



"Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping"
-- Bo Derek

Mastering the Reverse like Anthony Jeselnik



Let's watch some Jeselnik and get some clues...

<https://vimeo.com/1173504816/aed550c817?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>



Make some notes about his style, tendencies, habits while you watch.

If you catch a joke that you really like, stop the video and transcribe the joke.

Notes about Jeselnik's performance:

- His pacing is deliberate and slow
- He reiterates lines he wants you to remember
- He gets micro-commitments from the audience (chuckles, laughs, other emotions to show they're participating emotionally)



- He exudes confidence (takes it all the way to cockiness, then kinda smiles to let us know he's kidding)
 - He likes to dip the mic during his pauses
 - He likes to go to the darkside, edgy, wrong, not PC
 - He will use inflection or emphasis to misdirect the audience.
 - He doesn't do any broad act-outs.
 - He has this mischievous approach.
 - Jezelnik uses several ways to create expectation, then surprise.
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- **Misdirection using an act-out**
 - **Misdirection using a second ending (straight reverse)**
 - **Misdirection using a 3-Way Build-up**
 - **Reverse using Ambivalence**
 - ***Misdirection Using Paired Elements***



Joke Examples:

Misdirection using an act-out

I, of course, live in Los Angeles. I've got a nice place... Obviously. My brother has been staying with me for a couple of weeks now, which has been awful. My brother is crazy. Even my neighbors hate him. The other day I opened up the door and I caught him masturbating.

He looks me right in the eyes and goes, "Shut the door." I said, Get inside."

Misdirection using a second ending

"Man, my parents were strict. Mom and Dad were strict. My mom and dad once made me smoke an entire pack of cigarettes. An entire pack of cigarettes in one sitting, just to teach me an important lesson... about brand loyalty."

I once went on a date with a girl, first date. We went hiking. Her idea. And while we're hiking she gets bitten by a snake in between two toes, and I had to suck out the poison. So she's dead.

Misdirection using a 3-Way Build-up



"I don't own a gun. I'm against guns to be honest, when I was a kid. When I was a kid my parents had a gun. Apparently that we had to have a gun. 'Got to have a gun to protect the five children!' 'Got to have a gun to protect our five children!' Of course, they eventually got rid of it, to protect their four children. Not gonna lie, it was fun while it lasted. I was getting pretty good towards the end."

Reverse using Ambivalence

"I dated this one girl who owned a parakeet. Did you hear what I said? She owned a parakeet. That fucking thing never shut up! But the bird was cool."

Reverse using Ambivalence (An added condition that inspires you to expect it to be the solution, but...)

"A newspaper in the U.K. published a side-by-side photo of Camilla Parker Bowles and a horse, and said that Camilla Parker Bowles' face looked like a horse. The newspaper was immediately sued for defamation..." _____

My father, who lives in Bakersfield, was just diagnosed with Stage IV colon cancer... I know, it's horrible right? I mean who still lives in Bakersfield?



Misdirection Using Paired Elements

I was 12 years old, roaming around my house, and I found my dad's porn, in the back of the attic. That was a great day. It was a game changer for me. But then the worst day of my life was the day I found my mom's porn. In the back of that video store.

So what I'm going to ask you to do is to **write some of your own lines, using the reverse technique.**

An amazing thing might happen right now. You might find yourself at a complete loss as to what to write...

What do you do next? Where do you come up with lines?

This may sound crazy, but here's the crucial thing to remember when you're writing comedy material: **don't start by trying to think of something "funny!"**

That's right! Don't think of something funny to write, just think of writing something that's a fact about you because sitting down and trying to think of something funny to write is the kiss of death when you're writing comedy.

It just creates this big ominous, amorphous goo of this vague overwhelming concept of being *FUNNY*. But if you just start with facts, now you have something you can turn into funny by using the approach you've learned previously.

The basic rule of thumb to remember is that the setup isn't intended to be funny. If surprise is the number one trigger for human laughter and we try to 'funny up' the setup then it's hard to create surprise if the audience already thinks that we're trying to be funny.



