were decidedly non-random. Its various chuckles, giggles, and guffaws were timed to coincide with the jokes and other humor stimuli that the writers contrived to include in the script, and because of this feature it was necessary only to listen for the instances of laughter and correlate them with their "triggering" elements from the transcript. Incidentally, there were 147 counts of laughter associated with humor events in the one episode of *Friends* analyzed. The following table shows how many times each Maxim was

violated:

Table 1: Maxim Violations Resulting in Humor

Maxim	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
# of times violated	12	41	32	16

As can be seen above, violations of Grice's Maxims account for at least some of the humorous events in this episode. They total 101 violations out of 147 counts of laughter. However, these numbers do not all represent a one violation-one laugh correlation, as there are some humor events in which violations of Maxims overlap and trigger only one laugh. Also, there were 20 discrete humor events in which sight gags were the humor stimuli, which may or may not have included one or more violations of the Maxims. Sight gags derive from the traditions of physical (slapstick) comedy, the most famous of which would be the classic "pie in the face" routine favored by circus clowns. However, in this study, any humor stimulus to which some visual phenomenon contributes significantly counts as a sight gag. This distinction is made based partly on Eastman's (1936) categorization of humor for which he uses the term *ludicrous* to be more of an image that is perceived and the humor which he calls *wit* to be like a trick played upon the mind and expectations of the audience.

### 3.2 HOW HUMOR MIGHT COME THROUGH MAXIM VIOLATIONS

Recalling that there are three basic sources of humor, superiority, incongruity, and relief, it is possible for writers of situation comedy to create "windows" for humor to show through by orchestrating the verbal and physical behavior of the characters, among other things. Through the violations of Grice's Maxims, it is possible to highlight flaws of characters and/or to show their suffering, which give rise to superiority-based humor, to activate differing schemata in the audience's minds, which evoke conflicting scripts (incongruity-based humor), and to arouse the more instinctive sources of pleasure described by Freud, which can be achieved by sneaking past the mind's defenses through linguistic subterfuge. Various minutiae that are attendant to these three basic theories of humor will not be discussed now, except for the reminder that in this paper, the definitions of wit and sarcasm used are those espoused by Long and Graesser (1988).

### 3.3 BREAKING THE MAXIM OF QUANTITY

Recall from Chapter 1 that the Maxim of Quantity is concerned with how much information is contained in an utterance. Violations of this Maxim are made either by saying too much or too little. Of the identifiable

violations of the Maxims, Quantity was not often flouted in the script (a total of 12 times).

Following are some examples of how the Maxim of Quantity was violated by characters in the *Friends* transcript:

- (1) MONICA: Okay, everybody, there's food and drinks on the table. [To Ross and Rachel] Go across the hall.
- ROSS: What?
- RACHEL: What?
- MONICA: Right now. Joey and Chandler's. Go now.
- RACHEL: Why?
- MONICA: Just go. [Laugh track]

In the above example, the occasion is a surprise party for Rachel about which both Ross and Rachel had previous knowledge. However, they do not know about a second surprise party being staged across the hall, nor do they know about the presence of Rachel's father at the second party. Her mother is at the first party, and her parents, who have a lot of animosity toward each other because of divorce, do not know of each other's presence either. Monica's utterances addressed to Ross and Rachel in (1) above show her to be giving too little information.

However, she is operating under conditions of which the audience is fully aware. Monica is thus forced to withhold information not just from Ross and Rachel, but also from Rachel's mother. She also has two distinct and conflicting motives for using implicature, the former a desire to surprise Rachel, and the latter a vested (self-) interest in keeping two potentially antagonistic people from fighting and ruining her party. Thus the situation here presents itself as laughable, and the juxtaposition of clashing motives is the cause.

(2) MONICA: Okay people, I want you to take a piece of paper— here you go— and write down your most embarrassing memory. [Laugh track— situation] Oh, and I do ask that when you're not using the markers, you put the caps back on them because they will dry out. [Laugh track]

The place is "party number one" or Monica's party in which quiet party games are taking place. Here she is directing people in one such game. The first laugh simply comes from the situation. This scene stands in stark contrast to Chandler and Joey's party, which offers music, dancing, and drinking. The second laugh, however, is sparked by Monica's request to put the caps back on the pens. At the party,

everybody is an adult, and everyone presumably knows that they should put the caps back on the pens precisely because they do dry out. However, Monica addresses them as if they were children who do not know this. By giving too much information, she is revealing one of her character flaws, which is, for lack of a better phrase, "anal retentiveness." People familiar with the show already know this about Monica, as she commits similar acts of implicature in other episodes. However, this character trait readily reveals itself in this episode, and thus the audience laughs at Monica and her comic flaw.

(3) CHANDLER: Alright, you guys are off to party number one [He ushers three guys into Monica's apartment.] and you, you are off to party number two [He ushers four women into his apartment. Two guys try to follow. Chandler blocks them and waves them off to Monica's apartment]. Alright fellas, keep it movin', let's keep it movin'. [Laugh track]

This violation is one both of Relation and Quantity. Only Quantity will be discussed here. Chandler violates the Maxim of Quantity by saying too much. He essentially repeats himself in the last two lines of (3). This

repetition may be interpreted to indicate just how selfish Chandler is in regard to his desire not to share his female company with other males. His comic vice is thus revealed.

#### 3.4 BREAKING THE MAXIM OF QUALITY

The Maxim of Quality, as discussed earlier, deals essentially with telling the truth. Its submaxims enjoin speakers not to say things which they believe to be false nor to say things for which there does not exist adequate evidence. The Maxim of Quality is violated quite often in this transcript. Of the identifiable laughs coming from implicature, 41 were attributable to violations of Quality, either singularly or in conjunction with violations of other Maxims. There were actually more violations of Quality, but these violations did not coincide with the laugh track. Still, violations of the Maxim of Quality comprised the largest source of laughter coming from implicature.

The following are some examples of the violation of Quality:

(4) MONICA: Okay, um, so I still have to invite Dillon and Emma and Shannon Cooper.

JOEY: Whoa, whoa, whoa, uh, no Shannon Cooper.

PHOEBE: Why not her?



JOEY: Cause she, uh,... she steals stuff. [Laugh track]

In this situation the characters are discussing who to invite to their party. When Phoebe asks Joey for a reason why they should not invite Shannon, he hedges for a moment while he hastily comes up with the lie, "she steals stuff." If it is not a blatant lie, then it is something for which Joey does not, or rather is not, given the chance to give corroborating evidence as Chandler pipes in with the next line which offers the suggestion that the woman does not steal and that in fact Joey's motivation to exclude her comes from his having slept with her and never having called her back. As it turns out, the other characters and the audience favor this reason for Joey's lying, as they know Joey to be something of a Don Juan, which is one of his flaws. His making such a bold and socially touchy accusation against Shannon Cooper highlights another of his flaws- his stupidity. Joey's heavy-handedness in telling such an easily detected lie (because it is so exaggerated) is in accordance with his stupidity. The audience laughs at his attempting to hide one of his flaws, only to foil himself with another.

