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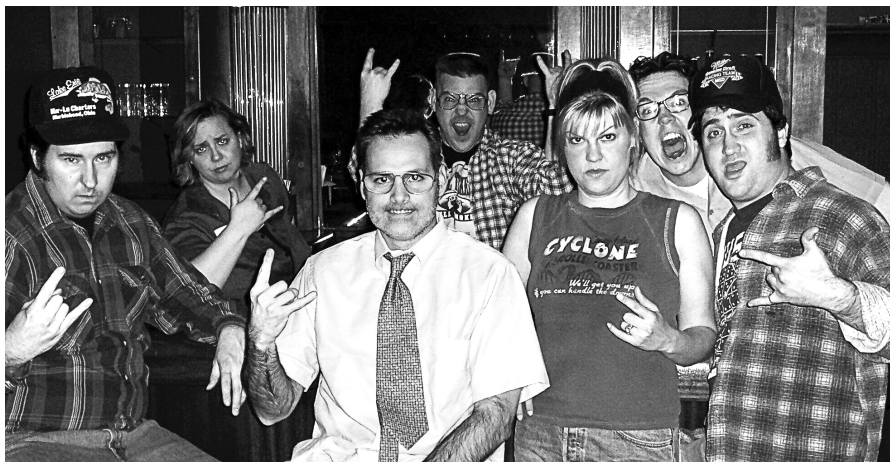
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“The play hums with the kind of quirky, blue-collar, sports-loving bravado that made *Bleacher Bums* a Chicago classic.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

# Losers Bracket

A comedy by Clay Sander and Nate Sander



# Losers Bracket

**“Chock-full of vigor and belly laughs.”**

—*Chicago Tribune*

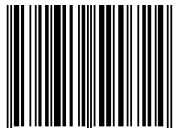
**“A gut-busting comedy with no-nonsense doses of heart. ... Elements of the Coen Brothers’ twisted sense of truth mingle with the laidback lunacy of Mayberry.”**

—*ChicagoTheatre.com*

**Comedy. By Clay Sander and Nate Sander.** *Cast: 5 to 6m., 2 to 4w.* “Tiny” Willits and Ethan Banks spend their free time at Boo’s Tavern in the working-class community of Downs Moor. Boo’s co-owner is a loudmouth named Gus “Hitch” Bigwood. Hitch has a limp due to a forklift accident 10 years earlier, which got him a massive settlement, a large part of which he spent on an antique automobile. Unbeknownst to Ethan and Tiny, Hitch has been faking his limp for the past decade to avoid paying back the insurance company for the fraudulent claim. Trying to gather enough money to leave town and live anonymously, Hitch and Terry Edwards (the town’s sheriff) hatch a scheme to “fake-steal” Hitch’s antique automobile and collect the insurance payoff. When Ethan and Tony find out Hitch is faking his limp, he is forced to let them in on the plans. The plan goes perfectly and all are satisfied with the results ... until Tiny and Ethan find out Hitch lied about the amount of the payoff. *Two int. and three ext. sets. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: LL3.*

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# Losers Bracket

By

CLAY SANDER and NATE SANDER



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*Losers Bracket* received its premiere production at WNEP Theater in Chicago, directed by Jen Ellison, in September 2003 with the following cast:

Sheriff Edwards.....	Patrick Brennan
Ethan .....	David Goss
Hitch.....	Don Hall
Boo.....	Rebecca Langguth
Tiny .....	Michael Powers
Trisha (Swing).....	Kathryn Sander
Rick (Swing).....	James Yeater

# Losers Bracket

## CHARACTERS

**HITCH BIGWOOD (m):** Loud and obnoxious bar owner. Can be any age over 40. His motormouth never stops dishing out advice, ridicule or anecdotes with a small-town Midwestern meter. The center of attention when he is in a room. A know-it-all who walks with a noticeable limp in his left leg.

**ETHAN BANKS (m):** Blue-collar bar regular in his mid 30s. Scruffy, recently divorced, thin with a bit of a paunch. Beaten down by life, nothing much excites him anymore.

