

RODNEY & SHERYL

by

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Based On True Events

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FADE IN:

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - DAWN

A large aluminum building with the words "U-STORE-IT" painted on the front sits on a desolate city street.

The adjoining lot is empty save a single BLUE DATSUN F-10, parked with the trunk open.

SUPER:

SEATTLE, WA
July 1978

CUT TO:

CLOSER on the storage facility. Rows of aluminum doors are closed and padlocked... except for one, which is propped open with a brick.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON THE PROPPED OPEN DOOR.

INT. STORAGE LOCKER

A man in his mid-30s sits cross-legged in the 6' X 8' locker surrounded by cardboard boxes and clear plastic crates. He is classically handsome, with a chiseled body, long brown hair and dark eyes. He's dressed in a blue tank top, flared pants, sandals, and a beaded necklace.

This is RODNEY ALCALA and he is-- as we will soon discover-- a very dangerous man.

One of the boxes lays open beside him, with it's contents scattered on the floor: There are women's earrings, necklaces, locks of hair, and most disturbingly, a woman's nipple, which hangs shriveled on piece of twine like a pendant.

And, of course, there are PHOTOGRAPHS. THOUSANDS OF THEM.

Rodney flips through the photographs of his victims: A young woman... another young woman... a young GIRL... a young BOY... another young woman... and so on.

Some of subjects are smiling, others are stoned and languid. A few are terrified.

As he looks at the photos, Rodney unzips his fly...

EXT. SCHULTZ HOUSE - DAWN

A small ranch in a poor residential neighborhood. The paint is chipped, the lawn sun-baked, and the picket-fence battered and broken.

All the other houses on the block look more-or-less the same.

SUPER:

SUN VALLEY, NV
Same Day

INT. AMY'S BEDROOM - SAME

AMY SCHULTZ, 18, stands at her dresser stuffing clothes and books (an SAT STUDY GUIDE among them) into a backpack. Her dog, GINGER, a scraggly looking mutt, lays on the bed behind her.

When the bag is full, she looks up. Sees a family photo hanging framed on the wall:

It shows her, as a child, standing with her parents, MARTY and ELAINE. Behind them is the Santa Monica pier. Everyone is happy and smiling.

She takes the picture out of the frame and RIPS IT IN HALF, removing her father from the picture. She packs the remaining half of the picture, and starts to zip the bag... but the ZIPPER is stuck. Broken.

Frustrated, she safety pins it shut, then throws the backpack over her shoulder.

AMY
Here Ginger.

Ginger hops off the bed and follows Amy into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Amy moves through the living room where her mom, ELAINE (40s), lays passed out on the couch. Elaine's ring finger is conspicuously naked, with a little tan line signaling where a wedding ring used to live.

Beer bottles litter the floor around her and the television plays an early morning news broadcast:

(CONTINUED)

NEWS ANCHOR

Two young paper boys discovered what appears to be the latest victim of a killer who the Los Angeles police are calling The Hillside Strangler. The body had been dumped 15 feet down an embankment in a residential neighborhood. The victim was a 20 year old woman and the body was nude--

Amy SNAPS OFF the television. Finds her mom's purse and removes the cash from it. She pockets the money, then heads to front door...

But stops before heading out.

Amy looks back at her mother, floundering.

She crosses back to the couch and covers her mother with an afghan. Kisses her on the head and looks at her sadly for a moment. Then heads back to the front door...

EXT. SCHULTZ HOUSE

Amy closes the door quietly behind her and crosses to the street with Ginger leashed and walking beside her.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

Amy and Ginger walk down the sidewalk as the sun rises up over the mountains behind her.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NOON

A long stretch of desert highway. Mountains in the distance. A road sign reads:

Bakersfield 3
Los Angeles 109

Suddenly, a BIG RIG barrels into frame, thundering down the highway.

EXT. REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

The Big Rig pulls up to a GAS STATION / DINER. The passenger door opens and Amy and Ginger hop out.

AMY

Thanks!

Amy gives the driver a wave and heads into the diner as the Big Rig takes off down the road.

INT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Amy sits at the counter, drowning a plate of pancakes in maple syrup. She begins scarfing them down.

AMY

(To the waitress)

Could I also get a plate of corned beef hash and a bowl of water?

EXT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Amy sits on curb, reading her SAT Study Guide while feeding the corned beef hash to Ginger. The bowl of water sits on the ground beside them.

CUT TO:

Moments later, Amy strips off her jacket and STUFFS it in her backpack.

She re-affixes the safety pin. It holds... but just barely.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - EARLY AFTERNOON

Amy continues down the highway with Ginger, thumb out, as cars speed past her.

A pickup truck slows down as it passes. The DRIVER blasts the horn and yells out the window:

DRIVER

Off the road, whore!

AMY

Fuck you, asshole!

Amy throws the driver the bird, and suddenly the safety pin on her backpack SNAPS and all of her belongings pop out and spill across the side of the road.

(CONTINUED)

AMY
God damn it!

Amy drops to her knees and begins collecting her things, stuffing them back in the bag.

As she's doing this, the blue Datsun F-10 speeds past... then slows to a stop further up the road.

INT. DATSUN

Rodney sits in the driver's seat. He adjusts the rear view mirror to get a better look at Amy. Stares at her as she gathers her things, considering his options.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY

Suddenly, aware of it's presence, Amy glances up at the car, suspicious.

After a moment, the Datsun begins to BACK UP.

Amy stands as it pulls up next to her. Rodney leans over and cranks down the passenger's side window.

RODNEY
Looks like you're in a bit of trouble.

Amy nods.

RODNEY
Where you heading?

AMY
L.A..

Rodney checks the clock on the dashboard. Pretends to deliberate.

RODNEY
Sure. Why not. Hop in.

Amy puts Ginger in the backseat, then hops in the front, and the car rolls on down the road.

TO BLACK.

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT - MORNING, 1978

SHERYL LEE-ELLIS (mid-20s) stands in her living room, pacing anxiously, clearly upset. When she turns to the person off screen, she speaks with a desperation that betrays a lifetime of dismissal and neglect.

SHERYL

"You wanna go? Go! Fine, get out of here. I don't give a crap. Pack your bags and walk off the end of the Earth for all I care. Jesus, would you look at this place? It's a mess. I don't know what it is, I can never seem to keep things together. You spend three hours cleaning a house, then it takes ten minutes to undo it all. Sometimes I think "What's the point?" Y'know? I get the urge to just give up. But, I couldn't live in a sty. My mother used to just throw her cigarette butts out the kitchen window. You believe that? Had an ashtray shaped like a cat and when it got full she'd toss them right out. It's amazing how many people can just Live Like That! Sheets unwashed, dishes a mess. And what's even more amazing is that I didn't turn out like that too. Because I think it can go either way. Like, you see your folks do something and even though you think "That's not right, I don't want to be like that," you do it anyway. You just do it. Because you've lived with it for so long. But not me. I did the exact opposite. I fought like hell to be different from them. I knew even back then that I wanted to be something different. I wanted to do something with my life. And I'm doing it! I am! I've got you, Lenny. I've got a husband; a man in my life who's good to me. Because if you got that, you don't need anything else.

(Pause)

You wanna go? You're not going. Because I'm gonna fight for you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL (cont'd)
I'm gonna fight for us. Not because
you're worth it, but because I am."

CAMERA PANS OVER to the PERSON OFF SCREEN and we see that Sheryl has been talking to her reflection in a mirror.

Sheryl stops talking, instantly breaking character. Suddenly, she is a different person. Calm, confident, methodical. An actress who is serious about her craft.

She crosses to her dresser and picks up some pages of a SCRIPT. Repeats her last line, changing the emphasis.

SHERYL
(Reading quietly)
"Not because you're worth it, but
because I am--"
"Because I am."
"Because I am."

Sheryl looks up at the clock on the wall, checks it against her watch: Time to go.

EXT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT, HOLLYWOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl steps out of her apartment-- a small, stucco building-- and crosses the street to her shitty little Chevrolet Chevette, red paint chipping away.

On the curb out front is a discarded couch with a homeless man sleeping on it. In the distance, the HOLLYWOOD HILLS loom large, seeming to look down on the people below.

SUPER:

LOS ANGELES, CA
September 1978

She hops in, turns on the ignition, and the car sputters to life.

INT. CASTING OFFICE - MORNING

Sheryl sits in the waiting room beside several other ACTRESSES who all look more-or-less the same as she does.

Posters of "recent" films hang framed on the wall. Mostly low-budget horror films: *The Touch Of Satan*, *The Incredible Melting Man*, *Orca*. Nothing you would want on your resume.

A CASTING ASSOCIATE steps out:

(CONTINUED)

CASTING ASSOCIATE

Amber?

One of the other actresses stands and crosses the room.

Sheryl watches her go, then listens as Amber performs the same monologue through the wall.

INT. CASTING OFFICE - SHORT WHILE LATER

Sheryl is now the last person in the room.

After a moment, the door to the audition room opens and THE FILM DIRECTOR and another ACTRESS step out, CHATTING QUIETLY. The Director is clearly flirting with the Actress.

DIRECTOR

I'm parked right around the corner.

Without so much as peeking at Sheryl, they cross the room and slip out the exit.

Sheryl watches them go, confused. Then:

CASTING ASSISTANT (OS)

Sheryl?

Sheryl turns, sees the Casting Assistant standing in the doorway to the audition room.

SHERYL

Yeah.

CASTING ASSISTANT

We're ready for you.

SHERYL

That was the director.

CASTING ASSISTANT

Hm?

SHERYL

I mean, he's not staying?

CASTING ASSISTANT

He had an appointment to get to.
But we can still tape you.

Sheryl nods, clearly disappointed. But then heads into the audition room anyway.

EXT. HIGH RISE - AFTERNOON

Sheryl pulls into a parking garage below a 20 story high rise in downtown L.A..

Outside, a small group of protesters hold up signs reading "STOP the BRIGGS initiative!" A man with a bullhorn leads a chant: "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Homophobia's got to go!" Nearby, some television cameras film the demonstration.

INT. STAIR WELL - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl takes the stairwell up, her bag slung over her shoulder, and goes through a door to...

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CON'T

...an entry area with an unmanned information desk and TWO DOORS on opposing walls. Above the info desk is a sign that reads AMERICAN THREADS, INC..

Sheryl checks a hand-written note to make sure she's in right place.

SHERYL

Hello?

No response.

Sheryl crosses to one of the doors and peaks inside.

Behind the door is a vast, open FACTORY FLOOR with DOZENS of black and brown women sitting behind tiny desks assembling lingerie.

KOKO(OS)

Excuse me?

Sheryl looks back, sees a blond 20-something standing behind her. Let's call her KOKO.

KOKO

Can I help you with something?

SHERYL

I'm here for the audition.

KOKO

Come with me.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl stands beside Koko as the elevator makes it's way up through the building. After a moment, there's a DING and the doors open.

EXT. LOFT - CON'T

Sheryl steps out of the elevator into a large futurist loft and waiting area. All of the furniture is made of sleek plastics and high-tech materials. Prints of women in lingerie adorn the walls.

At the far end of the room, several other YOUNG WOMEN sit, waiting to be seen.

KOKO
Can I get you a water?

SHERYL
No, thank you.

KOKO
Cappuccino?

SHERYL
I'm all set.

Sheryl takes a seat and Koko leaves.

After a moment, Sheryl looks over and sees a YOUNG MODEL sitting beside her, her body trembling. All the women in the room look young, but she looks particularly young.

SHERYL
Doing okay?

YOUNG MODEL
Hunh?

Sheryl gestures to her legs.

YOUNG MODEL
Oh, yeah, no. I'm just...

SHERYL
New to town?

YOUNG MODEL
(Nods)
My mom and I moved here a few weeks ago.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL

Your mom?

YOUNG MODEL

Yeah. I'm sixteen... *turning* sixteen. So, y'know. She's waiting in the car right now.

Sheryl smiles, sadly.

YOUNG MODEL

Do I actually... I mean... when I get in there, do I just *undress*, or--?

SHERYL

I mean, it's a lingerie add, so--

YOUNG MODEL

Yeah, no. Sorry. That was a stupid question.

Little pause.

SHERYL

You don't have to do anything you don't want to.

The Young Model studies Sheryl, trying to decide if she believes her. A look crosses her face like she thinks Sheryl is deliberately giving her bad advice to get the job for herself.

YOUNG MODEL

Yeah.

Suddenly, Koko reappears.

KOKO

Tiffany?

The Young Model looks up hopefully.

KOKO

We're ready for you.

Tiffany stands and follows Koko into the other room. The door shuts behind her with a soft click.

INT. THEATER STAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

In a small black box theater, Sheryl rehearses a scene from Jean Genet's *The Maids* with another actress.

The THEATER DIRECTOR (male, 30s; let's call him DAVID) and STAGE MANAGER (female, 20s) sit, taking notes.

ACTRESS

"Speak more softly, please, please. Speak-- speak of Madame's kindness."

SHERYL

"Her kindness, is it? It's easy to be kind and smiling and sweet-- ah! That sweetness of hers-- when you're beautiful and rich. But what if you're only a maid? The best you can do is give yourself airs while you're doing the cleaning or washing up. You twirl a feather duster like a fan. You make fancy gestures with the dishcloth. Or, like you, you treat yourself to historical parades in Madame's apartment--!!!"

Suddenly, mid-speech, the lights in the building go out.

DAVID

Fuck!

SHERYL

Um, David--?

DAVID

Hang tight everyone. Mitch check the circuit breaker. Shelly could you get the building manager on the line?