(5) [Rachel enters]

ROSS: Hi honey, how did it go?

RACHEL: Ugh, it was the graduation from hell.

CHANDLER: Ya know, my cousin went to hell on a football scholarship. [Laugh track]

Chandler actually makes a witty remark, which, in Long and Graesser's (1988) terminology, is a clever remark to a serious statement. It is a violation of Quality because it is a blatant lie. Hell is not an institute of higher learning, and so his cousin, of course, did not attend it, much less on a scholarship. The humor in this case comes from Chandler's having deliberately misconstrued Rachel's intended figurative meaning. He exploits the ambiguity of "from hell" and responds to it literally with an impossible and quite sarcastic statement.

(6) [Dr. Greene and Ross both step out into the hall. They are coming from different apartments. Ross is wearing Dr. Greene's glasses and has one of his cigarettes dangling out of his mouth] [Laugh track— sight gag]

GREENE: Are you wearing my glasses?

ROSS: Yes. [He pulls them off and hands them to Dr. Greene] I was just warming up the earpieces for you. [Laugh track]

In a previous scene, Ross had volunteered to retrieve Dr.

Greene's glasses and cigarettes. However, he was accosted on the way back by Mrs. Greene, who asked him about the items. Ross donned the glasses and put one of the cigarettes into his mouth as part of his efforts to mislead Mrs. Greene into thinking that the items were, in fact, his own; but as he leaves the apartment, he is still wearing these accoutrements. Ross is thus caught in an awkward position. He could tell Dr. Greene the truth about why he is making free with the man's possessions, but the truth is not an option. Mrs. Greene's presence must be kept a secret from Dr. Greene. So Ross is forced to break the Maxim of Quality by telling Dr. Greene that he is warming up the earpieces for him. The humor in this exchange comes partly from the situation of Ross having gone from the frying pan and into the fire, as he maneuvered out of the sticky situation with Mrs. Greene only to encounter Dr. Greene. Ross's self-interested motive for lying and the patent absurdity of his statement (no one thinks to warm up earpieces, much less to do it for someone else) also give rise to the laughter here.

While the frequency with which the Maxim of Quality is violated by characters in this episode of *Friends* is a characteristic intrinsic to *Friends* and to the genre of situation comedies in general, these violations share

another common characteristic— the degree to which they bend the rules of conversation. Granted, situation comedy is an art which imitates reality. The situations depicted within them usually derive from normal occurrences that people may experience in everyday life. However, in the sitcom reality, events and the characters' actions are often greatly exaggerated, perhaps in compliance with Aristotle's ancient commandments of comedy. Therefore, in situations where the average person might break the Maxim of Quality in small or subtle ways, for example, a white lie about a friend's new outfit or a small but necessary fib to cover a late arrival to work, characters in a sitcom do the same thing, but in grossly exaggerated ways. In everyday reality, small lies are told more often, probably because they are less likely to be found out, and if they are, then they are more likely to be tolerated. However, in situation comedies it seems that the characters throw caution to the wind in their invention of falsehoods. Example (4) above demonstrates this tendency toward exaggerated lies. Joey's violation of the Maxim of Quality could have been executed with a much smaller lie. For example, he could have said something like, "She is out of town." Had he said a smaller lie, maybe Chandler would not have felt obliged to "tell on him."

In a similar way, in (6) above, Ross could have told a smaller, more normal lie, such as, "I wanted to see what it's like to wear bi-focals."

Actually, the exaggeration present in American humor has been noted by Eastman (1936), who calls those characters prone to telling tall tales "magnificent liars." He distinguishes two types of liars, those who exaggerate to add entertainment value to their stories and those who lie in an attempt to change their reality. The above examples in which Joey and Ross lie could be seen as attempts to change their realities into something else, as Joey wishes to lay blame on Shannon Cooper and Ross wishes that he were not caught between the Dr. and Mrs. Greene.

### 3.5 BREAKING THE MAXIM OF RELATION

The Maxim of Relation, as mentioned in Chapter 1, simply states, "be relevant." A person violates this Maxim by uttering something seemingly irrelevant to the conversation in which the person is engaged. Of the instances of laughter identified as coming from broken Maxims, 32 came from violations of Relation. The flouting of this Maxim was the second most common cause of humor coming from implicature.

The following are some examples of the violation of the

Maxim of Relation:

(7) JOEY: Quick volleyball question.

CHANDLER: Volleyball.

JOEY: Yeah, we set up a court in your room. Uh, you didn't really like that grey lamp, did you? [Laugh track]

By bringing up the seemingly unrelated topic of the lamp in the context of talking about volleyball, Joey breaks the Maxim of Relation. Joey seems to imply that he and the other volleyball players broke or damaged Chandler's lamp while they were playing. Joey's implicature is motivated by self-interest, as he expects Chandler to react badly to the news. However, the implicature highlights Joey's flaw of stupidity. People do not normally do such careless things as playing volleyball inside their bedrooms, but it is within the realm of possibility for Joey, and the audience laughs at his mistake.

(8) [Ross and Rachel are coming down the hallway]

RACHEL: Oh, thank you for the wonderful dinner.

ROSS: Thanks for being born.

RACHEL: Oh, thank you for my beautiful earrings. They're perfect. I love you.

ROSS: Oh, now you can exchange them if you want, ok?

RACHEL: Mmm. Now I love you even more. [Laugh track]

Rachel's last utterance breaks the Maxim of Relation. In the context of the conversation about earrings it seems irrelevant. However, this remark activates conflicting scripts (Raskin, 1985). The first script is the perfect-birthday-date-with-your-boyfriend scenario. It seems that Ross and Rachel are coming home after a very romantic and enjoyable evening in which Ross gives Rachel just the right birthday present. However, the other script, that of imperfection or the he-never-gets-me-the-right-gift scenario is activated with Rachel's utterance, which implies that she will exchange the earrings. The humor then, comes from incongruity.

(9) [In the hallway between both apartments]

CHANDLER: [running out of his apartment after a young woman]

Okay, okay, you can be shirts and I'll be skins. [Laugh track]

Chandler's remark is a violation of the Maxim of Relation. The audience witnesses a scene and, by "putting two and two

together," infers that Chandler was trying to get the woman to take her shirt off. It is common for boys, when playing team sports, to designate teams as "shirts" or "skins" (the "skins" players do not wear their shirts) in order to tell the sides apart. The audience infers that Chandler was trying to get her to disrobe by placing her on the "skins" side. This violation of Relation shows one of Chandler's character flaws— he is quite unsuccessful with women (in fact, he is almost Joey's opposite in this regard). However, he still tries, and the audience laughs at his failure.

While conversations take place between characters in any kind of play— teleplay, screen play, drama, comedy, etc.— no other genre is so conscious of the audience as is the situation comedy. With sitcoms, the audience witnesses the action of the story as an omniscient observer. Things about which even the other characters are ignorant the omniscient audience is privy to by virtue of a previous scene, a wider perspective, etc. Sitcoms often take advantage of this elevated position of the audience by adding things that are intended specifically for them, such as sight gags. While these things may be quite outrageous, the characters typically take them in stride, often having a very subdued reaction or ignoring the gag entirely. Sight



gags often break the Maxim of Relation. However, a sight gag might just as easily break other Maxims. For example, a character might mime a response to a question instead of using words and in this way break Manner. That being said, it is possible to examine a violation of Relation that takes advantage of the visual medium:

(10) [Monica's apartment. They are preparing for the party.] [There is a knock at the door.]

