

Fresh flowers are delivered to the loading dock of an upscale Chinese restaurant. Hands pick up a tub of long-stemmed, white flowers and ferry them through a kitchen where food preparation has begun. Vegetables are chopped. Woks are taken down off hooks. Ducks get stuffed, etc. The hands move through swinging kitchen doors and into an elegant dining room. A slender vase sits in the middle of a plain white tablecloth. The hands insert three of the flowers in the vase, removing offending leaves and fluffing up the arrangement. The camera retreats to reveal a dining room full of similarly accoutred tables and satisfied restaurant manager HUE LING.

HUE returns through the kitchen doors and picks up a tray of pre-cut fortune cookie dough. He holds the tray over his head as he, again, navigates the kitchen. He sets it down in front of a frazzled twenty-something-year-old non-Asian, GARRETT HENRY.

HUE

No more fortunes with the word "suckle" in them.

GARRETT

What?

HUE

A customer last night brought me his wife's fortune and it had the word "suckle" in it.

GARRETT

Do you remember how it was used?

HUE

I don't care how it was used! No more suckle.

GARRETT

It's another word for nourish, you know.

HUE

Then use "nourish," just no more suckle, ...suckling, ...may one day suckle.

GARRETT

Bisuckle?

MR. HUE wags a warning finger at GARRETT who takes a black felt tip pen and adds the word suckle to a list that includes the words "dictator," "sponge," and "yankee."

2 INT. TRENT KENNEDY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

2

Casually-dressed TRENT KENNEDY enters his living room carrying mail. The home avoids usual bachelor trappings. There are no Ferrari Poster or dishes piled in sink, etc. An entire wall is lined with full bookshelves, but miscellaneous books are strewn about as well.

TRENT pushes play on his answering machine. He enters his kitchen and approaches a crib. We can't see who/what he's talking to.

TRENT

Hey little guy. Still illin'?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey Trent. This is Teresa. God, this is embarrassing, but I think I left a pair of earrings over there last weekend. Anyway, they sort of go with what I'm wearing tonight, and I was wondering if maybe--if you're not going to be there--if you could leave them out in your mailbox. I can just run by and pick them up later. ...Or whatever.

TRENT walks back into his bedroom and pulls out the drawer of his night stand. He opens a cigar box revealing condoms, a dozen earrings, and a couple watches.

TRENT

Shit.

TRENT rifles through the box while a second message plays.

MAN'S VOICE

This is Kevin--Kevin from the Black Hearted Irish. I was wondering if you were going to play that single I sent you on your show anytime soon? Give me a call.

The third message is again TERESA.

WOMAN'S VOICE

They're green. And dangly.

Relieved, TRENT pulls the correct pair of earrings out of the box. He grabs an envelope off his desk and seals the earrings inside.

3 INT. PATTERSON KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

3

Seventeen-year-old HEATH PATTERSON inserts a compact disk into a jambox. The Jackson Five's "I'll Be There" purrs out of the speakers. Arms outstretched, he performs a cornball waltz towards his sister, twenty-three-year-old BETH PATTERSON. She laughs.

BETH
They won't really play this, will they?

HEATH
I want to be prepared for anything.

BETH grabs her brother's hands and places them on her hips. Then she puts her hands on his shoulders. She leads them into a slow dance shuffle.

HEATH (CONT'D)
So this is it? This is simple!

BETH
I'm leading.

HEATH
So? I don't have a problem with that. She can lead.

BETH
She might expect you to. Here. I'm going to stop, and you take over.

After an awkward moment, the two resume the dance.

HEATH
This isn't too hard.

BETH
Remember, there *is* a beat.

HEATH works to find the beat.

HEATH
You may not realize this, but we kids today--what with the decline in family values and all--dance a bit closer than this.

BETH
We're doing what is commonly known among the female sex as type four dancing.

(CONTINUED)

HEATH

Ah, type four. Maybe I should be taking notes.

BETH

Perhaps. Notice the signs. We could fit a third person between us. My hands rest lightly and significantly above your hip bone. I'm staring not at you, but at the cute basketball player across the dance floor.

HEATH

And type four dancing represents?

BETH

Utter disinterest.

HEATH

Show me type three.

BETH moves in closer to her brother.

BETH

OK, type three. Friendlier. Room to chat without bumping noses, but the invisible wall is still there. She's reserving judgement, but you've got her attention.

HEATH

I'd take type three.

BETH

Who is this girl anyway?

HEATH

A sublime beauty. A goddess. Poetry in a supermodel's body. Her name's Doug.

BETH

That's poetic.

HEATH

Ann Douglas, but everyone calls her Doug.

BETH

And I assume she's been making a fool of herself pursuing you.

HEATH

It's been embarrassing, really.