STAGE MANAGER

On it.

DAVID

Actors, take five.

EXT. THEATER - SHORT WHILE LATER

Outside, the actors stand around chatting and smoking. Sheryl stands a short distance away from the others, studying her lines.

Suddenly, David steps out, says something to the other actors. They nod and take off down the street.

David turns and approaches Sheryl.

DAVID

We're gonna go to the Holler for a drink.

SHERYL

So we're done for the night?

DAVID

Power's still out.

SHERYL

What happened?

DAVID

I dunno. Some bullshit with DWP. We'll take care of it Monday.

SHERYL

(Under her breath)
Unbelievable.

DAVID

Hey. Rehearsal isn't over. We've just moved locations. C'mon.

Sheryl looks like she doesn't buy it, but either can't think of an excuse to bail or doesn't have the energy to fight him. She nods, acquiescing.

EXT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

A hole-in-the-wall bar in Hollywood. A group of New Age-y artists loiter out front, smoking and talking about *Halloween (1978)*: "I heard they shot it in Pasadena for like \$300,000." "That's crazy."

INT. BAR - SAME

Inside, Sheryl sits at the counter nursing a beer and looking bored while David waxes poetic about the *theatre*. The other actors and crew are across the bar.

DAVID

I wanna make art that wakes people up from their dead-end lives, y'know? 'Art that just grabs them by the collars and shakes the shit out of them and says "Live! Live!"

Sheryl's almost hasn't noticed it, but David is HOLDING HER HAND now, his thumb drawing little circles on her skin.

DAVID

Live theater is about connecting with people. It's about contact. It's about touch.

Sheryl looks up at him, brow furrowed.

DAVID

(Grinning)

Know what I mean?

EXT. STRIP MALL - FOLLOWING MORNING

Sheryl crosses the parking lot toward a MASSAGE PARLOR that's wedged between a liquor store and a donut shop.

As she approaches, she sees a WELL DRESSED MAN talking into a pay phone.

WELL DRESSED MAN

Yeah, no, I think you've really got something here. I mean, with the right team supporting you-- because you're only as good as the people around you, y'know what I'm saying? I think--

The Well Dressed Man looks up, sees something coming his way.

WELL DRESSED MAN

Hey man, I'm getting another call. I gotta take this. Talk later? Ciao.

(CONTINUED)

Calmly, the well-dressed man hangs up the phone and lays face down on the sidewalk. Suddenly, a POLICE CRUISER skids into the parking lot. TWO COPS jump out, cuff the man, throw him in the back of cruiser, and peel off.

Sheryl looks at this like she can't believe what she just saw. Goes inside the massage parlor.

INT. MASSAGE PARLOR - SHORT WHILE LATER

In a private room, Sheryl gives a deep tissue massage to a MAN (40s) laying naked, face down on the table, his ass covered by a thin sheet.

The room is dark and soft music plays out of wall-mounted speakers.

SHERYL

How's that?

NAKED MAN

Good. Could you do the tops of my legs?

SHERYL

Um. Okay.

NAKED MAN

I have really bad shin splints.

SHERYL

Of course.

The Naked Man roles over. The sheet begins to slip from his lap.

SHERYL

Oops. Don't lose this.

She corrects the sheet.

NAKED MAN

Thanks.

Sheryl begins rubbing the man's lower legs. He moans.

SHERYL

How's that?

NAKED MAN

Could you go a little higher?

(CONTINUED)

Sheryl nods. Goes a little higher. Working the area around his knees. Trying to keep her eyes away from his midsection.

NAKED MAN

A little higher.

Sheryl slowly moves up to his thighs, her face a mask of professionalism, trying not to show how uncomfortable she is.

NAKED MAN

Higher.

Sheryl stops what she's doing. She can't go higher without basically giving the guy a...

Understanding suddenly, she looks up towards the Naked Man.

NAKED MAN

I'll give you ten dollars to jerk me off. Twenty if you put it in your mouth.

Sheryl freezes, like a deer caught in headlights. She looks frightened and embarrassed and totally unsure of how to handle this. Finally:

SHERYL

Excuse me.

She steps out of the room.

INT. MASSAGE PARLOR, BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl sits alone in the break room, still upset from her encounter with the naked man.

After a moment, her BOSS (an older Vietnamese man) peaks in:

BOSS

Sheryl, someone's on the phone for you.

The boss slips out and Sheryl crosses to a wall-mounted telephone. Answers it.

SHERYL

Hello?

EXT. CAFE - FOLLOWING DAY

Sheryl sits at table outside of a bohemian cafe, sipping a cup of coffee. The cafe is empty save one other guest-- a beleaguered screenwriter scribbling feverishly into a tattered notebook and mouthing his dialogue to himself.

Sheryl looks across the street towards a fancy bistro, swarming with well dressed guests. A Porsche 911 pulls up out front, and a WOMAN (20s) who looks like a model or an actress steps out. The woman hands her keys to the valet, then crosses to a group of friends who greet her with hugs and kisses.

Sheryl stares at the woman like she'd give just about anything to trade places with her.

Suddenly, a middle-aged woman in a pantsuit approaches. This is HELEN (50s), her agent.

HELEN

Hey, sorry I'm late. Got stuck on a conference call with some people at Fox. How you doing?

A waitress steps up.

HELEN

Black coffee.

WAITRESS

Can I get you some menus?

SHERYL

Yes, please.

HELEN

(Deadpan)

And while you're at it, we'll take a bucket of lard and straw. Thanks.

WAITRESS

Um...?

The waitress stands there, confused.

SHERYL

I'm fine. Thank you.

The waitress steps away.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

So what's up? You look like your dog died.

SHERYL

It's been a long week.

HELEN

How's that?

SHERYL

I don't really wanna--

HELEN

C'mon, spit it out: Guy troubles?

SHERYL

Kinda?

HELEN

No shit. When isn't it? Here, let me set you up on a date. I just met this young actor and I swear to God, he's Adonis made flesh. Just signed a three picture deal with Paramount--

SHERYL

I just want to work.

HELEN

I said he's handsome. I didn't say it would be fun.

SHERYL

Helen, I--

HELEN

Oh, how's the play going? Let me know when it opens. I have a new casting director I want you to meet--

SHERYL

I need to talk to you about something.

HELEN

What?

SHERYL

I can't do this anymore.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

Do what?

SHERYL

Any of it. I'm working too hard to be accomplishing so little, and there are zero signs that things will get better. I think I want to move back to Pennsylv--

HELEN

Stop. Hold that thought.

Helen reaches down into her bag and removes a sheet of paper. Slides it across the table.

Sheryl unfolds it. There's an address written down.

SHERYL

What's this?

HELEN

ABC Studios at Vine Street Theater in Hollywood.

SHERYL

Why are you giving it to me?

HELEN

Why do you think?

SHERYL

A television show?

HELEN

Don't say I never did anything for you.

SHERYL

But I didn't audition.

HELEN

You don't have to. They've seen you. They want you.

SHERYL

What's the show?

HELEN

You're the Guest Star. It's gonna be great.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL
Fine, but what's the--?

HELEN
You're due on set next Friday at
8:00.

SHERYL
Helen. What show is it?

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

THE DATING GAME plays on Sheryl's tiny television set at home.

Sheryl watches despondently as the BACHELORETTE asks the BACHELORS a series of mind-numbingly insipid, innuendo-y questions. It's heart-breaking.

After a moment, the PHONE RINGS.

EXT. CAFE - EARLIER THAT DAY

Back to Sheryl and Helen:

SHERYL
Helen.

HELEN
It happens all the time.

SHERYL
I can't--

HELEN
You *can*.

SHERYL
It's not *acting*--

HELEN
It's a way to get you seen.

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sheryl answers the phone:

SHERYL
Hello?

(CONTINUED)

The voice of an OLDER WOMAN responds on the other end of the line. This is Sheryl's MOM (60s).

MOM (OS)

You answered this time. Have the stars aligned or do you need money again?

SHERYL

Hi Mom.

EXT. CAFE - EARLIER THAT DAY

HELEN

It's not a sit com.

SHERYL

Yeah. Sitcoms have *scripts*.

HELEN

So will this.

SHERYL

It's a *game show*. It's embarrassing.

Helen reaches across the table and takes Sheryl's hand. Squeezes it gently.

HELEN

It's work.

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

MOM (OS)

Your father's birthday was this week. Did you send a card?

SHERYL

Yeah, it's in the mail.

MOM (OS)

(Not buying it)

Uh huh.

SHERYL

What?

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - SAME

CAMERA PANS TO TAKE IN THE HOUSE THAT SHERYL GREW UP IN: A wooden farmhouse with cheap antiques and kitschy decorations. One look at it should make you want to run away to L.A..

WE PAN THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM where Sheryl's DAD (60s) sleeps in a recliner. He looks very old and very weak. The TV flickers in front of him.

EVENTUALLY, WE LAND ON Sheryl's MOM (60s), standing in the Kitchen.

SHERYL (OS)

I put it in the mail on Monday. I got him a card and a book on Gettysburg.

MOM

For an actress you're a shitty liar.

SHERYL (OS)

I'm not *lying*--

MOM

Mike and Betty chipped in on a riding lawnmower. Bonnie got him a new tackle box. There's nothing practical about a card.

SHERYL

I told you. I got him a *book*.

MOM

It's a gesture that the man is in your thoughts. And if you can't even manage *that*, then what's the point?

SHERYL (OS)

Is this really what you want to talk about?

MOM

I'm dying, Sheryl.

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT

Sheryl looks up. Suddenly concerned.

SHERYL
(Disbelieving)
What?

EXT. CAFE - EARLIER THAT DAY

HELEN
If you don't want to do the show,
don't. I can't force you,
particularly if your heart isn't in
it anymore.

SHERYL
I didn't say that.

HELEN
Look: Is it Shakespeare? No. But
it's a way in. And that's what you
need.

Sheryl starts to say something-- Stops, looks away.
Frustrated.

HELEN
Who knows. You might even have fun.

SHERYL
...you said there's a script?

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

MOM (OS)
I've been having pains in my chest.

Sheryl looks like she's heard this before; relaxes.

SHERYL
So see a doctor.

MOM (OS)
"A doctor." He doesn't know what
he's talking about. It's my body. I
know.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - SAME

Mom waits for a response. When none comes, she softens.

MOM

Y'know, your room's ready. If you ever wanted to come back for a visit.

INT. SHERYL'S APARTMENT

SHERYL

Yeah. Thing's are kind of busy right now.

A pause.

MOM (OS)

A boy?

Sheryl looks back at the TV. Watches as the end credits roll on *The Dating Game*.

SHERYL

(Equivocating)

A job.

Sheryl reaches for the nob on the television and changes the channel--

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SCHULTZ HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING, 1968

CU: A television screen switches channels. A COMMERCIAL APPEARS wherein a man dressed as THE DEVILS laughs maniacally while holding a bag of Lays Potato Chips.

THE DEVIL

Lays Potato Chips. Bet you can't eat just one.

WE CUT WIDE TO REVEAL the television sitting on a kitchen counter, while the SCHULTZ FAMILY moves around, getting ready for their day. The family consists of:

AMY, ten years younger than when we last saw her. Now a precocious 8 year old. She drowns her pancakes in maple syrup, just like she did in the scene at the diner.

Meanwhile, Amy's mom, Elaine, (30s now, dressed in a STEWARDESS' UNIFORM) tidies the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

Amy's dad, Marty (30s, in business attire) searches for his keys.

GINGER, their yellow lab pads around the kitchen.

Elaine snatches up the syrup.

ELAINE

Okay, that's enough.

AMY

Did you fix the zipper on my backpack?

ELAINE

I didn't.

AMY

Maaawwwm...

ELAINE

I'll fix it when I get back. Just don't load it so full.

MARTY

Have you seen the car keys?

ELAINE

They're on the television.

Marty goes into the LIVING ROOM.

Amy feeds Ginger some of her pancake under the table.

MARTY (OS)

They're not here.

ELAINE

Then I don't know.

MARTY (OS)

God damn it.

Amy feeds Ginger some more pancake.

Through the doorway, we see Marty find his keys in his coat pocket. Looking embarrassed, he comes back into the kitchen:

ELAINE

(Re: Keys)

Where were they?

(CONTINUED)

MARTY
(Lying)
They fell between the couch
cushions.

Elaine turns to Amy, crouching down to eye level.

ELAINE
Where am I gonna be tonight?

AMY
Chicago?

ELAINE
And when am I coming home?

AMY
Tomorrow?

ELAINE
And who do I love the most?

AMY
Ginger?

Elaine smiles and pinches Amy's nose.

MARTY
We gotta go.

ELAINE
See ya Spaghetti.

AMY
Bye Meatball.

Elaine kisses her daughter on the cheek.

MARTY
Don't be late for school.

And with that, Marty and Elaine are out the door.

Amy sits there, alone, still picking away at her pancakes.

EXT. SCHULTZ HOUSE (OLD) - MORNING

A simple ranch home in West Hollywood, complete with a white picket fence and a sprinkler watering the minuscule front yard.

SUPER:

(CONTINUED)

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA
September 1968

Amy steps out front-- her backpack hanging precariously open, books threatening to spill out-- and closes the door behind her.

EXT. SCHULTZ NEIGHBORHOOD - SHORT WHILE LATER

WE FOLLOW Amy walks down the sidewalk.

Up close we can see that her name is embroidered on the backpack.

As she walks, a SCHOOL BUS passes her by. Some kids wave out the window towards her and Amy waves back. The school bus rounds a corner and disappears down another street.