MONICA: [answers the door] Dr. Greene. Oh my god!  
It's Rachel's dad!

CHANDLER: [lets go of a balloon that he was blowing up]  
[Laugh track]

This sight gag is a violation of Relation. When he finds out the identity of the caller at the door, Chandler's reaction is to let the balloon fly. However, this action conveys no meaning to the other characters. Indeed, they simply ignore it, as his carelessness invites no comment or remonstrance from the other characters as the scene continues. Yet with this slip Chandler inadvertently betrays emotional state, which is one of anxiety. The audience laughs at Chandler's predicament, taking pleasure in his distress.

### 3.6 BREAKING THE MAXIM OF MANNER

Grice's Maxim of Manner states that interlocutors should "be perspicuous." By the Maxim of Manner it is intended that participants in a conversation avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity, as well as make their conversational contributions in a brief and orderly fashion. That interlocutors should subscribe to conventional or "normal" standards in terms of information quantity and organization is also embodied in this Maxim. Violations of this Maxim were rare in this episode, numbering only sixteen. The following are examples of humor coming from violations of Manner:

(11) [Back at Chandler and Joey's party. Everyone is dancing and having fun.]

MONICA: Could you guys please try to keep it down?

We're trying to start a Boggle tournament.

[Chandler and Joey stop dancing and laugh at her.]

[Laugh track]

In this violation of the Maxim of Manner, the characters of Chandler and Joey do not say anything so much as perform an action. Normally people respond to a request like Monica's with words that mean approximately "yes" or "no," even if some small implicature is made to the same effect. However,

Joey and Chandler do not even use words. They laugh at Monica outright, showing what they think of both her and her request. The audience, in turn, laughs at Joey and Chandler for their rudeness to Monica.

(12) [At Monica's party. Ross has a drink in his hand.]

MRS. GREENE: Oh, scotch neat. You know, that's Rachel's father's drink.

ROSS: Oh, mine too. Isn't that neat? [Laugh track] Scotch neat. [Laugh track-Quantity]

The Maxim of Manner is violated by Ross when he says, "Isn't that neat?" It is a play on words, as "neat" has multiple meanings, which cause an essential ambiguity or vagueness of expression. In this case the two juxtaposed meanings are "cool" and "a drink with no ice," and the humor comes from this incongruity, as it presents two conflicting scripts. One script is the "alcoholic drink" script, and the other is the slang expression, which has no place in the first script. In a previous scene Rachel's father had instructed Ross in the latter meaning because Ross had responded inappropriately to the man's utterance of "neat." In this exchange Ross's later addition of "Scotch neat" is a violation of Quantity, as he is giving too much information

for a simple play on words in an attempt to show Mrs. Greene that he knows both of the meanings. Being instructed by Rachel's father constituted a loss of face for Ross, and he is determined in this scene not to have the same thing happen with Mrs. Greene.

(13) [At Monica's party. Ross has a pair of eyeglasses in his hands.]

MRS. GREENE: Ross, whose glasses are those?

ROSS: Mine. [Laugh track- Quality]

MRS. GREENE: You wear bi-focals?

ROSS: Uh-hmm. [Puts them on] I have a condition, apparently, that I require [Laugh track- Quality] two different sets of focals. [Laugh track- Manner]

In this exchange Ross' referring to bifocals as "two different sets of focals" breaks the Maxim of Manner, as it is an odd way to talk about such a thing. However, in this scene, there are two episodes of laughter which coincide with violations of the Maxim of Quality. The first violation of Quality gets a laugh because it is obvious to the audience that the glasses do not belong to Ross. The second violation of Quality and the violation of Manner seem to be related to each other. Ross has already lied to Mrs.

Greene. It was a simple lie, but Ross seems compelled, almost against his will, to elaborate on the lie. As Ross proceeds through his next utterance, the laugh track sounds after the word "require." At this point the audience realizes that Ross is engaged in his second lie. However, the lie (the propositional content of his utterance) is not yet complete. The words that the audience cues in on are "condition," "apparently," and "require." "Condition" is itself a vague word, and at this point the audience expects some elaboration of that term. After this word, however, Ross hedges with the word, "apparently." This word shows his unwillingness to go through with the lie. It may be motivated by Mrs. Greene's being an authority figure for Ross. After all, she has more power than him, as she is the mother of his girlfriend. He may be feeling the kind of hesitancy in telling a lie that many people experience when attempting to lie to people possessed of much greater power than themselves. Ross, however, resigns himself to his course, as he trudges on with his lie. When he utters "require," the audience realizes that he is going through with his lie and so laughs. At the last moment, Ross seems to lose his determination again and twists the anticipated lie into a form that, although peculiar, the semantic content of which is the same as his first lie. So this

leaves him feeling no less guilty for having said it than he did after the first lie.

(14) [Ross is going to get Dr. Greene's cigarettes from his jacket in the other apartment.]

DR. GREENE: Get my glasses, too.

ROSS: All-righty-roo. [Laugh track]

[Closes the door] What a great moment to say that for the first time.

In this exchange, Ross' utterance of "all-righty-roo" is a violation of the Maxim of Manner, as it is an unconventional transformation of "alright." Also, any kind of diminutive or relaxed pronunciation would be indicative of a register shift, the kind of which is more common among people of better acquaintance and more equal power than are shared between Mr. Greene and Ross. This incongruity in opposition to the relationship that the two characters share is the cause of laughter. In other words, Ross oversteps his bounds by being too familiar with Dr. Greene. The character actually notes this faux pas when he makes the self-conscious and rather self-mocking comment, "What a great moment to say that for the first time," which is, incidentally, a laugh-causing violation of Quality (and self-deprecation in Long and Graesser's (1988) taxonomy).

### 3.7 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION AND EVIDENCE FOR THE HUMOR

#### PRINCIPLE

From the above examples of the violations of Grice's Maxims, their coincidence with the laugh track, and the subsequent discussions of the humor they contain, there exists enough evidence to conclude that some of the humor in this episode of *Friends* derives from the use of implicature.

Recalling the discussion in Chapter 1 of the various motivations for using implicature, i.e., the Politeness, Self-Interest, and Expressiveness Principles, now follows a presentation and discussion of evidence in support of the existence of a Humor Principle— that is, a motivation to use implicature coming from an explicit desire to "be funny."

The following are some examples in which a character violates some Maxim for reasons not accounted for by the previously established principles of implicature:

(15) [Monica is wearing her waitress costume, which includes breast enhancements. Joey is staring at Monica's breasts.]

MONICA: Joey, they're not real. I start miles beneath the surface of these things, okay? They're fake. See? [squeezes her breast]  
Honk honk.