**TINY WILLITS (m):** Ethan's friend. Big guy, overweight, mid 30s, with three days of stubble. He used to be a great high-school athlete, but too many beers and hot dogs have taken their toll.

**SHERIFF TERRY EDWARDS (m):** Downs Moor ineffectual sheriff. He is the same age as Tiny and Ethan. Slight build, nerdy and in a bit over his head with the job. Tends to not arrest a lot of people due to the paperwork involved and because he knows everyone.

**BOO KOONTZ (w):** Co-owner and manager of Boo's Tavern. Rough around the edges but is everybody's friend.

**SWING FEMALE (w):** Trisha\*, Stephanie, Exec Anne, Madge.

**SWING MALE (m):** Rick Potts\*, Neil, Exec Tom, Lance Mangler\*.

\*These characters may be separately cast.

**TIME AND PLACE:** Small town of Downs Moor. Unspecified state. Midwest. Present day.



# Losers Bracket

## ACT I

### Scene 1

AT RISE: *Inside Boo's Tavern. Afternoon.*

*(Lights up. Music starts. Abruptly, a ruckus starts from backstage [back patio] as the softball team is cooking out. BOO KOONTZ comes in and starts to pop beer bottles to take back out. HITCH BIGWOOD and ETHAN BANKS, in softball uniform, follow. HITCH walks with a noticeable hitch in his step.)*

HITCH. Where the hell is Tiny?

ETHAN. I don't know if he'll show up.

HITCH. I bought 10 extra patties for his fat ass. He better show.

BOO. He looked pretty upset.

HITCH. He should look upset! Four walks in a row, then, he serves up a waist high pitch to Jurgensen. He gave them the game.

BOO. Just lay off him when he gets here, OK?

HITCH. Hate to break it to you, Ethan, but we have to take on the Bootlegger, again, in the losers bracket next week. If Tiny had gotten us out of that inning, we'd play on Saturday instead of Sunday. Now, we ain't gunna have Beemer or Steve on account of them working. Then, if we happen to get past the Bootlegger, we have to play the Shot Tower at

3 o'clock. Then, we have to beat them twice because they beat Sticky's and it's double elimination! And, if we win the first one at three, then, we gotta play again at 7. Then, YOU can't be there 'cause you gotta work graveyard shift!

ETHAN. The plant's laying us off anyway. I'm not going to show up to work if we have a game.

HITCH. You better show up! They'll hold your last check, E.

ETHAN. How do you know that?

HITCH. Happened to Bill Tripp last year. Happened to Chick and Ray, too. They skipped out too early and the plant didn't give 'em a severance check.

ETHAN. Maybe ... Just back off when Tiny gets here.

HITCH. Scout's honor.

*(TINY WILLITS enters.)*

HITCH. Well, if it isn't Nolan fuckin' Ryan!

TINY. Eat me.

HITCH. What in the hell was that out there, Tiny?

TINY. I don't want to talk about it.

HITCH. I'm just saying that maybe it's time I put in Tucker to give you a rest.

TINY. Rest?! It's fucking softball, Hitch. Why don't YOU give it a rest while you're at it?

HITCH. Every time you face Jurgensen, you get so god-damned nervous. You start shaking like a dog shittin' fish-hooks.

BOO. What do you want on your burger, Tiny?

TINY. I ain't eatin'.

HITCH. Oh. It's the all-booze and smokes diet, is it? I bought extra patties. You gotta eat.

BOO. Leave him alone, Hitch.

HITCH. Boo, stay out of this. Tiny, I'm putting two patties on for you. A'right? *(Beat.)* Don't worry about the game. Happens to everybody from time to time. Shit, it happened to Buck Stamp.

TINY. Not this again. *(Rolls eyes.)*

HITCH. We had me, Jiggs, Hooch, Cub, Bloomer, Boobs, Duck, Crud, Hog-Jowels, Skinny and Slobber Hansen. Talk about a lineup! Eighteen and I that year. Guess who beat us for the championship?

ETHAN. Hitch, I kn—

HITCH. The Bootlegger! And guess who hit the dinger in the seventh to beat us that year?! *(Short pause.)* Jurgensen! Judas Priest, Tiny! He's 55 years old now!