EXT. ADJACENT STREET - MOMENTS LATER

As Amy walks TOWARDS THE CAMERA a BEIGE PLYMOUTH rolls up behind her, following slowly.

Amy shifts her backpack from one shoulder to the other and suddenly the broken zipper SPLITS OPEN and all of her books TUMBLE OUT on the side walk.

Amy groans and kneels to pick them up.

RODNEY (OS)

Looks like you're in a bit of trouble.

Amy looks back and sees RODNEY (in his 20s) standing on the sidewalk behind her, his beige Plymouth idling beside him. A CAMERA is slung around his neck.

It's clear from Amy's expression that she doesn't recognize him.

Rodney crosses to her and squats down, examining the backpack.

RODNEY

The zipper broke?

Amy nods.

RODNEY

You're Amy, right?

Amy looks surprised.

(CONTINUED)

AMY
How did you know?

RODNEY
You don't remember me?

Amy shakes her head no.

RODNEY
Really? I'm a friend of your
parents. We met at the Christmas
party.

AMY
(Confused)
We're Jewish.

RODNEY
No, not at your house. Your dad, he
works at the...

Rodney Snaps his fingers as though trying to remember the
name of a company.

RODNEY
...whatsitcalled?

AMY
Anderson Windows.

RODNEY
Yes. That. I work with their
advertising department.
Photographing the, um, windows.
(Gestures to the camera)
See?

Amy looks at the camera, clearly dubious.

INT. NEIGHBORING HOUSE - SAME

A NEIGHBOR peeks through the blinds at Rodney and Amy,
talking out on the sidewalk.

RODNEY
Yeah, he told me all about you.
Said you're one tough cookie.

Rodney gives Amy a playful shoulder punch.

EXT. ADJACENT STREET - SAME

RODNEY

In fact he called me just a little bit ago and asked if I'd give you a ride to school. Said you were late. Are you late?

Amy stares at Rodney, evidently not trusting him.

Suddenly, a NEIGHBOR (female, 40s) steps out onto the sidewalk:

NEIGHBOR

Amy? Everything okay?

Rodney looks up-- clearly caught.

RODNEY

Catch ya later.

Rodney smiles, winks at her, then strides back to his car. SPEEDS OFF.

Amy watches him go.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

EXT. ABC STUDIOS, PARKING LOT - BACK TO PRESENT, DAY

Sheryl hurries across the parking lot dragging a SUITCASE behind her. Outside the wind blows in heavy gusts.

Sheryl enters...

INT. ABC STUDIOS - CON'T

...the studio where she's greeted by the show's contestant coordinator, LISA (30s).

LISA

Sheryl?

SHERYL

Yeah, hi. I'm so sorry I'm late. There was an accident on the 101 and the traffic was just--

LISA

No no no, you're fine. You're totally fine. Right this way. Gosh,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LISA (cont'd)
it's really blowing out there
today.

SHERYL
I heard that it might rain later.

Lisa helps Sheryl with her suitcase and leads her down a
LONG HALLWAY.

LISA
Do you need anything? Can I get you
coffee? Water?

SHERYL
No, thank you.

LISA
Have you eaten?

SHERYL
I'm okay. Thank you.

LISA
I saw on your information card that
you're from Pennsylvania.

SHERYL
Hm? Oh, yeah.

LISA
Whereabouts?

SHERYL
Scranton.

LISA
Oh cool--

SHERYL
Well. Near Scranton.

LISA
I went to Penn State.

SHERYL
"Go Lady Lions."

Lisa chuckles and they keep walking.

After a moment:

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL
(Interjecting)
Oh, I wanted to ask: Do you know
when I'll get my script?

LISA
(Not understanding)
Sorry?

SHERYL
I was told there would be a script.

LISA
You mean the cue cards?

SHERYL
(Clearly lying)
Yeah.

LISA
They're in the dressing room.

They continue walking. Sheryl looks disappointed.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl LAYS DOWN HER SUITCASE. Unzips and opens it. Removes several house dresses-- pretty, but nothing fancy.

Beside her stands the head of wardrobe, BRUCE (30s), looking unimpressed.

BRUCE
This is it?

SHERYL
They said to bring three options.

BRUCE
Come with me.

INT. WARDROBE - MOMENTS LATER

Bruce opens a set of double doors leading to a massive closet. Expensive outfits hang in long rows. Any one of these is worth more than Sheryl's entire wardrobe.

Sheryl stands there, eyes wide, stunned by the glut and glamor of it all.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lisa leads Sheryl back into the dressing room, now dressed in a hip cocktail dress-- leggy with a high neckline. Sexy, but tasteful._

At the far end stands the hair and make-up team: MARILYN and GRETCHEN (40s, both).

CUT TO:

Sheryl sits, half-studying her CUE CARDS, while Marilyn and Gretchen work on her, passing a joint back and forth between them. Sheryl looks nervous.

Music pours out of a radio-- something funky and low-key and relaxing, like "Here, My Dear" by Marvin Gaye.

MARILYN

They're idiots. All of them.

GRETCHEN

I don't know where they get them from.

MARILYN

Had this one guy on the show. The "filmmaker--"

GRETCHEN

Jesus Christ--

MARILYN

And he's beautiful. But seriously: The IQ of a lug nut.

(offers Sheryl the joint)

Want some?

SHERYL

I'm okay.

MARILYN

(Without skipping a beat)

Shows up with his brother-- his *identical twin* brother. And he sits in the chair and we're working on him, asking questions. Trying to put him at ease, whatever. And he says he's making a movie.

GRETCHEN

"An independent film," he called it.

(CONTINUED)

MARILYN

And he starts describing the story--

GRETCHEN

Something about time travel?

MARILYN

I don't remember. And he says, gesturing back at his brother: "Yeah, we're both acting in it. I'm the star, he's playing my best friend."

(Looks dumbfounded)

Your identical twin brother is playing your best friend? Brilliant. Love it. When can I see it?

Gretchen bursts out laughing. Sheryl laughs with her, loosening up.

MARILYN

I mean, is it too much to ask for a great looking guy who's not a moron or a serial killer? Is that too much?

Suddenly, the door at the back of room swings open and Lisa enters with ED BURKE (50s), the host of the show. He's dressed in a hip 70s suit and rose colored glasses, both of which look wildly incongruous on a man that's oh-so-clearly a square.

Gretchen hides the joint behind her back.

ED

Oh my God, look at all the beautiful women. How's everyone in here doing today?

GRETCHEN

Oh, knock it off.

ED

(Quietly, to Gretchen)
Put that skunk-weed away, it reeks.

Turning to Marilyn:

ED

My darling.

(CONTINUED)

MARILYN
(Unimpressed)
Hey Ed.

ED
So this is Sheryl Lee-Ellis?

SHERYL
This is.

ED
They tell me you went to Julliard.

SHERYL
Columbia, actually.

ED
(Ignoring the clarification)
That's terrific. So you must be a
real music freak, hunh?

SHERYL
I--?

ED
What do you think of this?

Gestures to the music playing on the radio.

ED
You like it?

SHERYL
It's cool.

ED
Yeah, women love that black sound.
I don't know what it is. I'm more
of classics-guy myself. Bing
Crosby, Tony Bennett, Perry Como. I
mean, you wanna talk "soul," listen
to Perry Como sing *Moonglow*.

(Puts a hand to his chest)
That's soul.

(Little pause)
I want you to do me a favor
tonight. Would you?

SHERYL
What is it?

(CONTINUED)

ED

So you're an intelligent girl, anyone can see that. But when you get out on the stage, don't act too smart, okay? The guys'll feel intimidated. What we need from you is just to smile and laugh. Got it?

SHERYL

Um, okay?

ED

Is this the dress you're wearing?

SHERYL

I think so.

ED

Hey Bruce, can we get her into something a little skimpier? This outfit you got her in, it's no good.

Ed turns back to Sheryl, puts a hand on her shoulder.

ED

Never trust a fag to do a real man's job. You've got a great body, don't be afraid to show it off.

Ed draws little circles on Sheryl's skin with his thumb. He smiles creepily.

SHERYL

I...

Suddenly, ED'S ASSISTANT peaks into the room:

ED'S ASSISTANT

Mr. Burke, your wife's on the phone.

Ed nods to the assistant then turns back to Sheryl, unphased.

ED

(With a wink)

I'll see you on stage.

And with that, Ed leaves. Sheryl sits, looking like maybe this wasn't a good idea.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME

A station wagon pulls into the lot, parks. The doors open and the people inside spill out. There's a YOUNGER COUPLE in the front seats, and an OLDER COUPLE in the back.

The sky has darkened and begun to drizzle.

The younger woman (the driver) is terse and irritated, clearly overwhelmed by her boyfriend's parents. Her name is LAURA (25); she's the one in this group that we'll be following.

As for the others, let's call her boyfriend KENNY (26), and his parents MR. and MRS. SNOW (50s). Mr. Snow has a camera hanging around his neck and his wife clutches a brochure. Clearly tourists.

R. SNOW

This is it?

MRS. SNOW

It doesn't look like a television studio.

KENNY

How would you know, Mom? You've never been to one.

MRS. SNOW

It just looks so drab. What you see on TV, there's always these big lights and stages--

KENNY

What are you talking about? There will be lights inside.

MRS. SNOW

Yeah, but still--

KENNY

This is just the parking lot.

MRS. SNOW

(To her husband)

Doesn't it look drab to you?

RM. SNOW

Do we need the umbrellas? It looks overcast.

Laura lights a cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Seriously? You gotta light that now?

LAURA

What?

Kenny takes it out of her mouth, throws it on the ground and stamps it out.

LAURA

Hey!

KENNY

C'mon, we're gonna be late. This way.

CAMERA LEADS the group as they CROSS to the main building, Laura and Kenny in the front, and Mr. and Mrs. Snow behind them.

LAURA

Seriously, don't grab things out of my fucking mouth.

KENNY

My mom's allergic.

LAURA

Just because she disapproves of something doesn't make her allergic to it--

KENNY

Which door do we go in?

MRS. SNOW

I can't find my ticket.

RM. SNOW

I have your ticket... Wait... Where'd they go--?

KENNY

Calm down. *I* have the tickets.

(To self)

Jesus fucking Christ.

Suddenly, RODNEY WALKS BY IN A BROWN SPORTS JACKET. Laura sees him and looks immediately frightened.

No one else notices.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Kenny.

KENNY

Alright, fine, I'm sorry I took your damn cigarette, okay? Now can we just get through today? You can yell at me later tonight, but for right now can we just try to have a good time? If not for us, then for my parents? Please, can we just do that?

LAURA

(Still stunned)

...okay.

KENNY

Thank you.

They head inside the main building.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Sheryl looks at herself in the mirror.

Her hair and make-up are done, and she's now in yet another outfit: a slinky, shiny, liquid gold dress with spaghetti straps. Very revealing.

Sheryl stares at herself, evidently, with mixed feelings.

GRETCHEN

What do you think?

SHERYL

It's... nice.

Suddenly, LISA pokes her head into the room.

LISA

We're ready for you.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Lisa leads Sheryl backstage.

LISA

(Whispering)

Ed's introducing the Bachelors now. When he's done--

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL
Wait. He's already started?

LISA
Watch your step.

SHERYL
Oh. Thank you.

LISA
You're in through here.

Sheryl steps inside...

INT. ISOLATION BOOTH - CON'T

...a small black room with doors on two walls and a red light bulb on the ceiling.

LISA
When he's done, the light will go on and that door will open. Then you just walk on and cross to Ed.

SHERYL
The stage is through here?

LISA
That's right.

SHERYL
Okay.

LISA
You good?

Sheryl nods, still nervous.

LISA
Great. Have fun.

Lisa closes the door and takes off.

Sheryl stands there, clutching her cue cards. She closes her eyes and takes several deep breaths.

SHERYL
It's a job. It's a job. It's only a job.

After a moment the LIGHT BULB snaps on and the door opens. Sheryl steps out of the Isolation Booth...

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE

Sheryl steps out onto the stage, a Vanna White smile plastered across her face.

The room fills with the sound of applause. Sheryl looks out towards the audience, who cheers her on from bleacher-style seating. In front of them are several television cameras manned by operators.

A LARGE DIGITAL CLOCK hangs towards the rear of the room, above the audience, counting down the time on the show:
00:12:45... 00:12:44... 00:12:43...

Her plastered-on-smile masks a kind of dazed bewilderment--
"Oh my God, this is really happening."

ED

Sheryl is an aspiring actress from Scranton, Pennsylvania. She used to work massaging feet but quit when her boss asked her to work her way up.

The audience ROARS with laughter.

Sheryl WINCES at the sexist joke, but holds her smile.

ED

Sheryl moved to L.A. after graduating from college, and is joining us tonight to find a Romeo to complement her Juliet.

(Crosses to Sheryl)

Beautiful. What a knock out. How you doing Sheryl?

SHERYL

Doing well.

ED

Good, glad to hear it. So the rules of the game are simple: There are three bachelors on the other side of the partition. You can ask them anything you want except for name, age, and occupation. And when the game is over, you just pick which one you'd like to go out with. Sound good?

Sheryl looks over towards the partition dividing her from the bachelors. Something about it feels ominous. Like it's hiding something dangerous.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL

It does.

ED

Alright, well enough of my gabbing,
let's hear from the fellas.
Bachelor #1, would you please say
hello to Sheryl?

BACHELOR #1 speaks from behind the partition.

BACHELOR #1 (OS)

(Nervous; painfully polite)

Hi Sheryl. Pleased to make your
pleasure--

The audience LAUGHS.