CHANDLER: Wow, it's, it's like porno for clowns! [Laugh track]

The existing Principles do not adequately explain Chandler's motivation for making such an utterance. His comment is certainly not motivated by Politeness, as a woman's breasts are a taboo topic for polite discussion, and, at any rate, conventions of politeness would demand that the comment be off-record (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Chandler's remark is of the bald on record type, and exhibits no concern for anybody's face needs. Self-Interest also does not adequately explain Chandler's motivation because, as Chen (1993) describes it, Self-Interest centers on the desire to avoid undesirable consequences, and Chandler does not seem to be doing this. If anything, he is courting a slap in the face. The Expressiveness Principle comes closest to explaining Chandler's motivation. However, it, too, is somehow unsatisfying. Chen (1993) formulates Expressiveness in order to deal explicitly with metaphor (though it can explain some other figures of speech), which breaks the Maxim of Quality, and not with simile because it makes a literal comparison between two things, and so does not usually break the Maxim of Quality. Although Chandler's comment is technically a simile, it still breaks the Maxim of Quality through one of the submaxims, "do not say things



for which you lack adequate evidence." To equate Monica's false breasts and preceding actions with clown pornography is a patent absurdity because "porno for clowns" does not exist and Chandler has no real basis for comparison. His comment must be motivated by some other principle. His utterance has the effect of activating two incongruous scripts (Raskin, 1985) in his hearers minds— a clown script and a pornography script— and so produces humor. So in this case, Chandler's utterance may be said to be motivated by a desire to amuse.

Another piece of evidence regarding the Humor Principle can be seen in the previous example (5), here renumbered as (16):

(16) [Rachel enters]

ROSS: Hi honey, how did it go?

RACHEL: Ugh, it was the graduation from hell.

CHANDLER: Ya know, my cousin went to hell on a football scholarship. [Laugh track]

It will be recalled that Chandler's remark breaks the Maxim of Quality. His motivation for using implicature, however, is not satisfactorily explained by the existing three Principles. Politeness here has no relevance because the utterance in no way protects anyone's face. The kind of

sarcasm for which Chandler's character is known is not present in this comment. Self-Interest is not a sufficient motivation in this case, either, as Chandler is not acting to protect his own interests. Nor is Expressiveness an adequate explanation of his motivation, for here he is not being expressive in a figurative way. In fact, it was Rachel's preceding comment which followed the Expressiveness Principle. Her comment, "It the graduation from hell," was meant figuratively. Chandler, however, takes advantage of the ambiguity in Rachel's phrase, "from hell." Instead of accepting it's figurative meaning, he exploits the locative meaning of "hell" and chooses to make a comment about the place. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, this is a clever remark to a serious statement, which is one of the types of wit described by Long and Graesser (1988). Wit's manipulation of the Gricean Maxims has been described in detail by Hunter (1983).

(17) JOEY: Uh, hey, Dr. Greene, why don't you come with me? We'll put your jacket on Rachel's bed.

DR. GREENE: Alright, that sounds like a two-person job.

[Laugh track]

Dr. Greene's comment breaks the Maxim of Quality and has a heavy tone of sarcasm. Again, the existing Principles do

not adequately explain the character's motivation.

Politeness certainly does not explain it. Dr. Greene's comment is a face-threatening act directed at Joey and is not made off record, as would be expected. Since Dr. Greene enjoys more social power, however, he does not have to do such politeness work. He cannot even be considered an impolite guest because, due to his relationship with Rachel, he cannot be blacklisted by her friends. Self-Interest does not explain his motivation either. He is not acting to protect his own interests. Expressiveness is not an adequate motivation either, as his purpose here is not to express himself figuratively, although one might argue that sarcasm, being similar to irony, is Expressive. His purpose here is to evoke humor of the superiority variety. The sarcastic remark is an attack on Joey's face designed to highlight Joey's stupidity.

(18) ROSS: Hi, Dr. Greene. So, uh, how's everything in the, uh, vascular surgery...game?

DR. GREENE: It's not a game, Ross. A woman died on my table today.

ROSS: I'm sorry. See, that's the good thing about my job. All the dinosaurs on my table are already dead. [Laugh track]

In this exchange Ross breaks the Maxim of Relation. His motivation is not Politeness, as no face negotiation takes place. His motivation is not Self-Interest, either, as he is not seeking to avoid any negative consequences of what he says. Expressiveness, too, does not explain his motivation, as he does not seem to be making any figures of speech. His motivation here is to cheer up Dr. Greene. Such an action is common for people to do, and a common way to cheer someone up is to make them laugh. So Ross's comment is an attempt at light-hearted humor designed to improve the doctor's mood.

More evidence for a Humor Principle may be seen in (12) above, here renumbered as (19):

(19) [At Monica's party. Ross has a drink in his hand.]

MRS. GREENE: Oh, scotch neat. You know, that's Rachel's father's drink.

ROSS: Oh, mine too. Isn't that neat? [Laugh track] Scotch neat. [Laugh track-Quantity]

Ross's first comment about the scotch, "Isn't that neat?" is a violation of Manner, which is not motivated by any of the existing Principles. It does not come from Politeness, nor

Self-Interest, nor Expressiveness. Instead, his utterance, as mentioned in section 3.5 above, is motivated by an express desire to amuse Mrs. Greene. It is, according to Long and Graesser's (1988) taxonomy, a pun. Ross's second comment, "Scotch neat," is motivated by Self-Interest. It is intended to insulate him from any face threatening act directed at him by Mrs. Greene, were she to consider his remark to be made out of ignorance and not out of true knowledge and wit. Alternatively, it may be described as being motivated by Self-Politeness, as it is a move to protect his own face.

### 3.8 CONCLUSION REGARDING THE HUMOR PRINCIPLE

From the above examples it may be concluded that there is evidence to support the existence of a Humor Principle. Examples fifteen through nineteen were shown to be events of implicature that were not adequately explained by the Politeness, Self-interest, or Expressiveness Principles. One example, (17) (Dr. Greene's FTA toward Joey) is sarcasm, a well-known agent of laughter. Examples (15) and (19) above (Chandler's remark about hell and Ross's first "neat" comment, respectively), are both examples of characters use of wit. Wit arguably is always motivated by the desire to be funny. Example (18) (Ross's attempt to cheer up Dr.

Greene) is another example of implicature motivated by the desire to amuse. In this case the desire to amuse is entailed in the purpose of raising another character's spirits.

## CHAPTER 4 - PROBLEMS, OBSERVATIONS, AND FINAL COMMENTS

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

A study of this nature is useful both in what it does and does not explain. In this section I will discuss the problems that I encountered in applying Grice's Maxims to a situation comedy, make some comments about certain peculiarities of the discourse strategies found in *Friends*, and offer final suggestions for future research.

### 4.1 PROBLEMS

Not surprisingly, violations of Grice's Maxims could not account for all of the laughs that were present in the laugh track. Of course, I did not actually expect to find as many as I did, either. Of the 147 laughs that I counted, there were at least 50 which did not result from a breaking of any Maxims.