TINY. Please, shut up.

HITCH. Every year they win the Downs Moor city championship. I guess that's not gunna change. So, go ahead and sit there like a bloated wood tick and sip your beer like a loser.

TINY. Just go outside, will ya?

HITCH. Boo, you're on suicide watch until I get back. *(He exits backstage.)*

TINY. Boo, I'm gunna kill him.

BOO. I don't know why you let him get to you.

TINY. He sits on the bench and criticizes me constantly. Did you hear what he said in the third inning when I popped out?

ETHAN. Nah.

TINY *(mocking)*. "Try to get more fat into it, next time, Tiny."

ETHAN. Forget it, OK. Let's go out to the deck?

TINY. You realize we have to play Bootlegger, again, in the losers bracket. Then, if we win that one, we have—

ETHAN. I know. Hitch told me the whole scenario. Don't worry about it. *(Pauses.)* Do you just wanna hang out in the bar?

TINY. Can we?

*(TINY goes back behind bar and helps himself to a bottle. HITCH re-enters with burgers.)*

HITCH. Who wanted one with cheese?

ETHAN. I did.

HITCH. Tiny? *(Points to two burgers.)*

TINY *(long thought)*. S'pose so.

HITCH. Boo, call Ripley's! Tiny's eatin'!

TINY *(finally laughing)*. You are such a prick.

HITCH. Thank you. *(Bows good-naturedly.)*

*(TINY takes the two burgers and puts them on a plate with buns and starts fixing them for himself.)*

BOO. You gunna be OK, Tiny?

TINY *(depressed)*. I'm just out of it, guys. You can forget the wedding now. Trisha ain't gonna give me the time of day with me getting laid off again.

HITCH. You still going on about Trisha. Shit, it's been four months. She's already let Jock-strap into your place.

TINY. I know. I know. Dammit. We're going to be unemployed, again.

ETHAN. This really sucks. I just signed this car loan.

HITCH. Holy shit, E. You went and got that Ford?

ETHAN. Don't start.

HITCH. Vern Deters must see you walk onto his showroom with a big "Sucker" stamped on your forehead. Those Fords are oil guzzlers, E. I keep telling you, but, you don't listen.

ETHAN. It's a good car.

HITCH. By the way ... how the hell did YOU get a car loan?

ETHAN. I needed a car and Vern Deters let me work out a loan.

HITCH. How much interest is Deters socking you for?

ETHAN. None of your business.

HITCH. I bet it's over prime.

ETHAN. Shut up.

HITCH. Isn't it.

ETHAN (*reluctantly*). Yes, OK?

HITCH. What a surprise. Vern Deters rapes another customer!

Fuckin' loan shark. He got me 10 years ago and I never went back. Remember that Taurus?

ETHAN. Yeah, but—

HITCH. One year for that heap of metal to go into the crapper.

Brakes ... tires ... fan belt ... spark plugs ... they all went.

TINY. Jesus.

HITCH. Timing belt ... oil gauge ... radiator ... fuel pump ...

Shit, the windshield wipers fucked up on it! ... Two days after the warranty expired, too. I'm on my way to visit my sister in Minnesota and I get the oil light.

ETHAN. Thanks for the reassurance. That really helps a lot.

TINY. It's a nice car, Hitch. It's got good pickup.

HITCH. E ... you took TINY to the lot with you?

ETHAN. If I'd taken you, Hitch, you'd go on and on about the mileage per gallon and the—

HITCH. Yeah, and you'd get what you payed for! I'm not saying I'm an expert, but—

ETHAN. That is EXACTLY what you're saying. Just because you bought some piece of shit relic of a car doesn't mea—

HITCH. That piece of shit relic is none other than a 1934 Duesenberg Model J convertible coupe with A.H. Walker coachwork!

ETHAN. Oh. I forgot ... impressive.

TINY. Nothing like making us feel better after getting laid off. Must be real tough living off a settlement.