ED

Whoa, slow down fella.

BACHELOR #1 (OS)

Oh, no, I mean-- Pleasure to meet
your--

ED

Save that talk for the date.

BACHELOR #1 (OS)

(Trying again)

Pleasure to make your *acquaintance*.

ED

There we go, third time's a charm.
Bachelor #2?

BACHELOR #2 (OS)

(Singing)

Hellooooo Sheryl! Sheryl Sheryl
fo-ferrell fananna fanna
fo-ferrell, Fee Fi Fo farrel.
Sheeeerrrrrrryyyyyllllll! If you
wanna groooove, pick number twooo.

SHERYL

(Disgusted)

Does he always talk like that?

The audience LAUGHS again.

ED

(Re: Sheryl)

I guess we'll find out. Bachelor
#3, would you please greet Sheryl?

(CONTINUED)

BACHELOR #3 (OS)
 (Simple; cool)
 Hey, how's it going.

Sheryl smiles, listens as though waiting for something else from him. When nothing else comes...

ED
 Alright Sheryl, so that gives you
 an idea of what they sound like.
 (Out)
 We'll be right back to play the
 game right after this word from our
 sponsors.

Sheryl looks out towards the camera, forcing a smile.

Slowly, her eyes drift past the cameras to LAURA, sitting in the audience amidst the happy faces, appearing terrified and shaking her head "no."

Sheryl furrows her brow-- puzzled by the Laura's expression.

Suddenly, from off screen we hear the...

FIRST AD
 Alright, and we're out!

TO BLACK.

STREET PREACHER(OS)
 "The sun will be darkened, and the
 moon will not give its light..."

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. EAST VILLAGE, NY - DAY

A PREACHER stands on a street corner with a microphone and amplifier bellowing his sermon at bypassers.

STREET PREACHER
 "The stars will fall from the sky,
 and the heavenly bodies will be
 shaken. They will see the Son of
 Man coming on the clouds of the
 sky, with power and great glory. I
 tell you the truth, this generation
 will certainly not pass away until
 all these things have happened."

SUPER:

(CONTINUED)

NEW YORK, NY
June 1971

Rodney moves down a busy city street, wearing an NYU shirt, his camera in hand. He passes by the preacher, ignoring him, and moves on.

Rodney stops and SNAPS A PHOTO of a PRETTY GIRL crossing the street.

As she approaches him:

RODNEY

Hey, would you mind if I took your picture?

The PRETTY GIRL shakes her head and keeps walking.

RODNEY

Please? It'll just take a second...
(As she walks off)
Okay, I'll catch ya next time.

CUT TO:

SHORT WHILE LATER: Rodney approaches TWO MORE GIRLS, both in their late teens.

RODNEY

I love your outfit.

GIRL 1

Me?

RODNEY

Yeah, you. Can I snap a photo?

GIRL 1

What for?

RODNEY

My portfolio. I'm a fashion photographer.

GIRL 1

(Laughs)
Yeah, right.

RODNEY

I'm serious.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL 2
Let's get out of here.

RODNEY
C'mon. Just one picture.

Rodney SNAPS a picture.

RODNEY
See, that didn't hurt, did it?

Girl 1 laughs, flattered, but her friend drags her away.

CUT TO:

SHORT WHILE LATER: Rodney is showing an open fashion catalog to a ANOTHER GIRL.

RODNEY
See: John Burger. That's me, right there.

GIRL 3
You took that?

RODNEY
That's my picture.

GIRL 3
She's pretty.

RODNEY
No prettier than you.

GIRL 3
(Chuckles, flattered)
Stop it.

RODNEY
My studio's just around the corner.
Come over, let me take your picture.

GIRL 3
I shouldn't.

RODNEY
C'mon. It'll be fun. I promise.

GIRL 3
My mom would kill me.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

I can keep a secret if you can.

Girl 3 looks around to see if anyone is watching, then looks back down at the catalog, as if trying to make a decision.

GIRL 3

How far away is it?

EXT. EAST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Rodney moves down a busy city street. Eventually, he reaches a NIGHT CLUB. 'Goes inside.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Rodney grooves on the dance floor. He's smooth on his feet and clearly charismatic, moving between a number of partners.

Eventually, he finds himself dancing with a cute club girl we'll come to know as CHARLIE (20s).

CUT TO:

CORNER BOOTH - SHORT WHILE LATER

RODNEY

I just took a class with Roman Polanski. Have you heard of him?

Charlie shakes her head no.

RODNEY

Made Knife In The Water, Repulsion, Rosemary's Baby.

CHARLIE

Nope.

RODNEY

You haven't seen *Rosemary's Baby*?

CHARLIE

I don't like scary movies.

RODNEY

It's not a scary movie. It's a documentary.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

(Laughs)

No, it isn't.

RODNEY

He told us in class: It's a survival guide for life in the city.

CHARLIE

What can I say? I'm a wimp.

RODNEY

But you're a flight attendant. You don't find *that* scary? Spending all your time 30,000 feet above the earth?

CHARLIE

I think that's a little different.

RODNEY

How?

CHARLIE

Well, for one, flying is actually very safe. You're more likely to die on the freeway than in the sky.

RODNEY

Fair enough.

CHARLIE

Besides, I figure we've all gotta go sometime. If we crash, we crash. I just don't want to spend my life thinking about it. What's important is that I've *lived*. Y'know?

Rodney leans back in his chair, smiles; studying Charlie.

RODNEY

Would you let me take your picture?

EXT. EAST VILLAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rodney and Charlie move down a quiet city street. Rodney's camera is slung around his neck.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Charlie leads Rodney up the steps to the brownstone where she lives. She digs out her keys and opens the door.

Behind them, a POLICE CAR drives by. Rodney looks back, watches it disappear down the street, then turns and goes inside.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rodney stands shirtless over Charlie's CORPSE, holding his camera in both hands.

Charlie's body is undressed. Her hands have been tied behind her back, and there's a length of rope twisted tightly around her neck.

Rodney studies the body like a painter examining a work in progress, moving slowly around the room and studying it from different angles.

He goes to an OVERTURNED LAMP and sets it up right. Moves it closer to the body, adjusting the lighting. Rodney holds the camera up to his eyes and SNAPS A PICTURE.

At some point, Rodney looks up from the corpse and sees his REFLECTION in the mirror. He studies himself coldly, as though, for an instant, understanding just how awful he really is.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE - BACK TO PRESENT

PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF:

FIRST AD (OS)
And we're at commercial.

The house lights go up, and the crew begin moving quickly around the stage.

A young woman with a little make-up kit crosses to ED on the stage. Let's call her PAM (20s)

ED
Pam, I don't know what this new
shit you're putting on me is, but
it won't stay on my face.

(CONTINUED)

PAM

It's what I always use.

ED

These lights are a hundred degrees.
You need to find something that
won't wash away when I sweat.

THE CAMERA PANS OVER TO...

Sheryl sitting, looking pensive. Gretchen and Marilyn run over and begin touching up her hair and make-up.

MARILYN

What'd I tell you? Lug nuts.

GRETCHEN

The last guy didn't sound bad.

SHERYL

How am I doing?

MARILYN

Great.

GRETCHEN

Fabulous.

MARILYN

"Does he always talk like that?"

SHERYL

I'm worried it was too
condescending.

MARILYN

Did you hear the audience? You had
'em in stitches.

SHERYL

Yeah, no, I know. I'm just trying
to-- You know: What Ed said about
not--

MARILYN

Fuck Ed.

SHERYL

What?

MARILYN

I mean, no disrespect, but fuck
him. This isn't a sitcom and you're

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARILYN (cont'd)
not coming back next week. What's
he gonna do? Fire you? You're
supposed to have *fun*. That's the
whole point. So be yourself and say
whatever want.

Sheryl nods, taking in the advice.

SHERYL
Do either of you have a pen?

Marilyn hands Sheryl a pen and she begins to write on her
cue cards.

A female PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (18) steps up with a tray of
waters.

P.A.
Water?

SHERYL
No, thank you.

WE FOLLOW THE P.A. AS SHE CROSSES THE STAGE, MOVING AROUND
THE PARTITION TO THE THREE BACHELORS. This is the first time
we get a good look at them.

Bachelor's #1 and #2 are new faces. But we've seen Bachelor
#3 before: It's RODNEY.

Rodney sits there, quietly, looking serious and isolated,
while Bachelor's #1 and #2 chat affably between themselves.

P.A.
Water?

BACHELOR #1
Yes, please, thank you.

BACHELOR #2
Don't mind if I do.

P.A.
Water?

RODNEY
No.

He glares at her, and the P.A. hurries away.

(CONTINUED)

BACHELOR #2
(Re: the P.A.)
Too small.

Rodney looks over at him.

BACHELOR #2
Seriously, nothing under a C-cup. I don't give a shit how smart she is, how funny; her career, talents, politics, whatever. Doesn't matter. Can't do it.

RODNEY
What a gentleman.

BACHELOR #2
I'm a *realist*. I mean, if you *know* it's not gonna work, why go down that road? Hunh?

RODNEY
(Gestures across the partition)
What about her?

BACHELOR #2
What *about* her?

RODNEY
You haven't seen her yet.

BACHELOR #2
No.

RODNEY
What if she's *petite*?

BACHELOR #2
(Considers it)
I'd let her blow me. I mean, even Mosquito Bites need some loving now and then, right?

Bachelor #2 cackles to himself. Bachelor #1, the boy scout of the group, looks uncomfortable.

Rodney stares at Bachelor #2 and grins, like he knows something the other guys don't.

RODNEY
Your last name is Aslan?

(CONTINUED)

BACHELOR #2
Arnie Aslan, yeah.

RODNEY
What's that Armenian?

ARNIE
Loud and proud.

RODNEY
Made of strong stuff.

ARNIE
How do you mean?

RODNEY
Two genocides and you're still not
dead. It's impressive.

ARNIE
Excuse me?

RODNEY
Like cockroaches. Small and ugly
but you'll live forever. Until you
don't.

Rodney grins.

Arnie tenses, like he can't decide whether to laugh or throw
down.

INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH - SAME

On consecutive television monitors, we watch as:

- Bachelor #1 peeks around for help in case a fight breaks
out between Arnie and Rodney.
- Sheryl scribbles notes on her cue cards.
- A Hertz Car Rental commercial, starring O.J. Simpson,
draws to a close.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE

Suddenly, the house lights flash, signaling that the show is
about to begin again.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

We're on.

FROM HERE ON OUT, WE CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN BOTH SIDES OF THE PARTITION:

As Ed takes his place before the cameras and Marilyn and Gretchen vacate the stage, the FIRST AD counts down:

FIRST AD

In place everyone. And we're back
in five... four... three... two...

He points towards Ed.

ED

Welcome back to The Dating Game.
Sheryl, you had a little time to
think about those, um, colorful
introductions. Are you ready to ask
your questions?

SHERYL

I am.

ED

Okay, well then why don't you have
a seat right here. Make yourself
comfortable. Remember you can ask
them anything you like except for
name, age, occupation and income.
Good luck and here we go.

Sheryl looks into the crowd, scanning for Laura. Finds her seat empty.

Sheryl registers this. Then shakes it off and looks down at her cue cards, where the official questions have been scribbled out and replaced with her own handwritten ones.

SHERYL

Bachelor #1: Einstein said that
sitting on a hot stove for a minute
feels like an hour, and sitting
next to a nice girl for an hour
feels like a minute. That was *his*
theory of special relativity.
What's *yours*?

BACHELOR #1

Um... what?

The audience chuckles. Sheryl smiles wryly.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL

I'll come back to you on that.

BACHELOR #1

Wait, hold on: Was that the actual question?

SHERYL

(Moving on)

Bachelor #2: When you invite a girl out for dinner what do you expect in return?

ARNIE

(Snickers)

I guess that depends on the meal. I mean, are we talking Filet Mignon or what?

SHERYL

Good question. Are we?

ARNIE

Yeah, sure. I'm a generous guy.

SHERYL

That's good to know.

ARNIE

And if I'm spending an arm and a leg on dinner, I'd like to think she could at least buy the *dessert*.

Sheryl looks grossed out but keeps going, giving Arnie enough rope to hang himself.

SHERYL

And what would you order for dessert?

ARNIE

Oh, you know--

SHERYL

No, I don't. Tell me.

ARNIE

Something hot...

SHERYL

What, like banana flambe?

(CONTINUED)

ARNIE

...and wet and covered in cream.

SHERYL

Why do I get the impression that you don't eat out much?

ARNIE

Y'know, I'm happy to share.

SHERYL

(Shutting him down)

Sorry, I'm on a diet.

The audience laughs.

SHERYL

Bachelor #1: How's that theory of relativity coming along?

BACHELOR #1

Hunh?

SHERYL

Groovy. Keep at it.

The audience laughs again.

Rodney keeps his head down, listening, trying to gauge Sheryl's personality and what he thinks she'll respond to.

SHERYL

Bachelor #3.

RODNEY

Yes.

SHERYL

What's the difference between a boy and a man?

RODNEY

A boy thinks that buying a woman dinner means she owes you something.

Sheryl smiles and nods approvingly.

The audience hoots and hollers.

SHERYL

And what does a man think?

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

Well for starters he knows better than to talk about dessert before you've made it through dinner.

Arnie gives Rodney a dirty look then tries to hide it with a smile.

SHERYL

Bachelor #1, any luck?

BACHELOR #1

I can't...

SHERYL

No? Bachelor #3, your buddy's drawing a blank. Wanna help him out?

RODNEY

With his theory of special relativity?

SHERYL

Yeah.