The two dance for a moment in silence.

HEATH (CONT'D)

The truth is, I'm not sure she knew my name before I asked her out. She's in my trig class.

BETH

Pretty gutsy.

HEATH

Show me type two.

BETH closes in on HEATH, eliminating the gap between them.

HEATH (CONT'D)

(feigning disgust)

Your things--they're touching me. Hey! Hey! Hey! Watch the hands, sister!

BETH

(ignoring him)

Here's where you'll want to slide your hands down to the middle of her back. Unless they're sweaty. If they're sweaty, put 'em on her hips ...on her jeans where she won't notice.

HEATH

Is this where the sweet nothings come in?

BETH

Whoa, Tiger. We don't even have the training wheels off yet. So what made this girl say yes if she didn't know who you were?

HEATH

Boatloads of charm. Plus, and probably more importantly, she just got publicly dumped by a jock of some renown

BETH

And like a circling buzzard, my brother...

HEATH

...Swooped down on the carcass.

BETH

A class act.

The pair type-two dances for a few more seconds.

HEATH

Okay, this is starting to creep me out. I think I've got it.

They separate and plop down in chairs.

BETH

Well let's hope she doesn't expect to be dipped.

HEATH

Let's hope. So what are your plans for this glorious Friday night? You think they might tie up all the loose ends on The X Files.

BETH

Uh, I have a date.

HEATH

Our long national nightmare is over. Who is he?

BETH

His name is Trent. He works at that radio station you and all your little skinhead buddies listen to.

HEATH

If you insist on labeling us--we're "alternative." Oh wait a minute. I don't believe it. My sister has a date with Trent "The Dead" Kennedy.

BETH

I do?

HEATH

I think Mom and Dad should know about this.

BETH

He seemed nice.

HEATH

How'd you meet him?

BETH

He's in my book club.

HEATH

The Ala-Geek-win Round Table. Well, he can read. We can put that in the plus

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

HEATH (cont'd)
column. You suppose once you marry him I
can get free concert tickets?

BETH
It's just dinner.

HEATH
Maybe a bumper sticker?

BETH
It probably won't amount to anything.

HEATH
(baiting his sister)
He's no Daniel, hunh?

BETH
Lay off, Heath.

HEATH
Well, I'm sorry, but as cool as Daniel
was, the dude's gone. He made his
decision. I say it's time to get over it.

BETH
If I ever see Daniel again, I'll tell him
it's over between the two of you.

4 **EXT. JAMES MADISON HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON**

4

A line of expensive looking cars wait in a circular drive
next to a gymnasium. CAROLYN DOUGLAS, sitting behind the
steering wheel of the one clunker in the row, reads Fortune
Magazine as she waits for her daughter DOUG. A group of pom
pom carrying girls approach the cars. They tell each other
goodbye or, alternately, "see you tonight." DOUG gets in the
clunker.

5 **INT. DOUGLAS CLUNKER - AFTERNOON**

5

Still engrossed in the article, CAROLYN absently starts the
engine.

CAROLYN
How was practice?

DOUG
It was there.

CAROLYN
Mmm hmm

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

We were making one of those giant pyramids today. And you know James, that dwarf we just added to the squad? The one they experiment on in biology lab? Well he was the top of the pyramid.

CAROLYN

(absently)

Yeah?

DOUG

Yeah? Anyway, I was supposed to be spotting, but I realized that I hadn't painted my nails, so I wandered over to my purse to get the polish--I saw no option--and then I heard this thud followed by all these manic cheerleaders screaming.

CAROLYN

(still engrossed in magazine)

Uh huh...

DOUG

I ran back to where I was supposed to be standing, and there was James laying in a pool of blood, staring up, his eyes still open. He looked like that picture in our history book of Robert Kennedy after he had been assassinated.

DOUG poses briefly like Robert Kennedy on the floor of the Ambassador Hotel. CAROLYN starts the car, and begins to pull out of the lot.

CAROLYN

Blockbuster stock is up again.

DOUG

No kidding.

CAROLYN

They're the fastest growing franchise in America.

The car pulls carefully out of the lot into light suburban traffic.

DOUG
(between resignation and anger)
Wow.

A moment of silence as the car continues down the street.

CAROLYN
You don't suppose James' family is going
to sue us?

DOUG
Blood from a stone, Mom. Blood from a
stone.

7 **INT. JEWELRY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON**

7

Nervous forty-year-old DEAN JEFFRIES stares at engagement rings through a glass case. A humorless and matronly SALES CLERK waddles over.

SALES CLERK
Is there anything you'd like to take a
closer look at sir?

DEAN
Uh, that one.

The SALES CLERK withdraws the ring from the case and hands it to DEAN. DEAN examines the dangling price tag. A look of concern passes across his face.