Some of these laughs might simply be explained away as truly deriving from the situations presented. It would seem that situation comedies are aptly named, as the odd twists of plot and bizarre situations found within them do contribute to many of the laughs. Consider the following:

(20) PHOEBE: Okay, here are the birthday candles. Where's the birthday cake?

MONICA: Okay, we're not having birthday cake, we're having birthday flan.

Whereas Monica here is breaking some kind of social norm, she is not breaking any conversational Maxim. It seems a somewhat ludicrous proposition to have birthday flan, but the character says this with all sincerity, and as it turns out, they do indeed have birthday flan. While Grice (1975) did allude to there being other Maxims that might have accounted for this type of aberration, he never fully elaborated on them.

(21) MRS. GREENE: ...The funniest thing happened to me on the way here. I was... [Joey peeks out from the other room.]

PHOEBE: [Cuts Mrs. Greene off] Ha ha! That's great, ha ha! [Laugh track] I can't wait to hear the rest of it, ya know, but I really have to go to the bathroom so...Hey, come with me! [Laugh track]

While the first laugh may be attributed to impoliteness of the sort to be discussed below, the second laugh is triggered by Phoebe's request that Mrs. Greene join her in the bathroom. While none of Grice's Maxims are broken, some social rule is breached here. Certainly women have been



known to go to public restrooms together, but I suppose it is considerably less common to do so in a private location, such as one's home, and it must be most uncommon to ask the mother of one's friend to participate in such a joint venture.

In situations such as the above, as well as with certain sight gags and slapstick comedy routines (there is no implicature in a "pie in the face"), Grice's theory of conversation is inadequate for explaining exactly where the humor comes from.

## 4.2 OBSERVATIONS

While analyzing the humor in this episode of *Friends* to determine how much of it derived from the use of implicature, I observed two types of phenomena which seemed corollary to, but outside of simple violations of Grice's Maxims. One of them concerns the timing of the laugh track with the violation of the Maxim of Quality. The other concerns a general rarity of politeness.

### 4.2.1 THE TIMING OF HUMOR— BREAKING THE MAXIM OF QUALITY

One oddity regarding the synchronization of the laugh track with violations of the Maxims involved characters breaking the Maxim of Quality and then a few moments later

being found out by the other characters, such as from another character "telling" on them or from their confessing to the fib themselves. In all cases the laugh track corresponded to the realization of the lie by the other characters (and hence the audience as well). Consider the following example:

(22) [Ross and Rachel enter her apartment and turn on the lights.]

ALL: Surprise!

RACHEL: Oh my gosh! Wow! Monica. Oh my god!  
Mom! This is so great!

MRS. GREENE: Happy birthday sweetie.

RACHEL: [to Ross] Wow! You, you...I had no  
idea.

ROSS: Really?

RACHEL: No. I knew. [Laugh track]

So here the laugh track is delayed until the audience realizes that Rachel has told a lie. The humor comes at the moment when the audience realizes that one or more characters has broken the Maxim of Quality, even when the character did so some time before.

#### 4.2.2 UBIQUITY OF IMPOLITENESS

In the universe of situation comedies, if *Friends* may be considered a representative example, impoliteness prevails. The characters in *Friends* are rarely, if ever, polite. This impoliteness takes two forms. The first involves characters saying something where it would otherwise be normal to use some kind of implicature. Consider the following example:

(23) [Dr. Greene enter's Monica's apartment. He is supposed to be in the other apartment.]

PHOEBE: Oh no, you're not supposed to be here. This is the staging area. You should- it's all wrong. You should leave, [Laugh track] ya know? Get out. [Laugh track]

Both of these laughs coincide with Phoebe's FTA's (face-threatening acts, as described by Brown and Levinson, 1987) toward Dr. Greene. Considering their apparent power differential and social distance, she should not be giving him orders (bold on record FTA). Thus this is extremely unsocial behavior.

The second type of impolite behavior occurs when the characters actually use implicature, but to impolite or even hostile ends. In the previous example (16), used as

evidence for the Humor Principle, sarcasm was used to trigger laughter (ridicule). Sarcastic remarks are FTA's, which are, of course impolite. So Dr. Greene's face-threatening remark to Joey represents impolite behavior which employs implicature. Consider this other example:

(24) [Dr. Greene has just entered Monica's apartment for the first time]

DR. GREENE: Oh, you're having a partee [Laugh track- Manner]

MONICA: No, no, not a party. Just a surprise gathering of some people Rachel knows. Um, this is Phoebe and Chandler and Joey.

DR. GREENE: I'll never remember all of that.  
[Laugh track]

In this example, Dr. Greene breaks the Maxim of Quality to basically tell Pheobe, Chandler, and Joey that they are not important enough to remember. Again, considering the relationship they have with his daughter, this is rude.

From the observations, it may be concluded that, in the situation comedy world where rudeness reigns, the Politeness Principle is not common as a motivation for implicature.

#### 4.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Grice offers a useful tool for explaining some of the humorous effects to which language is put. I have shown instances of humor, specifically those found in a situation comedy, to come from implicature involving violations of all four of Grice's Maxims. However, the application of Grice's theory of conversation to humor is limited. It describes only some of the humor that comes from implicature. In the genre of situation comedy, there still exists humor that comes purely from the situations presented, which implicature simply cannot explain. The humor that comes from impoliteness may or may not be adequately explained using this theory. The humor found in impoliteness might simply come from a breaking of social norms and not conversational ones. However, humor that comes from the failure to understand implicature can be described with this theory. Although I found no instances of "failed implicature" humor (the humor that comes from a character failing to understand an implied meaning) in this transcript, I have seen it in other episodes of *Friends* as well as in other genres of comedy. My first inclination is to believe that "failed implicature" humor always causes the audience to laugh at the character who fails to understand the implicature (superiority theory). However, future

research is necessary in order to test this hypothesis.

Also, by approaching the study of humor from the direction of failed implicature, further insights might be made regarding the relationship between humor and successful implicature.

Appendix: Transcript of *Friends* episode, "The One With the Two Parties"

Originally written by Alexa Junge  
Transcribed by Joshua Hodge  
Corrections and additions by Derrick Taberski

Note: the symbol "☺" represents soundings of the laugh track which correspond with humorous stimuli

[Scene: Moondance Diner. Ross, Phoebe, Joey, and Chandler are sitting at the counter, Monica is working. Monica is wearing her costume, including big fake breasts.]

MONICA: So, I'll get candles and my mom's lace tablecloth, and since it's Rachel's birthday, and we want it to be special, I thought I'd poach a salmon.

ALL: Ohhh. ☺

MONICA: What?

ROSS: Question. Why do we always have to have parties where you poach things? ☺

MONICA: You wanna be in charge of the food committee?

ROSS: Question two. Why do we always have to have parties with committees? ☺

JOEY: Really. Why can't we just get some pizzas and get some beers and have fun?

ROSS: Yeah.

PHOEBE: Yeah, I agree. Ya know, I think fancy parties are only fun if you're fancy on the inside and I'm just not sure we are. ☺

MONICA: Alright. If you guys don't want it to be special, fine. You can throw any kind of party you want.