Rodney thinks about it for a second. Then:

RODNEY

Whether it's for a minute or for an hour, I'd love to sit *relatively* close to a *special* girl when I can. How's that?

The audience ROARS; bursts out into applause.

Sheryl smirks like she can't help liking this guy.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABC STUDIOS - SAME

Laura hurries through the parking lot, looking for her car. Clearly lost and FRIGHTENED.

Rain pours down, drenching everything in site.

Eventually, Laura SPOTS HER CAR.

A voice calls out to Laura in the distance behind her:

(CONTINUED)

KENNY (OS)
 Laura! Laura!

Laura fumbles with her keys and unlocks the door.

She collapses into the driver's seat and SLAMS THE DOOR shut. She sits there, gasping and staring out the window as rain beats down on the windshield and hood.

HOLD ON HER.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE - SAME

Sheryl flips to the next cue cards.

SHERYL
 Bachelor #1, I threw you a curve
 ball last time--

BACHELOR #1
 I'll say. I didn't know you had to
 be an astrologer to be on this
 show.

SHERYL
 Do you mean astronomer?

BACHELOR #1
 Is there a difference?

SHERYL
 Do you want there to be?

BACHELOR #1
 Um: No?

The audience chuckles.

SHERYL
 By the way: Einstein was a
 physicist not an astronomer.

BACHELOR #1
 Are you going to ask me a question?

SHERYL
 I just asked you two. But yes:
 Bachelor #1: In *The Groundwork of
 the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel
 Kant argues--

(CONTINUED)

BACHELOR #1
(Genuinely frustrated)
Oh fer crying out loud--

The audience laughs.

SHERYL
Kidding. Bachelor #1: What are
girls for?

BACHELOR #1
What do you mean?

SHERYL
Just what I said. What Are Girls
For?

BACHELOR #1
Oh geeze. You're getting edgy.

SHERYL
Should we go back to Kant?

BACHELOR #1
No! No, I... I can do it...

SHERYL
Glad to hear it.

BACHELOR #1
Okay:

SHERYL
I believe in you, Bachelor #1.

BACHELOR #1
Thank you.

SHERYL
You can do this.

BACHELOR #1
Uh, girls are for... um... guys.
And for having fun with.

Sheryl waits for something else.

SHERYL
Is that it?

BACHELOR #1
(Dumbly)
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

The audience applauds and Bachelor #1 sinks down into his seat, relieved to have the question over with.

SHERYL

Gloria Steinem would be proud.
Bachelor #2: What are girls for?

ARNIE

Why does this feel like a trap?

SHERYL

I don't know. Why does it?

ARNIE

Because if I say girls are for
winning and dining, I sound like a
jerk. And if I say they're for,
y'know, *respecting* or whatever,
then I just sound like some schmuck
who's just looking to get laid--

SHERYL

Bachelor #2, I think you just
answered my question.

ARNIE

Hey, wait, no, hold on! I didn't
mean it like that!

SHERYL

Bachelor #3--

ARNIE

Aw, God *dang* it--

SHERYL

Bachelor #3: What are girls for?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FRANKLIN CANYON, CA - MORNING (DECEMBER 1977)

The morning sun crests above distant hills. Birds are chirping. Everything is beautiful and the world is waking up.

Somewhere, small in the frame, A DEAD GIRL (18) lays naked in the grass. Her body is bent and broken.

CUT TO:

We cut to another landscape. More California hills dotted with oak and sycamore trees. A pond, perhaps.

(CONTINUED)

In the distance, some GRIP TRUCKS roll up a dirt road, kicking up clouds of dust in their wake.

The trucks pull to a stop and some CREW hop out.

While the DIRECTOR and DP discuss the scene they're about to shoot, some GRIPS begin unloading the truck.

Meanwhile, one of the GRIPS (male, 20s) goes to the CRAFT SERVICES TABLE and pours himself a coffee. Sips it and wanders off into the brush to look at the hills.

Suddenly, something catches his eye:

It's the DEAD GIRL (18).

CLOSE ON: An ant crawls across her cheek onto her ear. Her lobe is pierced, but the earring is missing.

The grip stands there, stunned.

EXT. L.A. TIMES - MORNING, DAYS LATER

A tall stucco structure in downtown. The words "L.A. TIMES" can be seen across the front of the building.

SUPER:

**LOS ANGELES, CA
December 1977**

INT. ATTACHED PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Employees cross from their cars to the entrance of the building.

Rodney moves with the crowd, chatting with a co-worker.

CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS OUT until it's revealed that we're in the backseat of A POLICE CRUISER, looking through the windshield.

Two INSPECTORS sit in the front seat, looking at the crowd through a pair of binoculars. We can't see their faces from here, but we will come to know them as WALKER and VANDERBILT (40s, 50s).

WALKER
Tan slacks, blue shirt?

(CONTINUED)

VANDERBILT

Yeah.

Walker checks his watch, jots something down in a little spiral-bound notebook.

Vanderbilt sips his coffee, watches as Rodney disappears inside the office building.

WALKER

See where he parked?

VANDERBILT

Upper level, I think.

WALKER

What's he drive?

VANDERBILT

(Checks his notes)

Blue Datsun F-10.

WALKER

Let's take a look.

They climb out of the car and begin working their way through the parking garage.

INT. L.A. TIMES, TYPESETTING - MORNING

In a vast office space, TYPESETTERS (mostly men) sit at small desks transcribing articles into a computerized system.

Among them is Rodney, who transcribes an article with the headline "Carter Delays Foreign Trips".

After a moment, a COPY BOY (17) comes up and taps Rodney on the shoulder; hands him a SHEET OF PAPER.

COPY BOY

Murphy wants this prioritized.

The Copy Boy takes off.

Rodney looks at the typewritten article. It's headline reads: "WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN CANYON"

Rodney studies the short article, focusing on a line towards the bottom:

"Detectives said there may be a connection with the two similar slayings in the last two weeks..."

Rodney reaches into his pocket and removes a GIRL'S EARRING.
'Turns it over between his fingers.

INT. L.A. TIMES, LAYOUT - LATER

Rodney moves through a room of men laying out the newspaper
on upright drafting desks.

COWORKER

Hey.

RODNEY

Brian.

COWORKER 2

Hey Rodney.

RODNEY

Allen.

Rodney passes through a door at the back of the room.

INT. BREAK ROOM - AFTERNOON

Rodney stands with THREE COWORKERS(40s - 50s), flipping
through pages of a small PHOTO ALBUM.

COWORKER 3

Ho God, look at that one.

COWORKER 4

The tits on her. I swear to Christ,
I could eat 'em.

COWORKER 3

Save some for me.

The guys giggle like mischievous children.

Rodney flips through some more pages.

RODNEY

Hold on, I gotta show you another
one. I met her at a party at Warren
Beatty's house.

COWORKER 4

"Warren Beatty's house." Listen to
this fucking guy.

Rodney finds the page he's looking for.

(CONTINUED)

Something about the photo SURPRISES the men.

COWORKER 4
(Grinning)
God damn.

RODNEY
I know, right?

COWORKER 4
God damn God damn God damn.

RODNEY
What'd I tell you?

COWORKER 3
(Slightly disturbed)
Wow. She's, uh...

RODNEY
What?

COWORKER 4
She looks pretty young.

RODNEY
Hey Man: The fresher the fruit, the
sweeter the juice.

Coworker 3 and 4 LAUGH loudly.

COWORKER 4
You got that right.

Coworker 5, looking disgusted, slips quietly out of the room. Rodney is the only one who notices. The other guys are glued to the book.

Coworker 4 flips to the next page.

COWORKER 4
Oh shit, look at this one...

EXT. ALCALA HOUSE - DAYS LATER

A simple rancher home in Monterey Park. In the distance we can hear the sound of children playing. This is a family neighborhood.

INT. RODNEY'S BEDROOM

The curtains have been drawn, and a red light bulb is screwed into the ceiling. A long table has been built into the far wall, where various PHOTO DEVELOPING supplies sit.

On the wall above Rodney's bed is the DEEP PURPLE POSTER featuring the Hieronymus Bosch painting of Hell from "The Garden of Earthly Delights."

Rodney puts a sheet of processing paper into the developer. Slowly an image comes into focus: It's a VOYEURISTIC SHOT of a BLOND WOMAN IN THE STREET, oblivious that she's being photographed. We'll come to know her as SUE KELLY.

Rodney stairs down at it admiringly.

Suddenly, someone KNOCKS on his door.

MOTHER(OS)

Rodney?

RODNEY

What is it, Mom?

The door opens a crack.

MOTHER(OS)

There are some men out here who want to speak to you.

RODNEY

I'll be right out.

CUT TO:

Rodney quickly collects his photos and stashes them in LOCK BOX. A PISTOL, a couple of KNIVES, and other photos and keepsakes are also in the box.

CUT TO:

Rodney HIDES THE LOCKBOX above a ceiling panel in his closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney steps out of his bedroom to find the TWO INSPECTORS from earlier, WALKER and VANDERBILT, waiting in the living room.

Rodney's MOTHER stands by nervously.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

Hello.

WALKER

Rodney Alcala?

RODNEY

That's right.

WALKER

Hi, I'm Inspector James Walker.
This is Inspector Andrew
Vanderbilt. We're investigating the
disappearance of Emma Allstone.

RODNEY

You're a long way from New York,
aren't you?

WALKER

So you're familiar with the case.

RODNEY

Only what I've read in the papers.
Should I have a lawyer present?

WALKER

I don't know. Should you?

Rodney shuts his mouth.

WALKER

Take a seat, please.

RODNEY

Mom, would you get us some tea?

Rodney's Mother doesn't move.

RODNEY

Please.

Finally, she steps out of the room.

Rodney moves to the couch. Sits.

The Inspectors pull up chairs opposite him.

WALKER

As may you know, Emma Allstone was
last seen on July 15th, leaving her
apartment building on 3rd Avenue at
44th Street, accompanied by a thin,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WALKER (cont'd)
white man with long brown hair. Her calendar says that she was supposed to meet up with a photographer named John Burger at that time.

RODNEY
What does that have to do with me?

WALKER
An informant recently notified us that you've worked under the name John Burger in the past.

(No response)
Is this true?

RODNEY
Who told you that?

VANDERBILT
Answer the question, please.

RODNEY
I haven't used that name in years.

WALKER
Why did you adopt a pseudonym?

RODNEY
'Felt like a change. I wanted to forget the past.

WALKER
(Consulting file)
Are you referring to the rape of Alice McAndrews, for which you served 34 months in prison?

Rodney hears a *sound*. Sees his MOTHER'S SHADOW poking out from around the corner. 'Knows he's being listened to.

Rodney looks back at Walker.

WALKER
Rodney?

RODNEY
I'm referring to life.

WALKER
Another informant tells us that you knew Ms. Allstone.

Rodney stares hard at Walker.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY
(Hesitates)
I met her.

WALKER
Where?

RODNEY
(Lying)
A club, I think. I can't remember
which one.

WALKER
Were you with Ms. Allstone on July
15th this year?

RODNEY
(Lying)
We got lunch. Went to central park,
took some pictures. Then she went
home. I never heard from her again.

WALKER
Do you still have those pictures?

RODNEY
(Lying)
No.

WALKER
Why not?

RODNEY
(Kind of lying)
I only took them to get her into
bed.

WALKER
Did it work?

RODNEY
(Lying)
No.

WALKER
Mind if we look around?

RODNEY
Do you have a warrant?

In the other room a TEA KETTLE begins to WHISTLE.

Walker grins.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY
Anything else?

WALKER
Don't go anywhere. We may need to
speak to you again.

Rodney's Mom steps back into the room carrying a tray with
cups of tea on it.

WALKER
Thank you, Ma'am. We're all set.

Walker and Vanderbilt see themselves out.

Rodney stares after them.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BOARDWALK - NIGHT

We follow Rodney down the boardwalk in Santa Monica, lit by
shopfronts and streetlamps. In the distance behind him, we
can make out the Ferris wheel at the end of the pier,
glowing in the night.

Beach bums and stoners mill about. There are guys on
skateboards and girls on roller skates. A street musician
plays a set of bongos to a few tourist who throw money into
his bucket.

Rodney ignores them all. They are not who he is looking for.

INT. SANTA MONICA BAR - NIGHT

Rodney sits quietly in a corner booth, a cigarette
smoldering in one hand. He studies the throngs of happy,
laughing women, while Etta James sings "Take It To The
Limit" through the jukebox.

Eventually, Rodney zeroes in on a single woman. It's the
BLOND WOMAN from his photograph, SUE KELLY. She's dressed in
a slinky cocktail dress, laughing with friends.

Among the friends is LAURA (from the audience of *The Dating
Game*). They order another round of drinks.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON RODNEY, who stares at Sue, unblinking,
lost in thought.

CUT TO:

- IN SUE'S APARTMENT, LATER THAT NIGHT: Rodney PINS Sue to
her mattress, hands gripped around her throat.

(CONTINUED)

The image lasts for a fraction of a second-- a snapshot of what's to come.

BACK TO:

CAMERA CONTINUES IN ON RODNEY, who now seems to be looking past Sue. He lifts the cigarette to his lips then lets it fall again without taking a drag.

CUT TO:

- Sue flails at Rodney, but it's useless. He tightens his grip.

BACK TO:

CAMERA CONTINUES IN ON RODNEY, who is lost in a 1000-yard stare.

CUT TO:

- Sue collapses, dead. Rodney lets out a long, low, animal growl.

BACK TO:

CAMERA CONTINUES IN ON RODNEY. A tear streaks down his cheek.