SALES CLERK
Three months salary is the rule of thumb
sir.

DEAN
What?

SALES CLERK
For how much you should spend, that is.

DEAN
Who do you suppose came up with that
rule?

SALES CLERK
Sir?

DEAN
Well--and this is only a theory--but I
suspect that whoever decided that three
month's salary was the rule was sitting
on your side of the counter.

(CONTINUED)

SALES CLERK
I wouldn't know.

DEAN holds the ring up and admires it. He wants to get it.

DEAN
I think they were in cahoots with whoever
invented Secretaries Day.

SALES CLERK
No, those were the flower shop people. We
had nothing to do with that.

DEAN laughs. The SALES CLERK still refuses to smile.

DEAN
I have a question.

The SALES CLERK stares at DEAN who remains uncomfortable.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Can you return them?

SALES CLERK
Within seventy two hours.

DEAN
Um... Do you... I mean... Is there...

SALES CLERK
No questions asked, sir.

DEAN
Do people laugh? Point and stare?

SALES CLERK
Not until you've left the premises.

DEAN continues to study the ring.

DEAN
I'll take it.

SALES CLERK
Will that be cash or credit?

DEAN
I'll be using my first born.

SALES CLERK
I'll find a fancy box.

8 **EXT. STRIP CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

8

Camera reveals an expansive and pristine Blockbuster Video outlet, then pans to its neighbor, the nookish "Les Video."

9 **INT. LES VIDEO - LATE AFTERNOON**

9

CAROLYN stands behind the counter while DOUG shelves videos in the tiny store.

DOUG

The Unbearable Lightness of Being. It was about Czechoslovakia, but it was made in England.

CAROLYN

True.

DOUG

Thanks, but where does it go.

CAROLYN

In the Daniel Day Lewis section.

DOUG

Oh. You realize this is the reason that in the history of civilization no one has ever been able to find a movie at a video store without asking. I think we should start a trend. Let's just alphabetize every last one of them. No more subdividing by category, by country, by star, by director. Every movie in it's place.

CAROLYN

Most people don't come in looking for a particular film. Most come in and browse. They like all the comedies being together. They like all the subtitled films together. There's an article in *Video Entrepreneur* that explains the strategy if you want to read about it.

DOUG

(sarcastically)

The new issue of *Video Entrepreneur* came in and you didn't tell me?

CAROLYN

I was saving it for a special occasion. Your birthday isn't far off.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

Mom, why don't you just sell Blockbuster this space, marry Dean, and live happily ever after.

CAROLYN

Don't you dare mention the M word in front of Dean.

DOUG

You've been going out, what, a year?

CAROLYN

To the day.

DOUG

Well I want to know what his intentions are. He's a great guy. You're crazy about him. I'm tired of you two having to sneak around behind my back. I don't see what the hold up is here.

CAROLYN

Honey, there are things you don't know about Dean.

DOUG

He's a vampire, a bloodsucking prince of darkness. I had a feeling he was too good to be true.

CAROLYN

And that's not even that bad part, honey. The thing is... The thing is...

DOUG

The thing is...

CAROLYN

The thing is that it's none of your business, but just know that Dean is understandably a little gun-shy when it comes to marriage.

DOUG

And how do you feel about it?

CAROLYN

I can think of worse things, but I'm not going to let Dean know that. I'm sure it would scare him to death.

DOUG

Are you doing something with him tonight?

CAROLYN

Yes, and speaking of which, don't you have a dance to start getting ready for?

DOUG

Don't remind me.

CAROLYN

Not looking forward to it?

DOUG

I think I'm going to call him and tell him I can't go. Help me think of something. Hey, you said you wanted to start staying open late. Let's start tonight. I'll work.

CAROLYN

You don't like this boy you're going with?

DOUG

I don't know him. I don't know why he asked me. I was just too shocked to think of anything to say except yes. God, everybody in school knows I'm single, and Troy's already asked a freshman--A FRESHMAN--to the dance. Most of the time, if I have a clue somebody likes me who I don't want to go out with, I can manage to avoid being alone with him, or I'll already have an excuse--a good one--just right there, ready, you know. At the tip of my tongue. This guy tricked me. He gave none of the usual preliminary signs.

CAROLYN

The usual signs?

DOUG

Stuttering. Shortness of breath. Describing his car stereo.

CAROLYN

Is he cute?

DOUG

That's the thing: I've never noticed.

CAROLYN

I don't think you can back out on a date to a formal dance four hours beforehand. He's probably already rented a tux.

DOUG

Probably white. Probably with tails and a top hat. A pink cummerbund.

CAROLYN

You know we used to think of dating as a chance to get to know people.

DOUG

You and Betty and Wilma?