[Joey is staring at Monica's breasts]

MONICA: Joey they're not real. ☺ I start miles beneath the surface of these things, ok, they're fake. ☺ See? [squeezes her breast] honk honk. ☺

CHANDLER: Wow, it's, it's like porno for clowns. ☺

[Scene: Central Perk. Chandler, Ross, Joey, Phoebe, and Monica are planning Rache's birthday party.]

ROSS: I talked to Rachel's sisters, neither of them can come.

MONICA: Ok, um so, I still have to invite Dillon and Emma and Shannon Cooper.

JOEY: Woah, woah, woah, uh, no Shannon Cooper.

PHOEBE: Why not her?

JOEY: Cause she uh, ... she steals stuff. ☺

CHANDLER: Or maybe she doesn't steal stuff and Joey just slept with her and never called her back. ☺

MONICA: Joey that is horrible.

JOEY: Hey I liked her, alright. Maybe, maybe too much. I don't know I guess I just got scared. ☺

PHOEBE: I'm sorry, I didn't know.

JOEY: I didn't think anyone'd buy that, ok. ☺

[Rachel enters]

ROSS: Hi honey, how did it go?

RACHEL: Agh, it was the graduation from hell.

CHANDLER: Ya know, my cousin went to hell on a football scholarship. ☺

RACHEL: Ya know, I mean this is supposed to be a joyous occasion. My sister's graduating from college, nobody thought she would. It's a true testament to what a girl from long island would do for a Celica. ☺

MONICA: So what happened?

RACHEL: My parents happened. All they had to do was sit in



the same stadium, smile proudly, and not talk about the divorce. But nooo, they got into a huge fight in the middle of the commencement address. Bishop Tutu actually had to stop and shush them. ☺ But you know what, you know what the good news is? I get to serve coffee for the next 8 hours. ☺

PHOEBE: Ok, so I guess we don't invite her parents.

MONICA: Well, how 'bout just her mom?

CHANDLER: Why her mom?

MONICA: Cause I already invited her. ☺

PHOEBE: Ooh, ooh, did you ask Stacy Roth?

JOEY: Oh, can't invite her. ☺ She also steals. ☺

[Scene: Monica and Rachel's apartment. Chandler, Joey, Monica, and Phoebe are setting up for the party.]

PHOEBE: Ok, here are the birthday candles. Where's the birthday cake?

MONICA: Ok, we're not having birthday cake, we're having birthday flan. ☺

CHANDLER: Excuse me?

MONICA: It's a traditional Mexican custard dessert.

JOEY: Oh that's nice. Happy birthday Rachel, here's some goo. ☺

[Knock at the door]

MONICA: [answers the door] Dr. Greene. Oh my God it's Rachel's dad. [Chandler lets go of his balloon, which makes a deflating noise] ☺ What're you doing here?

DR. GREENE: What? The father can't drop by to see the daughter on her birthday?

MONICA: No no, the father can, but um, since I am the roommate I can tell you that she's not here and I'll pass along the message, ok? So bye-bye. ☺

DR. GREENE: Ohhh, you're having a parteee. ☺

MONICA: No, no, not a party. Just a surprise gathering of some people Rachel knows. Um, this is Phoebe and Chandler and Joey.

DR. GREENE: I'll never remember all of that. ☺ So uh, what's the deal? Rachel comes home, people pop out and yell stuff, is that it?

CHANDLER: This isn't your first surprise party, is it sir? ☺

[Knock at the door, Monica answers to see Mrs. Greene]

MRS. GREENE: Hi Monica. ☺

[Monica slams the door back shut]

MONICA: Chinese menu guy. Forgot the menus.

CHANDLER: So, basically just a Chinese guy. ☺

JOEY: Uh, hey, Dr. Greene, why don't you come with me? We'll put your jacket on Rachel's bed. ☺

DR. GREENE: Alright, that sounds like a two person job. ☺  
[they walk into Rachel's bedroom]

MRS. GREENE: Well, my goodness, what was that?

MONICA: Sandra, I am so sorry. I thought you were Rachel and we just weren't ready for you yet.

MRS. GREENE: You thought I was Rachel?

CHANDLER: Yes because uh, you look so young.

PHOEBE: And because you're both, you know, white women. ☺

MRS. GREENE: Oh, I missed you kids. Well, should I put my coat in the bedroom?

CHANDLER: NO! ☺ No, I'll take that for ya.

MRS. GREENE: Oh well thank you. Such a gentleman. Thank you.  
[Chandler takes the hot pink coat and grimaces at it] Ahh,

it all looks so nice, so festive, all the balloons...  
[Chandler, remembering that Joey and Dr. Greene are in the bedroom, throws her coat in a cupboard] ☺ The funniest thing happened to me on the way here. I was...[Joey peeks out]

PHOEBE: [cutting Mrs. Greene off] Ha-ha, that's great, ha-ha. ☺ I can't wait to hear the rest of it, ya know, but I really have to go to the bathroom so... Hey, come with me. ☺ Yeah, yeah, it'll be like we're gal pals, ya know? Like at a restaurant. Oh, it'll be fun! Come on! ☺ [they go in the bathroom]

MONICA: Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.

CHANDLER: Ok, think, what would Jack and Chrissy do? ☺

JOEY: [peeks back out] Ok, now that your coat is safely in the bedr-, [sees that the coast is clear] oh, ok we can come back out in the living room. ☺

MONICA: So uh, Joey and Chandler, I, I think it's time that you take Dr. Greene over to your place.

CHANDLER: Uh, yes, absolutely, um. [Chandler jumps over the couch to stand with Joey and Dr. Greene] ☺ Why again?

MONICA: Because that's where the party is you goon. ☺ See this is just the staging area.

JOEY: Right this is staging.

CHANDLER: Yeah, this more than anything else, is the staging area.

JOEY: [as they're walking out, Dr. Greene questioningly gestures at the Happy Birthday sign over the door] This is clearly in the wrong apartment. ☺ [they all walk across the hall]

[Scene: Later on in the hallway between the apartments. Chandler is showing people to the parties.]

CHANDLER: Alright you guys are off to party number one ☺ [ushers 3 guys into Monica's apartment] and you, you are off to party number two ☺ [ushers four women into his apartment. Two guys try to follow and Chandler blocks them

and shoos them off to Monica's apartment] Alright fellas, let's keep it movin', let's keep it movin'. ☺

MONICA: Chandler could you at least send some women to my party? ☺ [buzzer goes off] Alright that's Ross.

CHANDLER: Ok, they're coming, shhh. [Runs into Monica's apartment and grabs one last girl to take to his apartment]☺

RACHEL: Oh, thank you for the wonderful dinner.

ROSS: Thanks for being born.

RACHEL: Oh, thank you for my beautiful earrings, they're perfect. I love you.

ROSS: Oh, now you can exchange them if you want, ok.

RACHEL: Mmn, now I love you even more. ☺

[They kiss while Ross backs her into her apartment and turns on the lights]

ALL: Surprise. ☺

RACHEL: Oh my gosh, wow. Monica. Oh my god. Mom. This is so great.

MRS. GREENE: Happy birthday sweetie.