*(HITCH switches to maudlin on a dime.)*

HITCH. Tiny, I would give all the money back to be able to walk normally. If I could turn back the clock and not drive that forklift, I would. But, that's not happening.

TINY. You're rich because you couldn't drive a tractor. End of story. Boo-fucking-hoo.

HITCH. You're the one sobbing in your beer! "Oh, poor me, I blew the game. Poor me, I'm getting laid off. Poor me, I'm not eating."

TINY. You just don't know when to let up.

BOO. Hitch. *(Gives him a look, then to TINY.)* You tell Trisha about the layoffs, yet?

TINY. What could I possibly gain by telling her?

ETHAN. Just tell her.

TINY. Did you just tell your ex when you got laid off?

ETHAN. Yeah.

TINY. And, you're divorced. Big surprise there.

HITCH. Tiny scores.

ETHAN. Yeah, but, at least I knew where I stood.

TINY. Yeah, you stood in divorce court.

HITCH. Two in a row!

ETHAN. Hitch ... please. It wasn't that clever.

HITCH *(shrugs)*. Heh.

TINY (*looks at watch*). Shit ... I'll be right back. I have to go get some stuff out of the house. Give me a ride home in the Ford, will ya?

ETHAN. Sure.

BOO. Why you gotta go now?

TINY. Trish doesn't want to be there when I pick up my stuff. It's just "too sad."

BOO. I don't know why Rick moved in. Doesn't Downs Moor High School pay that well?

TINY (*simmering*). I don't know, Boo, but, thank you for speaking his name, again.

BOO. I just can't figure why the high-school principal can't get his own place.

TINY. I gotta get over to the house before they get home.

BOO. I'm going back out. You coming?

HITCH. S'pose. Hey, Tiny, when you bring your stuff up to the apartment, don't take it through the bar. Back steps, please?

TINY. OK. Do you want that deposit check?

HITCH. Boo?

BOO. Well ... come on. It's Tiny.

HITCH. Exactly.

BOO. If something goes wrong, we'll make it up somewhere.

TINY. Is that OK, Hitch?

HITCH. She's the boss.

TINY. Thanks a lot.

BOO. I still need the rent.

TINY. I'll get it to you tomorrow.

BOO. We'll see you two later.

*(TINY and ETHAN leave.)*

HITCH. I don't know why you let him move up there. You're renting it to him for next to nothing.

BOO. We're not going over this again.

HITCH. I'm just saying—

BOO. Why do you want to stick it to these guys all the time?

HITCH. Gabby Thomson rented that for \$300 a month. You got Tiny in there for a hundred?

BOO. One fifty ... You know, you're the owner. I don't know why you left it up to me. You didn't have to agree to it.

HITCH. This is only temporary, right?

BOO (*exasperated*). Give the guy a break, will you?

HITCH. OK, OK. Sorry.

BOO (*pause*). Come on, coach. Let's go talk to the team.

HITCH (*laughs a little*). Damn.

*(They leave. Lights down.)*

## Scene 2

*(Lights up. Inside LANCE MANGLER's insurance office. Day. LANCE is on the phone.)*

LANCE (*into phone*). Sure. We can arrange that. Your premium will not be affected. (*Pause.*) Do you have the appraisal, then? (*Pause.*) That's wonderful ... Oh, you're too much! (*Pause.*) Great. I'll stop by to take a peek at the car later on, but, I don't see a problem with what you're asking. (*Pause.*) That sounds fine. (*Hangs up. Pauses. Dials.*) Bonnie? I'm going to be late. I need to head over to Hitch Bigwood's place to talk to him. (*Pause, she is clearly upset.*) Trust me, honey. This is worth it. (*Pauses and strains ear.*) I won't be long. I'll tell you about it tonight. Trust me, please? (*Pause.*) Bye.



*(Lights down.)*

### **Scene 3**

*(Lights up. Outside TINY's door. Day. TINY is hauling boxes out of an apartment. He leaves the keys under a mat. As he is leaving, RICK POTTS and TRISHA arrive at the front door. They exchange terribly uncomfortable looks as they pass each other through the cramped doorway. TINY looks dejected as he continues out.*

*Lights down.)*