CAROLYN

You know I met your father on a blind date.

DOUG

That settles it. I'm staying home.

CAROLYN

I think you should go.

DOUG

I'll make you a deal.

CAROLYN

I'm listening.

DOUG

I'll go, but you've got to promise to snatch that corsage out of his hand right off. Otherwise I'll end up bleeding and felt up before I'm even out of the house.

CAROLYN

And you promise not to run up and hug Dean and call him Daddy?

DOUG

You gotta learn to take a joke, Mom.

10 INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - AFTER CLOSING

10

All six primary characters and GARRETT will be interviewed in their own environments. During Garrett's interview, restaurant employees continue to clean, vacuum, etc. behind him.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

The notice in the English grad student lounge said "Creative Writers Needed Bad," and of course, someone had added "Competent Grammarian Needed Worser" below that. When I saw it, I couldn't figure out what a Chinese Restaurant would need a "creative writer" for, but I needed a job. Mr. Hue told me the concept. He wanted someone who would write fortunes. You know...for the fortune cookies. No two, he said, could ever be the same. He didn't want any that said, "Confucious say, yadda yadda." He didn't want them pulled out of quotation books. And they had to be handwritten. He told me to give him one on the spot. I said, "Nine dollars an hour is a small price to pay for piece of mind." So I got the job. I try to be philosophical about it. I figure in the literary hierarchy, what I do comes somewhere between being the lyricist for Bryan Adams and writing street signs. Some of those street signs are brilliant by the way. I saw one once that said, "Men Laying Pipe Beware." I would have signed my name to that one.

11 INT. TRENT'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

11

TRENT sits in front of his high tech stereo system. He has several CDs laid out in front of him: Van Morrison, Terrence Trent D'arby, Elvis Costello, Bob Marley, etc. He humms "I'm in the mood for love" as he refers to the song listings on the CDs and programs in appropriate mood music. He adjusts the volume to a level that's been marked on the amplifier. As he pushes the final two buttons on the CD player, he speaks.

TRENT

Repeat. Infinity.

12 INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

12

BETH opens her closet. All of her dresses are black.

Without much thought she reaches for one of the garments and lays it out across the bed.

13 INT. HEATH'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

13

HEATH is fully decked out in his tux. He gazes at the digital clock impatiently waiting for it to change.

14 INT. DOUG'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

14

DOUG talks on the phone. She is still in her gym clothes. She is upset.

DOUG

I can't believe I'm hearing this.
Remember, YOU thought we were getting
"too serious." YOU thought we ought to
see other people. Do the words "we can
still be friends" sound familiar?

15 INT. DEAN'S BATHROOM - EARLY EVENING

15

DEAN showers. We see only a silhouette, but we can hear the shower radio which is broadcasting an advertisement featuring a bickering married couple, both with grating voices.

WOMAN

Didn't I tell you to fix the roof?

MAN

I told ya! I'm watching the game!

WOMAN

You lazy good-for-nothing...

MAN

Nag. Nag. Nag.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Sound familiar? Maybe it's time you...

We see DEAN'S silhouetted head bang into the shower radio, effectively turning it off.

16 INT. CAROLYN'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

16

CAROLYN finishes loading an automatic drip coffee maker, setting it for 5 a.m. When she's finished this, she scratches an item off of a "to-do" list on the counter. She pulls milk out of the refrigerator, sniffs it, then dumps it out. Again she crosses an item off her list. Referring to her list, she goes to the bottom of a stairway and yells.

CARYOLYN

Ann, you need to get off the phone and
start getting ready.

DOUG (O.S.)

(frustrated)

In a minute!

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

CAROLYN crosses this chore off her list.

17 **INT. TRENT'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING**

17

TRENT straightens up his house. The books that have been left laying about the living room he returns to shelves. Then, thinking a bit about it, he pulls "The Color Purple" and the collected poems of Yeats from the shelves. He inserts a bookmark in one and leaves it conspicuously out on the coffee table. The other he places spread eagle in another unavoidable location.

18 **INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

18

BETH is now outfitted in her modest black dress. She walks into the living room of her apartment where her roommate AMANDA sits watching The Love Boat.

AMANDA

That Gopher...

BETH

You know the plan?

AMANDA

Page you at eleven p.m.

BETH

Should I set an alarm?

AMANDA

No, but you should take a chill pill.

BETH

Let's see. Am I forgetting anything?

AMANDA

(facetiously)

You think we should synchronize watches?

BETH

Oh yeah. When you go to the store, could you pick me up a pint of Ben & Jerry's?

AMANDA

Traditional cure-all for post date blues.

BETH

You got it.