RACHEL: Wow you, you. I had no idea.

ROSS: Really?

RACHEL: No, I knew. ☺

ROSS: All right.

MONICA: Ok, everybody, there's food and drinks on the table. Go across the hall.

ROSS: What?

RACHEL: What?

MONICA: Right now, Joey and Chandler's, go now.

RACHEL: Why.

MONICA: Just go. ☺

[They walk across the hall]

ALL: Surprise. ☺

DR. GREENE: Happy birthday sweetpea.

RACHEL: Daddy! [they hug and her face shows distress] ☺

[Time lapse. Still at Chandler and Joey's party. Rachel is talking to Chandler and Ross.]

RACHEL: Both of them are here, both of them, both of them are here?

CHANDLER: Well, we could count again. ☺

RACHEL: I can't believe this is happening.

ROSS: You know what, this is ridiculous, ok. This is your birthday, this is your party. I say we just put 'em all together and if they can't deal with it, who cares?

RACHEL: I do.

ROSS: That's who. ☺

CHANDLER: Look, are you gonna be ok?

RACHEL: Well, I have to be, I don't really have a choice, I mean, you know, I could look at the bright side, I get two birthday parties and two birthday cakes.

CHANDLER: Well, actually just one birthday flan. ☺

RACHEL: What?

CHANDLER: It's a traditional Mexican custard dessert...Look talk to Monica, she's on the food committee. ☺

[Time lapse. Chandler runs out of the bathroom.]

CHANDLER: Joey, Joey. Hey, some girl just walked up to me

and said, 'I want you Dennis,' and stuck her tongue down my throat.☺ I love this party. ☺

JOEY: Quick volleyball question.

CHANDLER: Volleyball.

JOEY: Yeah, we set up a court in your room. Uh, you didn't really like that grey lamp, did you? ☺

CHANDLER: Joey, a woman just stuck her tongue down my throat, I'm not even listening to you. ☺

GIRL'S VOICE: Dennis.

CHANDLER: Ok, that's me. [runs back] ☺

RACHEL: Listen honey, can you keep dad occupied? I'm gonna go talk to mom for a while.

ROSS: Ok. Do you have any ideas for any openers?

RACHEL: Uh, let's just stay clear of 'I'm the guy that's doing your daughter' and you should be ok. ☺

[Back at Monica's party]

MONICA: Ok people, I want you to take a piece of paper, here you go, and write down your most embarrassing memory. ☺ Oh, and I do ask that when you're not using the markers, you put the caps back on them because they will dry out. ☺

[Back in Chandler and Joey's party]

ROSS: Hi Dr. Greene. So, uh, how's everything in the uh, vascular surgery....game? ☺

DR. GREENE: It's not a game Ross, a woman died on my table today.

ROSS: I'm sorry. See that's the good thing about my job. All the dinosaurs on my table are already dead. ☺

[Back in Monica's party]

MONICA: Listen you guys, um, I don't mean to be a pain about

this but, um, I've noticed that some of you are just placing them on. You wanna push the caps ☺ until you hear them click. [she demonstrates, Gunther starts to walk to the door] ☺ Gunther, where are you going?

GUNTHER: I um, was sorta thinking about maybe...

MONICA: No. No you can't go. No this is fun. Come on we're just getting started. Here, here's your marker. ☺

PHOEBE: Listen if you wanna go, just go.

GUNTER: No, she'll yell at me again. ☺

PHOEBE: [whispering] Alright, I can get you out. ☺

GUNTHER: What?

PHOEBE: Shh. In a minute, I'm gonna create a diversion. ☺ When I do, walk quickly to the door and don't look back. ☺

[Back at Chandler and Joey's party]

DR. GREENE: I think I need a drink.

ROSS: Oh, I, I'll get it for ya. Whadaya want?

DR. GREENE: Scotch.

ROSS: Scotch. Alright, I'll be back in 10 seconds with your scotch on the rocks in a glass.

DR. GREENE: Neat.

ROSS: Cool. ☺

DR. GREENE: No no no no no no. 'Neat', as in 'no rocks.'

ROSS: I know. ☺

[Back at Monica's party]

MRS. GREENE: Oh hello Ross, where have you been?

ROSS: Hi. Uh, I have been in the bathroom. ☺ Stay clear of the salmon mousse. ☺

MRS. GREENE: Oh, scotch neat. Ya know, that's Rachel's father's drink.

ROSS: Oh, mine too. Isn't that neat? ☺, scotch neat. ☺ Would you excuse me? ☺ [walks out in the hallway; Dr. Greene is walking out of Chandler and Joey's apartment] Hey, hey, where you uh, sneakin' off to mister? ☺

DR. GREENE: I'm getting my cigarettes out of my jacket.

ROSS: No. no.

DR. GREENE: Whaddaya mean no?

ROSS: No, um, see 'cause that, that is, that is the staging area. If you go in there, it'll ruin the whole illusion of the party. ☺ Yeah, I think you take your scotch back in there and I will get your cigarettes for you sir.

DR. GREENE: Get my glasses too.

ROSS: All righty roo. ☺ [closes the door] What a great moment to say that for the first time. ☺ [goes to get the cigarettes and glasses]

MONICA: Ok, the first person's most embarrassing memory is, 'Monica, your party sucks.' ☺ Very funny. ☺

PHOEBE: Oh no, ooh, ooh, did somebody forget to use a coaster?

MONICA: What? ☺ [she runs over to where Phoebe is, Phoebe signals for Gunther to go and he leaves] I don't see anything.

PHOEBE: Great, I'm seeing water rings again. ☺

MRS. GREENE: Ross, whose glasses are those?

ROSS: Mine. ☺

MRS. GREENE: You wear bi-focals?

ROSS: Um-hmm. [puts them on and looks momentarily disoriented] I have a condition, apparently, that I require ☺ two different sets of focals. ☺



MRS. GREENE: Did you know my husband has glasses just like that?

ROSS: No.

RACHEL: Well those are very popular frames.

ROSS: Neil Sedaka wears them. ☺

GUY: [in a conspiratorial whisper to Phoebe] I hear you can get people out of here. ☺

MRS. GREENE: Rachel, you didn't tell me your boyfriend smoked.

RACHEL: Oh yeah, like a chimney.

ROSS: Ohh, big smoker. [while he says this, he inexpertly packs the cigarettes and flings one on Mrs. Greene. ☺ It falls to the floor. He retrieves it and puts it awkwardly in his mouth, where it hangs and looks out of place.] Big big smoker. In fact I'm gonna go out into the hallway and fire up this bad boy. ☺ [He walks into the hall wearing the glasses. The cigarette is in his mouth. He comes face to face with Dr. Greene] ☺

DR. GREENE: Are you wearing my glasses?

ROSS: Yes. ☺ [pulls them off and hands them to Dr. Greene] I was just warming up the earpieces for you. ☺

DR. GREENE: Thank you. Is that one of my cigarettes?

ROSS: [pulls off the cigarette clinging to his upper lip and hands it to Dr. Greene] ☺ Yeah, yes it is, I was just moistening the tip. ☺

[Back in Monica's party. Phoebe is talking to a guy and two girls at the party.]