CUT TO:

- Rodney leans forward and takes a BITE out of Sue's right breast. Blood pours down his chin.

BACK TO:

CAMERA CONTINUES IN ON RODNEY. Stops, close on his face. He blinks away the tears. Wipes his face.

He stands and crosses to Sue.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT, DAY

Laura sits in her car, staring blankly out the window. Rain beats down on the windshield.

HOLD ON HER.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SANTA MONICA BAR - NIGHT (DECEMBER 1977)

Rodney, Sue and Laura in the bar. The table is cluttered with empty glasses and beer bottles. They've been talking for a while; all a little drunk.

RODNEY

What's the most beautiful thing
you've ever seen?

LAURA

(Chuckles)
'Scuse me?

SUE

What?

RODNEY

(Gestures to both women)
Present company excluded, of
course.

SUE

(Laughs loudly)
Is that your line? Please tell me
you've used that before--

LAURA

Did you really just call me a
thing?

RODNEY

(Ignoring Laura)
I've never used it before--

SUE

Is that what you do though? Just go
around telling women what you think
they want to hear?

RODNEY

Getting warm.

SUE

At least you're honest about it.

RODNEY

No, but really. I'm being serious.

SUE

About--?

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

I want to know--

SUE

What's the most beautiful--?

RODNEY

What's your *idea* of beauty?

SUE

I don't know. I've seen a lot of--

RODNEY

Because I have this theory--

SUE

Oh fer fucks sake--

RODNEY

No, really, I do. I have this theory that all the things that people tend to think of as being, y'know, important ingredients for a successful relationship-- looks, career, politics, whatever-- are wrong. What really matters is whether or not you have a similar vision of beauty. For some people that's the Grand Canyon. For others, it's some bearded guy nailed to a cross. It's about what feeds your soul.

Sue looks at Rodney, clearly taken by him.

SUE

Do you wanna get out of here?

Rodney grins.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT

Laura sits, still staring out the window.

CAMERA PUSH IN ON HER...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SANTA MONICA BAR - NIGHT (DECEMBER, 1977)

Moments later. Sue is putting on her jacket while Rodney pays the bill.

SUE
I'll call you tomorrow.

LAURA
Hey, Sue. Um: You sure I can't take you home?

SUE
(Smiles)
I'm gonna be fine.

LAURA
I'm just saying. You're kinda drunk.

Suddenly, Rodney steps up to them.

RODNEY
You ready?

SUE
Let's go.

Sue gives Laura a little toodle-oo wave and heads for the exit.

RODNEY
(To Laura)
Don't worry. I'll bring her back in one piece.

Rodney winks at her.

Laura winces, visibly creeped out by this.

Rodney turns and follows Sue out the door.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT

CLOSE ON Laura, lost in thought.

Suddenly, someone BANGS on the passenger's window.

Laura JUMPS in her seat. Startled. She looks out the window to see Kenny standing there.

(CONTINUED)

Laura reaches over and unlocks his door. Kenny hops in with her.

KENNY

What the fuck's going on? You scared the shit out of my parents. You know that, right?

LAURA

It was him.

KENNY

Who?

LAURA

The guy on the show. Number three.

KENNY

What are you talking about? Are you ovulating or something?

LAURA

What?

Laura starts to say something else. Stops. Collects herself.

Kenny shakes his head, frustrated, as if he thinks this is all a ruse.

KENNY

It's like whenever my folks come to town you need to find some new way to humiliate me.

LAURA

I--

KENNY

Well I'm sick of it. I know you don't like all the tourist-y shit, but would it kill you to just *pretend*? For once, make it about someone other than yourself?

LAURA

Kenny, look, would you *please* just--

KENNY

Y'know what: Fuck it. Do whatever you want. We'll get a cab back. See you later.

(CONTINUED)

Kenny throws open the passenger's side door and steps out into the rain. Walks off.

Laura sits there, looking crushed.

She puts her head in her hands, trying to decide what to do. After a moment, she looks up towards the television studio.

She CLIMBS out of the car, SLAMMING THE DOOR behind her. Walks off towards the studio.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE - DAY

AGAIN, PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF:

SHERYL
Bachelor #3?

RODNEY
What are girls for?

SHERYL
That's right.

RODNEY
I guess I'd have to say that that's
up to the girl.

The audience CHEERS.

SHERYL
Good answer.

Sheryl looks at a LARGE DIGITAL CLOCK towards the rear of the room, counting down the time to the next commercial break. 00:01:10... 00:01:09... 00:01:08...

Sheryl realizes that she only has time for one last question and shuffles through the notes written on her cue cards.

SHERYL
Okay, Bachelor #3, I have a follow
up question.

RODNEY
Shoot.

SHERYL
You've been with the other
Bachelors for a few hours now,
right?

(CONTINUED)

Bachelor #1 and Arnie shift in their seats, obviously uncomfortable with where this question is going.

RODNEY
We talked a bit.

SHERYL
Okay: Tell me the most disgusting thing that Bachelor's #1 and #2 said or did backstage.

The audience HOWLS WITH DELIGHT.

SHERYL
Besides coming on this show, of course.

Ed laughs, trying to be a good sport, but it's clear that he's pissed off.

RODNEY
Oh Gosh. Wow, that's a tough one.

Sheryl leans forward in her seat, listening intently.

RODNEY
Well, y'know, if I'm being honest, Bachelor #1 really didn't say anything disgusting.

SHERYL
No?

Bachelor #1 slumps down in his seat, relieved beyond words.

RODNEY
Yeah, he's basically a boy scout.

BACHELOR #1
It's true! I didn't say anything--

RODNEY
With the operative word being "boy."

The audience CHUCKLES.

SHERYL
What about Bachelor #2?

Bachelor #2 stares daggers at Rodney.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

I can't repeat it word for word, seeing as how we're on television and all. But he had some thoughts about bra-size being a prerequisite for a meaningful relationship.

SHERYL

Is that right?

RODNEY

Thought that was pretty, um, tasteless.

The audience BOOS at Bachelor #2, who smiles bitterly and shakes his head. Trying to hide his anger behind a twisted smile.

Suddenly, a BUZZER sounds and Ed steps back out onto the stage.

ED

And that buzzer signals that it's the end of the game.

BACHELOR # 2

Wait, hold on. What about me?

ED

It's decision time, Sheryl--

BACHELOR # 2

I don't get to answer the question?

INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH

The TV DIRECTOR motions to someone at the control panel.

TV DIRECTOR

Kill Bachelor #2's mic.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE

BACHELOR # 2

Because he said some pretty--

But before Bachelor #2 can finish his sentence, his mic cuts out. Suddenly, his voice sounds small-- inaudible to Sheryl and the audience.

Rodney continues to smile out at the cameras, unconcerned.

(CONTINUED)

ED

--so why don't you stay right there, analyze what you've heard and make a decision.

INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH

CU on a TV MONITOR: Ed turns and speaks directly into the cameras.

ED

And while Sheryl makes her decision about her date, we'll take a little time off so you can make a decision about the very fine products we've selected just for you. We'll be back right after this.

Suddenly, the monitor cuts to a SHAKE 'n' BAKE COMMERCIAL showing a KNIFE CUTTING INTO A PORK CHOP.

CUT TO:

INT. ABC STUDIOS - DAY

Laura strides down a long corridor. Eventually she finds what she's looking for: a SECURITY GUARD (40s), feet propped up on his desk, answering a call.

LAURA

Excuse me. Could you--?

SECURITY

(To the caller)

--Jim, gimme a second.

(To Laura)

Can I help you with something?

LAURA

I need to talk to someone on The Dating Game.

SECURITY

F'you want tickets to see the show, you need to go to Guest Relations. Head down this hallway, go through the doors and--

LAURA

No, no, I don't want to see it. I was just *there*. I need to talk to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LAURA (cont'd)
someone who works on the show. A
producer or something--

SECURITY
What for?

LAURA
There's someone on it, right now,
who shouldn't be there.

SECURITY
"Who Shouldn't Be There?"

LAURA
Yes.

SECURITY
Your husband?

LAURA
No, I--

SECURITY
Boyfriend?

LAURA
Last year, my friend Susan Kelly
went missing. We were dancing at a
club, and she met this guy. Okay?
The following morning she was found
dead in her apartment. Murdered.
And that guy was the last person
with her before she died.

SECURITY
Uh huh. So what does this have to
do with--?

LAURA
That guy is Bachelor #3. He's on
the show right now. And he's
dangerous. Could you just call
someone for me? *Anyone?*
(little pause)
Please.

The Security Guard looks at her, still dubious, but
softening.

SECURITY
(To Caller)
Hey Jim. I'm gonna have to call you
back.

(CONTINUED)

The Security Guard hangs up and begins to dial another number.

Laura looks relieved.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE - DAY

Commercial Break: The cameras stop and the crew begins to move around the stage.

FIRST AD

And we're out.

Ed crosses the stage with his Assistant.

ED

'Soon as the show's over, get that cunt out of here. I don't want to see her face again.

Sheryl hears this. Looks hurt, if not surprised.

Marilyn and Gretchen dart over to Sheryl, resume with her hair and make-up.

GRETCHEN

So who you gonna pick?

MARILYN

Knock it off.

GRETCHEN

What, I'm just asking.

SHERYL

Do you think I went too far?

MARILYN

I think *he* thinks you went to far.

GRETCHEN

He thinks everything's too far.

SHERYL

Do *you* though?

MARILYN

I've been working on the show since 1968. I've listed to more idiots flirt back and forth than I can count. And the thing I've learned is that no matter what words they

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARILYN (cont'd)
use, The Question Beneath The
Question is always the same.

SHERYL
I'll bite. What's The Question
Beneath The Question?

MARILYN
"Which one of you will hurt me?"
(Little pause)
You just asked it clearer than
most.

Sheryl nods: 'Yep. That's the crux of it.'

GRETCHEN
So who you gonna pick?

CUT TO:

INT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PARTITION - SAME

Suddenly, Arnie WHACKS Rodney across the arm. Rodney looks
down at his arm, confused.

ARNIE
What the fuck, man!

RODNEY
Something wrong?

ARNIE
Why'd you tell her all that?

RODNEY
Because she asked.

BACHELOR #1
Whoa. Uh. Guys, c'mon--

ARNIE
"Because she asked." Fuck you,
asshole.

BACHELOR #1
Calm down, it's just a game.

ARNIE
(To Bachelor #1)
Zip it, twerp. You didn't get
humiliated on national television.

(CONTINUED)

BACHELOR #1
Just saying--

ARNIE
(To Rodney)
Soon as this show's over, you and
me are gonna have some words.

RODNEY
Words? Is that right?

ARNIE
You bet your ass.

BACHELOR #1
I gotta pee. I'll be right back.

Bachelor #1 gets up and runs off stage.

Rodney stares hard at Arnie, a little smile on his face.
Trying to decide how far he wants to push this.

RODNEY
What if I don't show? What then?
You gonna hire someone to track me
down?

ARNIE
(Impotently)
Fucking pussy.

RODNEY
I have a better idea. Let's
exchange contact information now so
that we know where to find each
other in case the other person
get's cold feet.

Arnie looks dubious.

ARNIE
Okay.

RODNEY
I'll give you my I.D., and you give
me yours. Deal?

Rodney reaches into his pocket and takes out his wallet.
Digs through it until he finds a small square piece of
paper. He takes it out.

Arnie takes out his I.D.. The men trade.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

(Reading)

Stocker Street, Glendale. That's at the base of the hills, right? Yeah, I know where that is.

Arnie looks at the slip of paper in his hands-- it's a small black and white photo of a MURDERED WOMAN; naked, strangled and posed in some bizarre position.

For a second, Arnie appears confused, like he can't quite tell what he's looking at. Then it hits him, and he LEAPS BACK IN HIS SEAT, dropping the photograph.

The photo flutters to the ground, landing face-side down.

ARNIE

What the fuck is that?

Rodney smiles at Arnie and hands his I.D. back to him. Rodney leans forward and picks the photo up off the floor-- looks at it lovingly, then folds it up and puts it in his mouth. Chews it. Swallows. SMILES.

Arnie stares at him, terrified.

Suddenly, Bachelor #1 returns, takes his seat. He registers that the mood has shifted, but doesn't question it.

FIRST AD (OS)

Alright folks. Everyone in place!

INT. ABC STUDIOS - DAY

Laura watches pensively as the Security Guard tries to connect her to someone on The Dating Game.

SECURITY

(Into phone)

Okay, great. Tell Lisa we're on our way. Thanks.

He hangs up.

SECURITY

Come with me.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Security Guard leads Laura down a long corridor.

SECURITY

Don't make me regret this.

Laura nods, nervous but grateful.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY (SUMMER, 1978)

A desert landscape. Low hills in the distance; dry, rocky terrain.

CUT TO:

A COYOTE trots off towards the hills with a chipmunk crushed between it's jaws.

CUT TO:

Back on the highway. Rodney's blue Datsun speeds past the camera, shrinking off into the distance.

INT. DATSUN - SAME

Rodney and Amy drive in silence. Amy glances over at him and furrows her brow. He looks familiar but she can't place where she's seen him before.

Rodney looks at Amy, and she turns away again.

RODNEY

So let me guess: An actress?

AMY

Hm?

RODNEY

Or are you gonna be a model?

Amy chuckles and shakes her head.

RODNEY

What? What'd I say?

AMY

I'm not gonna fuck you.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

'Scuse me?

AMY

'Just saying. If that's what you've got in mind then you can pull over and just let me off right here.