But if we start with a fact and then we change the point of view at the last moment, we have a better chance of creating sharp surprise resulting in laughter.

With that in mind, let's try to write some reverses:

There are two primary places you can look for setup lines:

1. **OBSERVATIONAL** - you observe things around you and you write down the facts about the observation.
2. **PERSONAL** - write down statements about yourself by answering these questions:
 - What things make you mad?
 - What bothers you about yourself?
 - What are your weaknesses?
 - What are your strengths?
 - How do people describe you?
 - How would you describe yourself?
 - What are your likes?
 - What are your dislikes?
 - What are your hobbies?
 - What's your favorite music?
 - What are your favorite games?
 - What are your favorite sports teams?
 - If you could be anything in the world, what would it be?
 - What would you buy if you had \$1,000,000?
 - Where did you go to high school? What was your high school mascot?
 - What was unique about the town you grew up in?
 - What's your heritage?



- Where do you work?
- How do you feel about your job?
- How do you feel about your boss?
- Have you ever been fired from a job?
- What are your pet peeves?
- How would you describe your family? Large? Small?
- What religion are you and do you practice?
- What are your thoughts on religion?
- What are your favorite parts of your body?
- What makes you feel insecure about your body?
- Describe your boss.
- Describe your parents.

This is a nice list of questions to help us develop straight lines that will become setups for jokes about who we are.

You know where else you can get really cool ideas to help you write facts about you?

1. Dating profile questions
2. *250 Speed-dating Questions* (Kindle book \$2.99)
3. Google "Job Interview Questions"
4. Personality Profile questions.
5. Prompted diary questions.

Let's Get to work!

I know this can seem daunting, so I'll walk you through the first one.

I'm going to walk you through the process of how I created this joke:

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16



years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's not my wife.

So let's walk through how I got to this joke:

Step 1: Write down the question.

Are you married? If so, is your spouse older or younger than you?

Great question. That question was followed by another question that read:

Describe the relationship in 10 words or less.

So I decided to combine the two questions and answer them honestly:

Step 2: Write down your answer. Don't be funny. Just write it down.

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. As of today, we've been together for 16 years. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life.

Once you have that statement. Make that your setup. Make a commitment to stick with it until you find a way to make a joke out of it. Be really stubborn! Don't walk away until you have something.

Anthony Jeselnik has an advantage over you or me at this point in the joke-writing process and that is his angle.



Jeselnik is known for his deep sarcasm, mischievousness and he leans big into edginess, dark punchlines that could have a tendency to offend. That's where he wants to go.

The good news is when you already know your angle or the persona you are writing for, it makes it quite a bit easier to find the jokes.

If you're writing for a ventriloquist whose dummy is a dirty old man, you already know his angle and that leads you to types of punchlines the dummy might say. So you already know the kind of punchline you're looking for.

You have direction.

Step 3:

One way to step it out a bit is to see yourself on stage saying this intro line to an audience. If you were on stage and you stated that very line to an audience, how do you think they would respond?

So now the setup is:

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. My marriage is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16 years.

Do you feel that the audience might applaud this accomplishment?

Good.

So let's look back at that setup to see what assumptions or images the information might have conjured in the audience's imagination.



Step 4: Identify the key pieces of information in the setup:

2 key pieces of information stand out in that setup:

1. *The woman I'm married to now is younger than me.*
2. *As of today, we've been together for 16 years.*

Step 5: What assumptions might the audience create based on each of those key pieces of information?

Assumptions often come from an audience's desire to see an image.

Think imagery. When you tell a story, the audience is trying to see what you're saying. They're trying to see the movie.

Hypothesizing the audience's assumptions.

Since my wife and I have been together for 16 years, the audience is probably assuming that the woman is not super young. Imagining a 16-year commitment in a marriage will usually cause an audience to imagine someone reasonably mature.

I'm pretty confident that because I say "married 16 years." Those numbers cause them to get a picture of a woman in her 40's or maybe 50. Also when they see me and see that I look like I'm in my 50's, audiences usually default to the notion of birds of a feather flock together.