PHOEBE: Ok, ok, she's taking the trash out so I can get you out of here but it has to be now, she'll be back any minute.

GIRL 1: What about my friend Victor?

PHOEBE: No, only the three of you, any more than that and she'll get suspicious. ☺

GIRL 1: Alright, let me just get my coat.

PHOEBE: There isn't time. ☺ You must leave everything. They'll take care of you next door. ☺

GIRL 1: Is it true they have beer?

PHOEBE: Everything you've heard is true. ☺

[Back at Chandler and Joey's party. Everyone is dancing and having fun.]

MONICA: Could you guys please try to keep it down, we're trying to start a Boggle tournament. ☺

[Chandler and Joey stop dancing and laugh at her] ☺

MONICA: You, and you, you're supposed to be at my party. And Gunther! [he stops dancing and looks abashed] ☺ What are you doing here?

GUNTHER: Um [he starts dancing again] ☺

PHOEBE: [enters with the three people she got out] Ok, welcome to the fu-oh. ☺

MONICA: Phoebe.

PHOEBE: Alright, I'm sorry but these people needed me. Ya know they work hard all week. It's Saturday night. They deserve to have a little fun. [to the three people] Go. ☺

MONICA: Ya know, my party is fun. I mean, maybe it's a little quieter, less obvious sorta fun but, you know, if people would just give it a chance... [volleyball hits her in the head from behind] ☺

[Back at Monica's party]

RACHEL: You want me to see a therapist?

MRS. GREENE: Sweetheart, you obviously have a problem. You've chosen a boyfriend exactly like your father. ☺

RACHEL: Ok mom, you know what, fine, I'll make an appointment ok, but you know what, right now, I gotta go, I

gotta go do a thing.

[Chandler and Joey's party]

DR. GREENE: Did you know your mother spent \$1200 dollars on bonsai trees? ☺ I felt like Gulliver around that place. ☺

RACHEL: Daddy, daddy, you know what, I really wanna hear more about this, I really do, but I just have, I just have to do uh some, uh some stuff.

[Monica's party]

MRS. GREENE: You work and you work and you work at a marriage but all he cares about is his stupid boat.

[Chandler and Joey's party]

DR. GREENE: You work and you work and you work on a boat...☺

MRS. GREENE: He always ridiculed my pottery classes...

DR. GREENE: ...and you sand it and you ☺ varnish it...

MRS. GREENE: ...but when all is said and done, he still drinks out of the mugs. ☺

DR. GREENE: ...and her yoga and her Bridges of Madison County...

MRS. GREENE: ...the scotch, the cigarettes...

DR. GREENE: ...and the bonsai's and the chiuaua...

MRS. GREENE: ...I may have only been in therapy for three weeks now dear but...

DR. GREENE: ...what the hell does she want with half a boat?...

[Scene: The hallway after the party. Rachel is sitting there.]

CHANDLER: [running out of his apartment after a girl] Ok, ok, you can be shirts and I'll be skins. ☺ I'll be skins! [sits down beside Rachel] Hey, how you holdin' up there,

tiger? ☺ Oh, sorry, when my parents were getting divorced I got a lot of tigers. ☺ Got a lot of champs, chiefs, sports, I even got a governor. ☺

RACHEL: This is it, isn't it? I mean, this is what my life is gonna be like. My mom there, my dad there. Thanksgiving, Christmas. She gets the house, he's in some condo my sister's gonna decorate with wicker. ☺ Oh, Chandler how did you get through this?

CHANDLER: Well, I relied on a carefully regimented program of denial and, and wetting the bed. ☺

RACHEL: Ya know, I just, so weird. I mean I was in there just listening to them bitch about each other and all I kept thinking about was the fourth of July.

CHANDLER: Because it reminded you of the way our forefathers used to bitch at each other? ☺

RACHEL: It's just this thing. Every year we would go out on my dad's boat and watch the fireworks. Mom always hated it because the ocean air made her hair all big. My sister Jill would be throwing up over the side and my dad would be upset because nobody was helping and then when we did help he would scream at us for doing it wrong. But then when the fireworks started, everybody just shut up, you know, and it'd get really cold, and we would all just sort of smoosh under this one blanket. It never occurred to anybody to bring another one. And now uh...

CHANDLER: Yeah I, I know. [Hugs her. Ross walks out and Chandler puts her in his arms.] ☺

[Scene: Monica's party. She is seeing off the last of the guests.]

MONICA: Ok, thanks for coming, I hope you guys had fun.

MRS. GREENE: Alright, Monica dear, I'm gonna hit the road. Now I've left my 10 verbs on the table. ☺ And you be sure and send me that finished poem.

MONICA: Ok will do. So glad you came.

MRS. GREENE: I think I saw Rachel out in the hall.

MONICA: Ok, let me go check. [to Rachel] Your mom want's to say goodbye.

RACHEL: Oh ok.

MRS. GREENE: Happy birthday sweetie.

RACHEL: Ok.

[DR. Greene opens the door to Chandler and Joeys apartment. Ross sees him and runs to the door forcing him back in then holds onto the door knob.] ☺

JOEY: Ahh, you drive safe.

MRS. GREENE: Ross, what're you doing.

ROSS: I'm getting ready for the water skiing. ☺ [Dr. Greene opens the door which pulls Ross in] [looking up at Dr. Greene] How are you? ☺

CHANDLER: Well, uh, Dr. Greene, where are you going?

DR. GREENE: To get my coat.

GUYS: No no no. ☺

DR. GREENE: Alright, alright, I can get my own coat.

[the guys form a wall between Dr. and Mrs. Green and dance across the hall as he walks across] ☺

CHANDLER: Sorry, we're on a major flan high. ☺

PHOEBE: Oh no, you're not supposed to be here. This is the staging area, you should, it's all wrong, you should leave ☺ ya know, get out! ☺ [opens the door, the guys are right there] ☺ Or perhaps you'd like a creme d'menthe, uh..☺

DR. GREENE: I have to be heading toward my chateau, thank you.

PHOEBE: Oh all right, then I guess we're going back into the hallway again.

JOEY: Thanks for coming Mrs. Greene. [grabs her and kisses her to distract her. ☺ She goes limp in his arms. Dr.

Greene leaves.] Well, ok, you take care. ☺

MRS. GREENE: Oh, you kids [she caresses his face and chest]  
☺ Well [breathless] ☺ this is the best party I've been to  
in years.

MONICA: Thank you! ☺

[Epilogue: Monica and Rachel's apartment. Close up of the  
flan on the table with birthday candles.]

MONICA: Ok everybody, it's time for flan.

CHANDLER: Yup, get ready for the gelatinous fun. ☺

JOEY: Kinda looks like that stuff you get when you get a bad  
infection. ☺

MONICA: Ok, that's enough.

PHOEBE: Ok Rachel, make a special flan wish. ☺

RACHEL: Ok, I've got one. [blows out the candles. Somebody  
calls out 'heads up' and the volleyball lands in the flan]  
☺ Wow, those things almost never come true. ☺

END

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