

"THE ANALOGY BUTLER"

By Rob Biesenbach

Characters

Stewart - 20s/30s, a bit insecure, naïve

Sally - 20s/30s, more practical, grounded

Alfred, the Analogy Butler - older, distinguished, a butler

(STEWART and SALLY, seated at a coffee shop. ALFRED stands discreetly behind Stewart. At lights up, Stewart is laughing, Sally is gamely humoring him.)

SALLY

Oh, that's a good one! My father would like that one.

STEWART

Well, there's more where that came from!

SALLY

Oh, I know! (Pause, she sighs) I really regret not being closer to my parents.

STEWART

This coffee sure is tasty ...

SALLY

Do you have a good relationship with yours?

STEWART

So much better than Starbucks! Why, Starbucks coffee is like ...

(Alfred steps forward, whispers in Stewart's ear. Stewart nods, Alfred steps back.)

... drinking water from a pig trough!

(He is amused. She humors him, slightly and politely.)

SALLY

Yes ... right ...

(A pause)

STEWART

I hate Starbucks.

SALLY

Yes, I know. (Pause) So your parents were just in town, weren't they?

STEWART

For two days, yes.

SALLY

That's not very long.

STEWART

Well, you know what they say about houseguests, don't you?

SALLY

No, I'm sure I don't ...

STEWART

Houseguests are like ...

(Alfred steps forward, whispers in his ear, steps back.)

... Houseguests are like fish. After two days, they start to smell!

SALLY

Uh-huh ...

STEWART

(Chuckling to himself) You know, because the fish, after -

SALLY

Yes. I get it.

(Pause as they sip their coffee.)

I'm so not looking forward to Monday.

STEWART

Oh?

SALLY

It's performance review time, and I just know I'm gonna get screwed. My boss hates me.

STEWART

(In a spontaneous glimmer of humanness) She doesn't hate you, she just feels threatened by your intelligence.

SALLY

(Startled by the genuineness of the moment) Really? I never thought of it that way. So you think -

STEWART

(Returning to form) Don't get me started on bosses. Bosses are like -

(Alfred starts to step forward.)

SALLY

STEWART! COULD YOU JUST NOT -

STEWART

What?

SALLY

Could we just ... have one evening, one moment, to ourselves? Without him along?

STEWART

Sally, we've been all through this.

SALLY

I know but ...

STEWART

I don't go anywhere without my analogy butler.

SALLY

But -

STEWART

Really, Sally, before Alfred came along, my conversations were dull and lifeless. But my Analogy Butler polishes up my prose ... spit-shines my syntax ... makes my rhetoric sparkle! Why, a conversation without an analogy is like ...

SALLY

A day without sunshine?

(Stewart and Alfred share a chuckle.)

STEWART

Oh, please, I think we can do a little better than that. Alfred?

(Alfred leans in, whispers.)

(Proudly) It's like a car without wheels.

SALLY

Oh.

STEWART

(Proudly) Thank you.

SALLY

You know, Stewart, that analogy wasn't terribly ... original.

STEWART

What do you mean? Of course it was. It was very -

SALLY

I just don't see how "a car without wheels" is any better than "a day without sunshine." And I don't understand why you need to hire someone to come up with, well ... glorified clichés.

(Alfred steps forward.)

ALFRED

THEY ARE NOT CLICHES!

STEWART

Alfred, please!

(Alfred steps back, to other side of stage.)

Sally, they're not clichés.

SALLY

Look, Stewart, we've been going out for, what, six weeks now? And it's been great. It's been -

STEWART

(Eagerly) It's been like -

SALLY

STEWART!

STEWART

(Chastened) Right.

SALLY

It's been really ... nice. And up to now, I've been a pretty good sport about having this ... this third wheel along on all our dates. But I think he's really starting to ... impede things ...

STEWART

Sally, I'd be lost without Alfred.

SALLY

No, you wouldn't. You'd be able to grow ... grow beyond all these ... superficial, hackneyed observations.

STEWART

What you're asking is ...

SALLY

I want intimacy, Stewart. I want something real. I know you're capable of -

STEWART

No, no I'm not. Really, Sally, without Alfred I'd be ... I'd be ...

(Stewart looks over shoulder,
expecting Alfred, but he's not there.)