19 **INT. HEATH'S BEDROOM - EVENING** 19

HEATH continues to stare at the clock. As it turns 7:45, he gets up deliberately, picks up the corsage sitting on his desk, takes one last look at himself in the mirror, and marches out of the house and to his car.

20 **INT. HEATH'S CAR - EVENING** 20

HEATH sets the corsage on the passenger seat, puts the key in the ignition and turns it. Nothing happens. He stares blankly. Then he calmly removes the keys, opens the small blade on his Swiss Army Knife and pretends to perform Hari Kara.

21 **INT. DOUG'S BEDROOM - EVENING** 21

DOUG is still in her gym clothes and on the telephone. She is upset but has mellowed a bit.

DOUG

...I've missed you too. ...Yeah. ...Yeah. I know what you mean. ...Have you told your new little friend? ...After tonight? You want to get back together AFTER the dance? ...Well which is worse, telling her before the dance or after? God, Troy, you want your cake and you want to eat it too. ...Yeah, but if you ate it, you wouldn't have it any more. Forget it, Troy, it's an expression. Just a second, I've got a calling coming in.

DOUG clicks over to the second call.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Hello?

22 **INT. PATTERSON KITCHEN - EVENING** 22

HEATH scrubs grease off his hands. He's got the cordless phone propped up next to his ear.

HEATH

Uh, Doug. This is Heath. I'm sorry I'm running late. I've had some minor car problems here, but it's about taken care of.

23 **INT. DOUG'S BEDROOM - EVENING** 23

DOUG finally looks at the clock. She had almost succeeded in forgetting her own date. She is speechless.

DEAN flips channels again.

ANNOUNCER

We return to Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis
in...

Flipping once more, DEAN lands on the Discovery channel. Onscreen, two amoeba's split apart. He turns the TV off, and exits the room, working on his tie as he departs. He returns to the room a minute after the door closes and retrieves the ring he has left on the bureau.

28 INT. DOUGLAS BATHROOM - EVENING

28

DOUG is frantically putting on makeup. CAROLYN is blow drying her hair.

CAROLYN

Honey, will your generation of women ever appreciate what mine has done for you.

DOUG

You heard from Blockbuster again?

CAROLYN

"Mrs. Douglas, we have the utmost respect for you, Les Video and your clientele. You've really taught us a thing or two about persistence."

DOUG

What's wrong with that?

CAROLYN

What do you mean, what's wrong with it? It's patronizing. Persistence is just another way of saying I'm stubborn.

DOUG

Sounds fine to me. Where's Dean taking you tonight?

CAROLYN

That Chinese place, the one with the fortune cookies. Well there's more. They've upped the offer another five percent.

DOUG

Those bastards. The Empire?

CAROLYN

The offer part's fine. It's this next line. "We would also accept you into our advanced management training program." Then they say something about where they'd transfer me and how much money I'd make when I got out. The Empire sounds right.

DOUG

Wow, fancy. How much would they pay you?

CAROLYN

That's not the point. I've been managing a store for ten years. What do I need to go to Blockbuster management school for? Are they going to teach me how to make an eye-catching display using eighty copies of Tango & Cash?

Noticing DOUG'S transformation...

CAROLYN (cont'd)

You certainly are dressed to kill. I thought you weren't interested in this boy.

DOUG

It's not for him.

29 INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

29

TRENT sits in the DJ booth at an alternative rock station. Something grungy buzzes out of the earphones hanging around his neck.

TRENT

There was this time--I think I was 16-- that I got asked to one of those Sadie Hawkins dances by this girl I didn't really know, but I said yes because, you know, I didn't want to be a dick. Technically, the girl is supposed to pick you up, but she didn't have a car and she lived like a thousand miles outside of town, so I drove out to get her. The first thing I do when I get there is lock my keys in the car. As if that's not enough, the motor's running, her parents have left for the evening, and my Dad's not home, so we're just stuck there. At first it's unbelievably awkward, but every time we look at the car we just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TRENT (cont'd)
 bust out laughing. We end up going sledding on a big hill near her house which is a blast. You know how you have to hold on to each other, and we're screaming and laughing. We're out there living some sort of Norman Rockwell painting, and I'm thinking, "Gee, this girl is swell." Our fourth or fifth time down the hill, we slide into this huge pile of slush. When her parents get home, I'm standing in front of the fireplace in nothing but her Dad's bathrobe and a smile. But the Dad is cool. He's like, "Could I get you my slippers, Son?" I think that was the last time I had a good time on a date. Before it became a science. God, I can't even remember if I kissed her.

30 **EXT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

30

TRENT arrives at BETH'S door. Dressed sharply, he carries a single rose. He knocks. BETH answers. AMANDA remains on the couch facing both the TV and the door.

TRENT
 Hi. You ready?

BETH
 (concerned)
 I don't look ready?