RODNEY

Whoa, hey, time out. I wasn't trying to--

AMY

I'm not gonna blow some dude for the privilege of a ride in his fucking *Datsun*. Got it?

RODNEY

I was just making conversation.

AMY

"Are you gonna be an actress or a model?"

RODNEY

What? I was being serious.

AMY

Pfft.

RODNEY

You're young, you're pretty, you're moving to Los Angeles. You don't think that's a reasonable assumption?

AMY

It's a perfectly reasonable assumption. But it's a creepy-ass thing to say to someone who you've just met.

RODNEY

How?

AMY

It's flattery.

RODNEY

You don't think you're good looking?

(CONTINUED)

AMY
I don't think "good looking,"
describes most models. They're
exceptionally beautiful.

RODNEY
(Suggestively)
Well--

AMY
And by telling me that I look like
they do-- whether you meant it or
not-- you're signaling a level of
sexual attraction; which puts me in
a position where either I have to
accept your advances or shut it
down and risk all the things that
women risk when they reject a man.

RODNEY
I--

AMY
And considering that I'm a) in a
car with someone I don't know,
b) traveling with my
old-as-the-hills dog, and c)
currently passing through the
middle of fucking nowhere, that's a
scary God damn position to be in.

Rodney starts to say something, then stops. He doesn't look
upset, and certainly not ashamed of himself. There's a
little smile on his face, like he's pleasantly surprised by
the brazenness of his new passenger.

RODNEY
Alright. Alright, fair enough. Can
we try again?

AMY
I don't know. Can we?

Rodney snaps on the radio to lighten the mood. Classic rocks
pours of the speakers. Something a light and folksy with
sinister undertones. "The Dark End Of The Street" by the
Flying Burrito Brothers, maybe.

RODNEY
Why are you going to L.A.?

(CONTINUED)

AMY
I got into school there.

RODNEY
Congratulations. Which one?

AMY
UCLA.

RODNEY
'Know what you're studying yet?

AMY
(Lying)
Criminal Justice.

RODNEY
Really?

AMY
Yeah.

RODNEY
How'd you settle on that?

AMY
(Lying)
Runs in the family. My dad's a
Sergeant in the LAPD, and my
brother's in the Marines, so--
y'know.

RODNEY
Cool. A whole family of protectors.

AMY
Something like that.

RODNEY
(Doesn't buy it for a second)
Very honorable. Where's he
stationed?

AMY
What?

RODNEY
Your brother, I mean.

AMY
(Floundering)
Oh. Um. He's, uh--

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

I actually used to be in the army. Trained to be a paratrooper, but ended up working as a *clerk*, which is fine by me. I'm not cut out for combat.

(Little pause)

Sorry, I interrupted. You were saying?

AMY

Oh, no. That's fine.

RODNEY

(Gestures at Ginger)

What about her? She going to school with you too?

AMY

No, Ginger's staying with my dad.

RODNEY

(To Ginger)

Is that right? You gonna help hunt down the bad guys, Ginger? You gonna make the world safe for Good People?

Amy reaches back and pets Ginger on the head.

AMY

(Chuckles)

I think her hunting days are just about over. But I'll see her on the weekends, and with a Lieutenant to look out after her, I think she'll be just fine.

RODNEY

'Thought you said your dad was a Sergeant.

AMY

What?

(realizes her mistake)

Yeah, no. Uh: He *used to be* a Lieutenant before he was promoted.

RODNEY

You mean he used to be a *Sergeant* before he was promoted? Lieutenants outranks Sergeants.

(CONTINUED)

AMY

W... I, um...

RODNEY

Unless he used to work at a rural precinct or something, and was promoted to a lesser position in a larger district?

AMY

Yeah. I think that's what happened.

RODNEY

Gotcha.

AMY

Because he used to work in-- Yeah. That's definitely it. Sorry, it's been a long day. I'm...

Amy gestures that she's mentally fried, forces a chuckle then turns and looks out the window. 'Knows that she has just blown her tough girl cover.

Rodney allows a slight smile to creep across his lips. Keeps driving.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

The Datsun speeds on down the highway.

INT. DATSUN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Rodney takes out a joint, lights it. Takes a hit then offers it to Amy who shakes her head. Rodney shrugs.

Amy peaks over at Rodney, again seeming to recognize him.

RODNEY

Something wrong?

AMY

Sorry, I feel like I've seen you before.

RODNEY

I'm not the kid on the milk carton, if that's what you're wondering.

Again, Amy shakes it off. Looks out the window at a road sign that says:

(CONTINUED)

Los Angeles 65

Amy looks impatient. She turns and checks on Ginger in the back seat, sleeping.

Rodney reaches down to scratch his ankle.

CUT TO:

Beneath the seat, Rodney reaches for a REVOLVER. He rotates it so that it's easily accessible, then removes his hand.

CUT BACK TO:

Amy suddenly notices a CAMERA CASE in the back seat. She furrows her brow, like she's just found another piece of the puzzle but doesn't know how to put it together yet.

AMY

You're a photographer?

RODNEY

Hm? Oh, yeah.

AMY

What do you shoot?

RODNEY

People. Women mostly.

AMY

Like for magazines, or--?

RODNEY

Sometimes. Does that make me creepy too?

AMY

Depends on the pictures.

RODNEY

Well, I don't have any on hand, so--.

AMY

I guess I'll never know.

RODNEY

Bummer. My Pampers ad would have blown your mind.

Amy chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

You sure you don't want some of this?

Rodney re-offers her the joint.

Amy looks at it for a second, weighing the risks. Finally, she accepts it, TAKES A HIT and hands it back.

Rodney finishes it off and flicks the rest out the window.

RODNEY

God look at view. How beautiful is that?

(little pause)

Mind if I pull over and snap a couple pictures?

AMY

Um...

RODNEY

If you're in a hurry, we don't need to.

AMY

No, it's fine.

RODNEY

Cool. Thanks.

Rodney pulls into a rest stop overlooking PYRAMID LAKE; a vast reservoir surrounded by mountains.

EXT. PYRAMID LAKE REST STOP

Rodney and Amy climb out of the car.

RODNEY

Would you grab my camera case?

Amy does.

While she's distracted, Rodney get the revolver from beneath his seat and slips it in the back of his pants.

Amy steps around the car and hands him the case, oblivious to the gun.

RODNEY

(Gesturing to Ginger)

Wanna take her?

(CONTINUED)

AMY
She's fine there.

RODNEY
Cool.

Rodney crosses to the edge of the look out, snaps some pictures of the lake.

Amy loiters, not frightened but still on guard.

RODNEY
I can't get the shot I want from here. I think I'm gonna climb down the embankment. Join me?

AMY
Is it safe?

RODNEY
I think we'll survive.

AMY
Okay.

Rodney climbs over the guard rail and begins to move down the hill towards the lake. Amy starts to follow him, then stops and looks back towards Ginger who is staring out the car window at her, whining pitifully.

Amy turns and follows him down the hill.

EXT. LAKE - AFTERNOON

Rodney snaps some more pictures of the lake while Amy saunters around. She skips a stone.

RODNEY
Mind if I snap one of you?

AMY
Hm?

RODNEY
Nothing wild. I promise.

AMY
I don't think so.

RODNEY
Just to give a sense of perspective. These mountains--
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY (cont'd)
they're huge, y'know, but it's kind
of hard to tell without a figure in
the image.

AMY
Let me think about it.

RODNEY
Fair enough.

Rodney sits beside the lake, reaches behind his back and removes the gun from his waistband. He tucks it discreetly beneath his leg.

Amy walks over to him, sits down. 'Looks at Rodney, sitting there with his camera.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHULTZ NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

AMY'S POV: 10 years younger, Rodney Alcala squats down to help Amy pick up her books. His camera dangles from the strap around his neck. He looks up at her and smiles.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LAKE - AFTERNOON

Amy looks at Rodney with an expression of dawning recognition.

AMY
That's how I know you.

RODNEY
Hm?

AMY
You offered me a ride when I was a
kid. I was on my way to school and
my bag broke--

Rodney gives her a look like he doesn't remember this, but believes her nevertheless. There have been so many girls, after all.

AMY
Heh. Not a lot has changed, I
guess.

(CONTINUED)

Amy suddenly gets wistful, like this memory has triggered emotions that she's been holding back.

AMY

Actually everything has changed.
That may have been the last decent
day of my life.

Rodney's hand finds it's way to the gun-- strokes it slightly.

RODNEY

How's that?

AMY

Nevermind. Sorry, it's stupid. I
sound like a--

RODNEY

No, what were you gonna say?

Amy starts to say something; stops herself. Looks embarrassed.

AMY

Fuck it. You already know I'm full
of shit, so why not. My dad isn't
in L.A. He, uh, took off when I was
a kid. It's a total fucking cliché.
Met some woman on a business trip
and never came back. I think he
lives in San Antonio now.

Rodney's hand freezes on the gun. Something about this last line has seized him.

AMY

Which, I mean: Big whoop, right?
People deal with worse every day.
But still: Everything seemed to
fall apart after that that. My mom
moved back to Reno so she could be
near her parents, but then *they*
died, and she started drinking
and-- heh. It's all normal stuff.
Totally ordinary dumb choices and
shitty luck. But once you're IN it,
it's just so hard to get OUT of.

RODNEY

Are you actually going to UCLA to
study Criminal Justice?

(CONTINUED)

AMY

Pfft. I haven't even finished studying for the SATs. I've got a cousin in Hollywood who manages a laundromat. She's gonna let me stay there until I can get on my feet. Pretty pathetic, hunh?

Rodney tries to say something, but the words won't come out.

AMY

And I know it doesn't make sense, but sometimes I look back at that time and wonder how everything would have been different if Dad hadn't gone on that business trip, or hadn't met that woman. I think about the details of the day, and what I could have done to change the course of events. And--

Amy stops herself; starts again, her mind changing direction.

Rodney removes his hand from the gun.

AMY

I remember in high school my math teacher was explaining angles and distances. And she told us to imagine a massive comet, the size of Texas, on a collision course towards the moon. And as it torpedoes through space, it hits some tiny space rock which shifts it's course 1 degrees in the other direction. And, y'know, 1 degrees over the course of a mile won't make a big difference. But 1 degrees over the course of a million miles makes it so that instead of hitting the moon, it hits California. Over time, a little thing can make a big difference.

(Little pause)

Y'know what I mean?

Rodney looks at Amy with a pensive expression. Something about all of this has struck a chord with him.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

Yeah, I do.

AMY

Sorry, don't listen to me. I'm
really high. I... never mind.

Amy looks at Rodney, sensing something that isn't there.
Warming to him.

In the distance, the sun begins to lower behind the
mountains.

AMY

If you still want to take a picture
of me... you can.

RODNEY

We should get back to the car.

Amy nods, disappointed.

AMY

Okay.

They stand and begin back up the hill.

EXT. PYRAMID LAKE REST STOP - DUSK

Rodney and Amy get back into the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SHORT WHILE LATER

The Datsun speeds down a long, moonlit stretch of highway.

Amy stares out the window at the passing landscape while
Rodney keeps his eyes glued to the road. Hands gripping the
wheel.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT, HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

The Datsun pulls into a laundromat parking lot. Through the
glass facade, we can see some customers folding clothes
inside.

Amy hops out, grabs Ginger and her bag. She leans in through
the passenger' side window.

(CONTINUED)

AMY
Well, thanks for the ride.

RODNEY
Sure thing.

AMY
If you ever want to talk, you know
where to find me.

Rodney nods.

AMY
See ya.

Amy turns and heads into the laundromat where she's greeted
by a white woman-- presumably her COUSIN (30s).

Rodney watches as they hug. Something about it seems to
irritate him and he backs quietly out of the parking lot and
drives away.

FLASH-FORWARD TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - BACK TO PRESENT

The Security Guard and Laura continue down the corridor.
They turn a corner and move through a door into...

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE

The Security Guard gestures to a couch.

SECURITY
Have a seat there and someone will
be with you in just a minute.

LAURA
Who?

SECURITY
George Bradshaw, the series
producer. He'll be able to help
you.

Laura nods, nervous but grateful.

LAURA
Thank you. Really.

(CONTINUED)

SECURITY

He'll be here any minute.

The Security Guard turns and leaves.

Laura sits. She looks at the clock on the wall-- it reads 3:50.

She turns back and continues waiting patiently.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO / STAGE

Again, Ed takes his place before the cameras as Marilyn and Gretchen vacate the stage.

Again, the First AD counts down:

FIRST AD

Four... three... two...

He points towards Ed.

ED

Alright, welcome back to *The Dating Game*. Sheryl, you played the game beautifully, and now it's time to make a decision. The bachelors were cool, candid and sharp, but only one of them gets the date. So will it be Bachelor #1, Bachelor #2 or Bachelor #3? Who is the lucky fellow?

Sheryl looks out into the audience, her eyes drifting over to the Laura's empty chair. Something about her absence feels ominous.

SHERYL

Um...

ED

Yes?

On the other side of the partition, Rodney leans forward, listening expectantly.

Sheryl looks off stage towards Marilyn and Gretchen. Gretchen is smiling and holding up three fingers.

Sheryl looks back at Ed.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL

Number three.

ED

Number three!

The lights flash and spin and the audience cheers.

Rodney leans back in his chair and laughs.

Bachelor #1 and Arnie clap politely.

ED

Do you mind if I ask what it was,
what about Bachelor #3 appealed to
you?

SHERYL

He knows what girls are for.

The audience laughs.

