SCREENPLAY ON WORDS

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Editor's Note: This is the script for a standup routine the author performs in comedy clubs around Boston.

You may recently have noticed that a lot of movies that have played at theaters recently are based upon books. I've been waiting for the longest time, though, for my favorite book to make its way up onto the silver screen. As to making this book into a movie, l think it's long overdue, especially since l borrowed the book from the library two months ago and have not yet returned it. But that's fine -- and a pretty hefty one at that. Anyway, being a filmmaker, I decided to seize this opportunity and go ahead and make the movie myself.

The book that my movie is based upon is the dictionary. lt's true -- the dictionary really is my favorite book. lt's well-written, it has many interesting characters, and it's suspenseful. I guess I do have to admit that the first couple of chapters are kind of slow, but once you get into it, I think you'll find that it's truly a spellbinding book.

Anyway, my movie is about this word that travels back in time to try to prevent another word from coming into usage in the future. It's entitled The Terminologist and stars Arnold Schwarzenegger in the title role. l know what you must be thinking: why in the world would I cast Arnold Schwarzenegger as a word? Well, since he's a body builder, he does have definition. Another reason is that his features are so pronounced. l'm sure that when the film is released, some critics will complain that he was typecast or that he has only marginal talent. Well, let me tell you something -- Arnold's performance is superlative, and it really pumps this film up.

The first scene takes place in a library where a battle of major proportions occurs between Schwarzenegger and the head librarian. The librarian, with whom Schwarzenegger is in strong apposition throughout the entire movie, just so happens to have also come from the future -- in order to protect the word.

A word of warning: this movie is not for the squeamish. Take my word...please. It is a violent movie. When l wrote the screenplay, l threw everything in the book at Schwarzenegger. I don't mean to get too graphic, but not only is he italicized, underlined, and hyphenated, but he is also parenthesized. bracketed, and abbreviated. And in one scene, he is actually drawn and quoted.

In another scene, Schwarzenegger goes to the hospital because

one of his wounds gets inflected. He gets the wound treated, but then the doctor examines him further and finds elision. He determines that his patient has contracted cancer of the colon and needs to be operated upon immediately. This news puts Schwarzenegger in a bad mood, but he decides to go ahead with the operation -- he knows it's his asterisk. The doctor is about to give him a shot of morpheme, but he refuses because he has analogy to it. During the operation, the doctor removes part of his colon, so in the end he is left with only a semicolon.

At one point, Schwarzenegger actually captures the word and locks him up in a secret place. But before long, the librarian learns of his whereabouts. In conjunction with some other words, he launches a daring rescue operation, and the word gets out.

At the end of the movie, Schwarzenegger is finally caught and brought to trial. His sentence is handed down -- it is, of course, capital punishment. Again, 1 won't go into too much detail, but suffice it to say that the final scene depicts Schwarzenegger's syllabification: he goes to the guillotine and gets his prefix chopped off. Before this happens, he is asked if he has any final words. 1 left open the possibility of a sequel by having Schwarzenegger say, "I'll be back."