TRENT
 No, I mean yeah, you look ready. It was rhetorical...sort of. I guess I meant are you available to leave?

AMANDA
 A flying start.

BETH
 Yeah, let's go.

TRENT
 (holding out rose)
 This is for you.

BETH
 Thanks.

BETH holds the flower self-consciously trying to decide whether she should carry it or leave it in a vase. TRENT notices.

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

I got it from one of those sidewalk vendors. They say selling flowers keeps them off crack.

AMANDA

A single rose means I love you.

BETH and TRENT, both horrified, turn and gape at AMANDA.

BETH

Thank you, Miss Manners.

AMANDA

Just thought you should know.

31 INT. DOUGLAS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

31

HEATH fidgets in the living room. CAROLYN puts on her own shoes as she tries to stall for her daughter.

CAROLYN

Ann says the two of you have math together.

HEATH

Trig--and boy does it come in handy.

There's a pause while CAROLYN decides whether HEATH is being intentionally funny.

CAROLYN

Ann says those college prep course are difficult.

HEATH

Pretty tough.

A moment of awkward silence.

CAROLYN

So what are your plans?

HEATH

Well, after graduation, I think I want to go to a four-year school, you know, study art, maybe go into animation.

CAROLYN

Uh, I'll need Ann home before that.

HEATH

Sorry. You mean tonight. Dinner before the dance at Louie's On The Lake. A bunch of friends of mine are eating there. Then I was going to take her to this coffee shop down by the university. They've got one of my pieces on display there. I don't know. You think that would look like showing off?

CAROLYN

I'm not sure what...

CAROLYN stops speaking when she sees HEATH'S jaw drop. Behind her DOUG has entered the room looking stunning. HEATH stands up. He's holding the corsage box in his trembling hand.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Would you like some help with that, Heath?

HEATH hands the box off to CAROLYN without taking his eyes off DOUG.

DOUG

Hi, sorry I'm running late.

HEATH

These aren't the socks I wanted to wear.

DOUG

What?

CAROLYN

Oh, what do you know? This is a wrist corsage.

CAROLYN helps DOUG on with the corsage while HEATH fidgets.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Now, Ann, I want you home no later than...

DOUG mouths the word "early" to her mother.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

midnight.

DOUG

Oh, mom.

CAROLYN

Midnight, and I mean it. I need you to inventory the store in the morning.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

CAROLYN works the group towards the door.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Nice meeting you, Heath.

HEATH
Thanks, you too.

CAROLYN
I think she'd like to see your work.

DOUG
See his what?

CAROLYN closes the door on the couple.

32 **EXT. DOUGLAS HOUSE - NIGHT**

32

As HEATH and DOUG stroll up the sidewalk, DEAN pulls up in front of the house.

DOUG
Hey, Dean!

DEAN
Hey, Kiddo. Bowling tonight?

DOUG
Tractor pull.

Unintroduced, HEATH stands uncomfortably.

DEAN
Is your mom ready?

DOUG
For a hostile takeover, yes. For a date?
Who knows.

DEAN
Actually, with our dates, it's tough to
tell the difference.

DOUG
(covering her ears)
I don't want to hear about it.

DOUG finally remembers HEATH.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Dean, this is Heath.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Hi. None of the pretty girls willing to go with you?

HEATH laughs nervously.

DOUG

We have math together.

HEATH

Trig.

DEAN

Maybe you'll be able to get some homework done tonight.

DEAN reaches out to shake Heath's hand. When he does, the ring box falls out of the jacket he's carrying. He stuffs it back in his pocket quickly, but not before DOUG notices.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(upon box retrieval, shaking Heath's hand)

Sorry about that. Never know when you're going to need that spare glass eye. Good to meet you.

HEATH

Uh, yeah.

DOUG

We better go. Mom gives him demerits for tardiness. See ya, Dean.

DOUG leads HEATH away.

DEAN

(calling after them)

Have fun.

DEAN knocks on the door while opening it up.

33 INT. DOUGLAS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

33

DEAN enters the house.

DEAN

Hi, honey. I'm home.

DEAN plops down on the couch and kicks his feet up on an ottoman. CAROLYN enters room with a cordless phone pressed to her ear. She nods at DEAN, but continues the conversation.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

(angrily)

No, you see, I wouldn't be calling you at home if you returned my calls from your shop which is where you should be anyway. You promised me those VCRs last week.

DEAN

Big day at the office.

CAROLYN

I rent them. You fix them. It works better that way.

DEAN

Naw, you wouldn't want to hear about it.

CAROLYN

Well where are the parts coming from? The eighteenth century? We have this thing now. It's called next-day delivery?

DEAN

Okay, Okay. They want me to head up the new software division.