ED

Very good. Alright, well before you
meet Bachelor #3, I want to
introduce you to the gentlemen who
you did *not* choose. Bachelor #1 is
from Sherman Oaks. He's a medical
intern and plans on having a
private practice. His hobbies
include reading, golf and duplicate
bridge. Sheryl, meet Josh Young.

Bachelor #1 (Josh) steps out from behind the partition and
crosses to Sheryl. He smiles politely and shakes her hand.

SHERYL

Hello. Nice to meet you.

JOSH

Thank you. You too.

Ed shakes Josh's hand and gestures for him to stand on the
other side of him.

ED

Thanks Josh. Marvelous job.

Josh takes his place.

ED

Sheryl, you also did not pick
Bachelor #2. He is a furniture

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ED (cont'd)
designer from Glendale, who enjoys
Frisbee and dancing. Sheryl, please
meet Arnie Aslan.

Arnie steps out from behind the partition and crosses to
Sheryl. Sheryl forces a smile and goes to shake his hand.

SHERYL
Hi. Nice to meet you--

But Arnie isn't smiling. As he takes her hand, Arnie leans
in and whispers into Sheryl's ear.

ARNIE
Be careful. He's dangerous.

Arnie steps back and gives Sheryl a look that says he's
serious.

Sheryl struggles to maintain her smile.

ED
Very nice. Well done Arnie.

Arnie steps over next to Josh.

ED
Gentlemen, thank you both for
joining us. I hope you can come
back again. We've got some nice
gifts for you, just head out that
way.

Ed shakes both of their hands one more time and Josh and
Arnie exit the stage.

Rodney sits on the other side of the partition, waiting
eagerly. Turning the earring over in one hand.

Sheryl looks towards the partition, smiling but clearly
nervous.

ED
And now Sheryl, it's time for you
to come face-to-face with the man
that you've chosen. But first I
want to tell you a little bit about
him. Bachelor #3 is a skydiver,
he's into motorcycling. He's also a
fine photographer. Say hello to
Rodney Alcalá!

(CONTINUED)

Rodney slips the earring back into his pocket as he hops out of the chair.

Sheryl sees Rodney as he rounds the partition. He's good looking but also, somehow, threatening.

Rodney crosses to her quickly as the audience applauds-- goes in for a kiss before she can protest. He whispers in her ear.

RODNEY

Smart choice.

When he steps back, Rodney already has one hand around her waist, and the other one holding her hand.

ED

Well, Rod, you did it. You offered some great answers to some very tricky questions and now you've got the girl.

RODNEY

Thanks Ed.

ED

You know, some people spend their entire life trying to find the perfect spot to fall in love, but we here on *The Dating Game* think we've found it. Grab your bags and get ready, because you will both be flying away to Carmel, California!

As Ed continues to babble on about the beaches and restaurants of Carmel, Sheryl looks down and notices that Rodney is tracing little circles on the top of her hand with his thumb.

Sheryl looks up at Rodney.

He peers down at her and smiles. Something about his grin is unsettling.

As Sheryl holds his stare the sound of Ed and the audience fades into a distant hum.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - SAME

Laura continues to sit patiently, waiting for someone to enter.

After a moment, the door opens and an elderly CUSTODIAN (60s) steps in, dragging a vacuum cleaner behind him.

Laura looks over expectantly, then sighs when she realizes that this clearly isn't a producer.

She looks back at the clock on the wall: 4:00.

Outside, someone passes by the doorway LAUGHING. Laura looks after them, but can't see who it is.

The custodian plugs in his vacuum and gets to work on the carpets.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Its moments after the show has ended. Members of the crew swarm around backstage.

As Sheryl moves upstream through the flow of people:

SHERYL

Which way to the dressing room?

ED'S ASSISTANT

Right through there and around the corner.

Suddenly, Rodney steps up beside Sheryl.

RODNEY

There you are. You disappeared on me.

(To Lisa)

Could you give us a few minutes?

ED'S ASSISTANT

The next show starts loading in five. Be out by then.

SHERYL

Oh, you don't have to--

RODNEY

Cool. Thanks.

But it's too late. Ed's Assistant is gone.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

Hey. I'm Rodney.

Sheryl forces a chuckle. Shakes his hand.

RODNEY

Figured I should introduce myself again now that the cameras are off.

SHERYL

Sheryl.

RODNEY

So, pretty exciting, hunh?

SHERYL

Yeah. Very.

RODNEY

Did they tell you when the trip's scheduled for?

SHERYL

I think we need to our submit availabilities to Lisa.

RODNEY

Ever been to Carmel?

SHERYL

No. You?

RODNEY

Yeah. They announce it like they're flying you Costa Rica, but it's like a six hour drive up the coast. Fucking cheapskates.

SHERYL

Heh. Yeah.

RODNEY

Whatever. I'm sure we'll find a way to entertain ourselves.

Rodney reaches out and takes Sheryl's arm. Strokes it.

SHERYL

I should probably get going. I've got a, uh, rehearsal later tonight.

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY
I'll see you soon, Sheryl.

SHERYL
Yeah. I'll see you.

Sheryl turns and heads towards the dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl steps into the dressing room. Marilyn and Gretchen applaud as she enters.

GRETCHEN
Look who's got a hot date Friday night!

MARILYN
Are you excited?

GRETCHEN
She's so excited! I told you she'd got for number three.

Sheryl forces a smile.

MARILYN
C'mon, let's get that make-up off you.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - SAME

The custodian finishes vaccuming the floors. When he's done he begins to coil up the power cord.

Laura looks at the clock on the wall. It's now 4:10.

LAURA
Excuse me?

The custodian looks up.

LAURA
Hi, I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm supposed to meet with someone named George Bradshaw. He's a producer.

CUSTODIAN
What the hell are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Do you have any idea where his office is, or how I could--

CUSTODIAN

Who'd you say you were waiting for?

LAURA

George Bradshaw. He's an executive producer on *The Dating Game*.

CUSTODIAN

No he aint.

LAURA

Or a *series* producer. I don't know what his exact title is--

CUSTODIAN

That aint it either.

LAURA

Would you just listen to me! It's very important that I speak with him.

CUSTODIAN

I doubt that very much.

LAURA

Why? Why is that so fucking impossible to believe?

CUSTODIAN

Because I'm George Bradshaw.

Laura's face drops. In an instant, she realizes that she's been duped.

LAURA

What?

The Custodian lights a cigarette and takes a drag.

CUSTODIAN

Lemme guess: The security guard out front set this up? Yeah, he's an asshole alright.

Laura starts to say something else, then stops. She looks torn between embarrassment and heartbreak.

(CONTINUED)

CUSTODIAN

I mean, if there's something you
want me to do, I'm happy to try--

Then, finally:

LAURA

Excuse me.

Laura crosses to the door and leaves. George watches her go,
then continues coiling up the power cord.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl moves down the corridor, dressed in her own clothes
again. Finally, Sheryl finds who she's looking for...

SHERYL

Lisa.

LISA

Hey, congratulations!

SHERYL

Thanks.

LISA

Have fun?

SHERYL

(Forcing enthusiasm)

Yeah, no, it was, uh...

(Can't do it)

Hey, I'm sorry, but could I ask you
something?

LISA

Yeah, what is it?

SHERYL

This is kind of a strange question,
but: What happens if I don't
actually want to go on the date?

Little pause.

Sheryl looks nervous.

LISA

(Shrugs)

Then you don't go on the date.

(CONTINUED)

SHERYL
It's just that simple?

LISA
Yeah. What, you think we're gonna
make you?

SHERYL
(Chuckles)
I don't know. I just--

LISA
Did he say something?

SHERYL
No, he didn't... I just got kind of
a creepy vibe from him.
(little pause)
He makes me a little uncomfortable.

LISA
I'll call him tomorrow.

SHERYL
Are you sure?

LISA
"Go Lady Lions."

Sheryl smiles gratefully. Turns and heads out the exit.

INT. RODNEY'S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING DAY

Rodney stands in his bedroom with several dozen photographs
spread out across the floor.

After a moment, he crouches down and picks up a few of the
pictures. Flips through them.

Then stops. Drops the photos.

CUT TO:

Rodney cuts up the photographs, one-by-one, with a pair of
scissors and stuffs them inside a large black garbage bag.

EXT. ALCALA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney carries the black trash bag out to a garbage bin at the end of the driveway. Stuffs the bag inside.

In the distance we can hear the sound of children playing. Maybe a boy rides by on a bicycle.

Rodney starts to turn to go back inside... then stops, as if remembering something.

Rodney reaches into his pants pocket and removes the EARRING. He puts it in the garbage can, sets the lid on top and heads back inside.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney stands in the shower, washing himself off.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney steps into his bedroom with a towel wrapped around his waist. Drops it and slips into some pants.

Suddenly, in the other room, the phone rings. Rodney's mother answers it:

MOTHER (OS)

Hello?

(Little pause)

Just a sec.

(Calls out)

Rodney, you've got a phone call!

Rodney throws on a shirt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney steps into the living room, looking nervous, like he expects it to be a call from the police.

His mother hands him the phone and leaves.

RODNEY

Hello?

LISA (OS)

Mr. Alcala?

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

Yeah.

LISA (OS)

Hi, this is Lisa Weissmeuller from *The Dating Game*. How are you doing today?

RODNEY

Um, fine?

LISA (OS)

That's great. So look, I'm afraid that I'm calling with some unfortunate news. Our office just received a call from Sheryl Lee, your bachelorette.

RODNEY

Oh?

LISA

Yeah. It turns out that she won't be able to attend the date after all.

RODNEY

What?

LISA (OS)

She's very sorry to have to cancel on such short notice, but a family emergency has called her back east.

RODNEY

Fine, so let's reschedule it.

LISA (OS)

Unfortunately she won't be able to do that either. With that said, your flight vouchers are still active so if you have somebody else that you'd like to go with--

RODNEY

Wait, no, hold on. Just shut up for a second. What are you--? What's going on?

LISA (OS)

Mr. Alcalá?

(CONTINUED)

RODNEY

I won. I won the game. She asked the questions and I answered, and so we're going on a date. Those are the fucking *rules*.

LISA (OS)

I'm very sorry if you're upset but--

RODNEY

Give me her phone number, I want to call her.

LISA (OS)

I don't have it.

RODNEY

You're lying.

LISA (OS)

Yep.

RODNEY

You're a cunt. If I ever see you on the street, I'll bash your fucking head in.

Lisa goes silent for a moment.

LISA (OS)

Yeah. 'Can't imagine why she turned you down. Fucking freak.

Rodney looks like he's about to say something, but then there's a CLICK and the line goes dead.

Rodney stands there, eyes filled with humiliation and hate. Slowly, he sets the phone back on the cradle.

MOTHER (OS)

Rodney? Everything okay?

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney slips into a DRESS SHIRT...

CUT TO:

...laces up his boots..

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

...loads FILM into his CAMERA...

CUT TO:

...cleans off a lock-blade KNIFE, then slips it in his back pocket.

EXT. DATSUN - NIGHT

The Datsun drives along the highway at night.

We see distant hills, low and black and dotted with the houselights.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

Amy is mopping up the floors as the last CUSTOMER packs up her things to leave.

Ginger is laying on a dog bed behind the counter.

CUSTOMER

Buenas noches. Te veo mañana.

AMY

Si. Que tengas una buena noche.

Amy walks the woman to the door, closes it behind her and locks it. She shuts off the overhead lights.

She crosses to the counter, loads the last of the folded laundry into a plastic bag and sets it aside.

When she's done, she grabs an IN-N-OUT bag off the counter and whistles for Ginger.

AMY

C'mon girl.

Ginger stands and follows Amy to a door at the back of the room. Amy opens it...

INT. AMY'S ROOM

Inside is a utility closet that has been turned into a very small living space. There's a twin bed and a small dresser. Beside the bed is an overturned milk crate with a lamp and a little radio on it.

Tacked to the wall beside the bed is the picture of Amy and her mom.

(CONTINUED)

Amy snaps on the lamp and the radio, and plunks herself on the bed. She opens up her SAT GUIDE. Continues studying.

As music plays, she digs out the burger and begins chowing down, stopping every so often to feed Ginger a French fry.

Suddenly, there's a KNOCK on the front door.

Amy puts down her food and goes to her bedroom door. Looks out.

INT. LAUNDROMAT

She sees Rodney standing at the front door, his camera hanging around his neck. He gives her little wave.

Amy grins and crosses to the door. Opens it a crack.

RODNEY

Hi.

AMY

Hi.

RODNEY

Can I still take your picture?

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - CON'T

Amy chuckles and holds the door open for him.

Rodney steps inside and Amy closes the door behind him. Locks it.

Together, they cross back to Amy's little bedroom in the utility closet.

TO BLACK.

Silence. The post-script appears on screen:

Sheryl Lee-Ellis eventually moved back to Pennsylvania where she continues to perform in regional theater. She has never spoken publicly about her experiences with Rodney Alcala on *The Dating Game*.

These words fade. Replaced by:

In 1979, Rodney Alcala murdered a 12 y.o. on her way to ballet class, as well as at least two other women. It was among his bloodiest killing sprees to date.

(CONTINUED)

Police eventually raided his apartment and found a receipt for the storage locker in Seattle. The police were able to arrest him based on evidence found there.

These words fade. Replaced by:

While Alcala has been in jail ever since, his list of murder victims continues to grow. Some authorities now estimate the actual number to be as high as 130.

These words fade. Replaced by:

In 2010, Alcala was tried for five murders based on new DNA evidence. He was convicted and sentenced to death. He is currently on Death Row in San Quentin Prison.

THE END