Excuse me.

(To Sally's exasperation, Stewart gets
up to confer with Alfred.)

Help me out here, okay?

ALFRED

(Annoyed, perfunctory) You'd be like a bird without wings.

STEWART

That's a little trite isn't it?

ALFRED

Like a nucleotide without triphosphates.

STEWART

Um ... too technical.

ALFRED

Like a Romulan warship without its cloaking device.

STEWART

Don't you mean Klingon?

ALFRED

The Klingons stole it from the Romulans.

STEWART

Oh, right. Anyway, too nerdy.

ALFRED

Like a Mexican with just one job?

STEWART

Isn't that kind of racist?

ALFRED

Only a little.

(Stewart signals with a "gimme"
gesture.)

Like a hunter -

SALLY

STEWART, THIS IS RIDICULOUS! You don't need him. You're clever enough
on your own.

STEWART
No Sally, I'm not, I'm -
(Alfred whispers in his ear.)
Dumb as a board. (To Alfred) Hey!

SALLY
Stewart -

STEWART
Hold on, Sally.

SALLY
I've had it! Stewart, it's either him or me!

STEWART
Wait! Sally, don't! I need you ... like -
(Alfred whispers in his ear.)
... like your grandmother's favorite dildo!

STEWART
(To Alfred) Hey, come on, now!

SALLY
That's it, I'm outta here!
(She starts to leave.)

STEWART
Please, Sally, wait! Alfred, you're fired!
(She stops. Long pause.)
Sally?

SALLY
No, Stewart, it's too late.

STEWART
But, Sally, I LOVE YOU! (Pause) Like ...
(He turns to Alfred, who turns away.
Stewart struggles.)
... like ... I've never loved anyone before. (Pause) I'm sorry. That
wasn't very ... pithy.
(She goes to him, kisses him.)

SALLY

It was perfect.

STEWART

Really? Look, honey, give me a second here okay?

SALLY

Sure.

(She steps aside, Stewart joins Alfred.)

ALFRED

I'm sorry, sir. I don't know what came over me. Rest assured, it will not happen again.

STEWART

I know it won't, Alfred. Because I am cutting you loose.

ALFRED

That's not necessary, sir. Believe me, I understand the situation. We can make ... adjustments ...

STEWART

I don't think so, Alfred.

ALFRED

I could be of service to you both ... like a 2-for-1 special, as it were!

(Stewart shakes head)

We could cut down, perhaps. Say, alternating days ...

(Stewart signals no)

I'll work for food.

STEWART

Alfred, it's over.

(Pause)

ALFRED

With all due respect, sir, you're not ready.

STEWART

Yes, Alfred, I am. I'm as ready as ...

ALFRED/STEWART

As a robin is ready for spring.

ALFRED

Very good, sir. (Pause) Perhaps you're right ... but ... what about me? What will I do? Where will I go?

STEWART

Don't worry, Alfred. There are plenty of people in need of your services. The vapid, the slow-witted, the dull ...

ALFRED

I suppose ...

STEWART

Try Lincoln Park.

ALFRED

Yes, sir. (Pause) This is farewell, then?

STEWART

I'm afraid so. (Pause) Alfred, thank you. I'll miss you ... like -

ALFRED

Please, sir. May I? For ... old time's sake?

STEWART

Of course.

ALFRED

Like an amputee misses his limb.

STEWART

Yes, like an amputee misses his limb. Very good. Well done, old friend.

(They shake hands, Alfred departs.
Sally joins Stewart.)

Well ... it's just you and me then.

SALLY

Can you handle it?

STEWART

Oh, sure. It'll be like -

(She puts a finger to his lips.)

It'll be ... great.

(They smile, return to their seats.)

Just not very clever, I'm afraid.

SALLY

Oh, we'll manage.

(Silence as they sip their coffee.)

STEWART

So ... this ... thing with your parents. The distance? Was it always like that?

SALLY

I don't know when it started. Things were fine when I was a kid.

STEWART

But it's different when you get to be an adult ...

SALLY

Exactly, so I can't really pinpoint a time ...

STEWART

It just sort of snuck up on you?

SALLY

Yeah. Sometimes I wish it could be like it was ...

(Blackout)