CAROLYN

No they don't use ponies anymore.

DEAN

And, from what I understand, San Francisco is a beautiful city.

CAROLYN

Can I get that in blood?

DEAN

Good weather. Fancy rice dishes.

CAROLYN

Always a pleasure, Mr. Willis.

DEAN

Great restaurants.

CAROLYN clicks the phone off emphatically.

CAROLYN

What about great restaurants?

DEAN

We're going to one. You ready?

34 INT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT

34

TRENT and BETH drive to the restaurant.

TRENT
It's called The Empire. Have you heard of it?

BETH
No.

TRENT
I've just been a couple times. Food's great. Service is unbelievable. And they have this thing.

BETH
This thing?

TRENT
This thing they do. They handwrite your fortunes in the fortune cookies. Last time I went the ink was still wet.

BETH
That's hygienic. Do you remember what it said?

TRENT
Clearly. It said, "Risk your heart without fear. Loneness gone. Romance near."

BETH
And was it?

TRENT
Real near. The guy one table over from me was performing a non-surgical tonsillectomy on his date.

BETH
God, I hate that.

TRENT
Yeah.

BETH
It said "loneness"--not loneliness?

TRENT
That's what made me remember it.

(CONTINUED)

BETH

I don't know if I like that. I mean, loneliness is bad--we can all agree on that--but I'm not sure "loneness" is.

TRENT

It's like people think that if you're alone, you're automatically unhappy.

BETH

I'm very content by myself.

TRENT

Same here.

35 INT. HEATH'S CAR - NIGHT

35

DOUG and HEATH ride in Heath's car in uncomfortable silence.

DOUG

Hey, what do you think about eating at The Empire?

HEATH

(hesitating)
Sounds fine.

DOUG

Did you already have plans?

HEATH

No, not really.

The pair returns to the uncomfortable silence.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Mr. Jeffries coached me in Little League.

DOUG

Dean? He didn't remember you?

HEATH

I was seven at the time. I think he might have if I would have sat next to him and yelled, "Hey batter, batter, batter, batter, swwwwwing"

Again with the silence.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Don't you hate Mrs. Shropshire?

DOUG
Yeah. You have her for government?

HEATH
No.

DOUG
Civics?

HEATH
(uneasily)
No.

DOUG
Have you ever had her for a class?

HEATH
No.

DOUG
So why do you hate her?

HEATH
I've just heard, you know, people say things that, I guess, umm, make me hate her.

DOUG
Oh.

HEATH
The food in the cafeteria--that's really bad too.

DOUG
I've never had any.

HEATH
Well, I don't recommend it.

More uncomfortable silence.

HEATH (CONT'D)
I don't think the Beatles were all that great either.

DOUG looks quizzically at HEATH.

CAROLYN drives DEAN to the restaurant.

CAROLYN

I can't believe you're not even going to mention it.

DEAN

Mention what?

CAROLYN

You know what. Did anything special happen down at the accounting firm of Ross and Harvey today?

DEAN

Oh. You mean the stripper who came in and sang happy anniversary to me in the middle of a staff meeting.

CAROLYN

It wasn't a stripper. It was a man in a gorilla suit.

DEAN

Boy, I sure wasted a lot of dollar bills, then. And, once again, you one-upped me.

CAROLYN

The flowers you sent were lovely.

DEAN rests his head on CAROLYN'S shoulder as she drives.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

And I did not one-up you.

CAROLYN wraps her arm around Dean's shoulder.

DEAN

Honey, that light was red.

CAROLYN

No it wasn't.

37 **INT. THE EMPIRE KITCHEN - NIGHT**

37

The restaurant is operating at full-tilt now. The kitchen is a buzz of activity. An impatient waiter, JOHN LU, speaks above the din to GARRETT who is up to his elbows in strips of paper, cookies and ink.

LU

Table seventeen. Conventioneers.

GARRETT

Reduce them to stereotypes for me.

(CONTINUED)

LU
 "Conventioneers" isn't enough?

GARRETT shakes his head no.

LU (CONT'D)
 (sighing)
 All right. The man sent the first bottle
 of wine back. He said the nose was too
 herbal.

GARRETT
 Enough said. The date?

GARRETT begins scribbling down the first fortune.

LU
 The woman is artificially tan, except for
 mysterious pale band on ring finger of
 left hand.

GARRETT
 Charlie Chan!

LU
 I see number one son impressed.

GARRETT
 For the lady.

GARRETT hands LU first fortune.

LU
 (reading)
 Stop and smell the poseurs.

GARRETT
 And for the gentleman...

Reading second one as he writes it.

Sometimes ...cheaters ...win. Mostly ...they
 ...end up ...like ...the ...couple ...in ...the
 ...Towering ...Inferno. There. That should
 make for an interesting denouement.