Assumption 1: the audience probably assumes my wife is around my age.

Assumption 2: they assume that we're a loving couple.

(Obviously, we've been together for 16 years and there's no information in the setup that would suggest otherwise).

So the 2 primary assumptions the audience will likely create are:

1. My wife is mature (younger but age appropriate to be with a man my age).
2. We are a stable, loving couple.

Step 6: Try to shatter those assumptions

So if those are the two grand assumptions or images the audience creates then I want to try to shatter one or both of those images somehow.

So I'm going to say the setup up again to put it right in the front of my brain, but this time with the motivation of taking the next step in shattering those "grand assumptions"

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16 years.

They still don't quite see my wife. I haven't described her at all really. The audience has only assumptions to draw on. They are curious to know more. They crave a clearer picture, so I'm just going to give them that.

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16



years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a hot, young thing...

Now what's the audience assuming?

They are assuming that I think of my wife as a hot young thing, right? (Because I've given no other information to the contrary and I actually help lead them to that conclusion by saying "*hot, young thing*" in a playful demeanor like I'm throwing a shout-out to my youthful-looking wife).

And that's exactly what they're thinking: **I am throwing a shout-out to my youthful looking wife...** so I will shatter that notion by just saying it...

Step 7: Write and Rewrite until the punchline is as close to the last word as possible.

*The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16 years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's **not** my wife.*

Of course, if you've been keeping up with Anthony Jeselnik's shows, you'll have probably noticed that Jeselnik is not just doing one and two-liners. He's taking the kernel of an idea and now building bits from those one and two-liners.

So how might he continue to extend this joke with a tag or topper? Or take the joke to another direction?

There are three ways to go to extend a bit:

1. A Topper: an additional punchline based on the original information in the setup.



2. A Tag: an additional punchline based on the NEW information in the punchline.
3. An act-out.

Jeselnik doesn't really do act-outs, so for this endeavor we are left with tags and toppers.

So let's put the joke right in front of us again:

*The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16 years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's **not** my wife.*

What information can give us an idea of where to take this?

Character

Theme

Setting

Plot

Conflict

What's the setting that's in the audience's mind right now?

What's the last thing that was said before the punchline?

If you see pictures of me on social media...

So if you said, "social media," you're following along really well.

What happens when people see a picture on social media?

1. They comment.
2. They share.
3. They zoom in for a better look.



The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, we've been together for 16 years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's not my wife. So do a brother a solid and uhm... don't share those pictures. Because it's only a matter of time... till my wife sees those pictures...

What's the audience thinking now? Do you think they are creating an assumption of what happens next? If so what's the assumption?

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, my wife and I have been together for 16 years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's not my wife. So do a brother a solid, and don't share those pictures.

But what else do we have from that list related to the setting of pictures on social media?

Comments...

The woman I'm married to now is younger than me. This is definitely the longest relationship of my life. As of today, my wife and I have been together for 16 years. [APPLAUSE]. So if you see pictures of me on social media with a young hot, thing... that's not my wife. So do a friend a solid, and don't share those pictures. Because it's only a matter of time... till my wife sees those pictures. And if that happens, all hell will break loose... because now my wife is gonna want to fuck her..." And I'm just not into that.

Jeselnik does it by taking the context of the initial story and asking questions.

Again we go back to the maxim of the 5 W's
Who?



What?
Where?
Why?
When?
How?

"I used to live in an apartment and every day for like an hour-and-a-half this loud thumping aerobic music would be pounding. Just pounding. It took 3 phone calls to the landlord for them to finally get me to stop."

I tried to take a dick pic. I couldn't get it to pose properly, if you will. I didn't freak out like the other people at that Chuck E. Cheese.

My kids were good. My wife used to blast them for not using coasters. I would be like, "Hey, relax! Check the liquor cabinet. Check the fridge in the garage with the beer and wine coolers. They haven't drunk a drop. Because I raised them to do hard drugs."

Set goals to write several reverses a day. At first you might suck, but eventually you'll get better.

Get personal 1 on 1 Coaching with Jerry just follow [this link](#) to learn more!