LU
 Day knew who?

GARRETT
 Denouement--outcome, ending.

37 CONTINUED:

37

LU
I've got one for you.

GARRETT
Yeah?

LU
Miffed daters stiff waiters.

LU puts cookies on a small plate and exits. GARRETT yells after him.

GARRETT
Wisdom ain't pretty.

38 **EXT. UNIVERSITY QUAD - DAY**

38

BETH is stretched out on the grass, a book bag nearby.

BETH
There are a number of horrors I prefer to dating, balancing my checkbook, getting a pap smear, watching Saturday Night Live. First of all, I'm not very good at it. Dating, that is. I always say the wrong thing. I know you're supposed to act a certain way, but I can never make myself do it. You know, appearing entranced by every detail of his life or being impressed because he's in a band or owns a boat.

39 **INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

39

TRENT is talking to BETH over wine.

TRENT
We'll be live on air, and I'll take calls off the request line, and I just know these guys are already stoned. I do the morning show. So it's like seven a.m., and I've got Jeff Spicoli calling into ask me about radio. Not how to break into the business, but how to fix them. "Yo, Dead, there's too much distortion." And I can hear it cranked in the background, but you can't tell these guys to just turn it down.

TRENT looks for encouragement from BETH, but she seems uninterested.

(CONTINUED)

BETH

Uh huh.

TRENT

So anyway ...well, it's boring. Shop talk.

BETH realizes she's been snagged.

BETH

No, finish. What do you do?

TRENT

(unenthused)

I'll play Nirvana "unplugged". They think I've fixed their radio.

BETH manages a laugh.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Yeah, so...

BETH

No that's funny.

TRENT

No it's not. It's depressing. I mean, I love the music, but I'll go out to these car alarm store appearances and see the people who show up--the people who listen to my show--and it's frightening. People who braid their goatees, pierce their eyebrows, tatoo their necks.

BETH

My brother is a fan.

TRENT

Does he fit the description?

BETH

He wants to go to art school.

TRENT

So he will soon.

BETH

Yeah.

The conversation comes to screeching halt.

TRENT

Have you ever played the strained-metaphor game?

(CONTINUED)

BETH

The what?

TRENT

The strained metaphor game. The correct answer is no, because I just made it up.

BETH

We're giving up on natural conversational flow this early.

BETH looks at her watch and gives TRENT a playful expression of concern.

TRENT

We're irrigating the conversation. Replenishing it.

BETH

How do you play?

TRENT

I'm not sure. I just liked the title.

BETH

O.K.

TRENT

All right. I've got it. The first person names two random items or concepts. The second person has to complete the strained metaphor.

BETH

Sounds challenging.

TRENT

No, the challenging version is the *precise* metaphor game. It's in your best interest not to confuse the two.

BETH

Can we play a sample round?

TRENT

Sure. Let me think. O.K. First dates are like...

TRENT scans the restaurant

TRENT (CONT'D)

...a glass of water.

(CONTINUED)

BETH
Tasteless?

TRENT
I was thinking more along the lines of quenching a thirst, but I think you understand the game. So, onto round one. How about a heart and an edible garnish.

BETH
Give me a second.

BETH drums her fingers on the table and thinks.

BETH (CONT'D)
Let's see, the human heart, like an edible garnish, tempts the hungry who, but then chew it up and, having tasted its fruit--no make that essence--, spit it out.

TRENT
Bonus points for extra strained. But I think I can see a theme here.

BETH
You do, huh? Let's create a window into your psyche.

Glancing around, BETH notices a snuggly couple at a nearby table.

BETH (CONT'D)
How about love and ...The Empire.

TRENT
That's easy. Love is an empire that conquers all.

BETH
Or that crumbles into dust?

TRENT
God, I feel like I'm on a date with the walking wounded.

BETH
That's what Amanda--she's my roommate--calls me. What about you? You sound awfully optimistic. "Love conquers all"--how have you managed to keep living that lie.

TRENT

Healthy diet, lots of exercise.

BETH

Push ups with Santa Claus. Step class with the Easter Bunny? Wait a minute. I know you. You're the guy who's never been in love. I've heard he existed, but I never thought I'd be going out to dinner with him.

TRENT

I've been in love. Well, it felt like... I thought it was... There was this girl who... Jesus, I lived with a woman for three years!

BETH

(singing)

You've never been in love. You've never been in love...

TRENT

I've been deeply, head over heels, madly in love. Lots of times.

BETH

Thought so.

TRENT

Do you think this somehow gives you more soul.

BETH

Not soul, necessarily, but insight. Yeah.

TRENT

Don't confuse being cynical with having insight.

BETH

I'm just saying, one of his spent a few nights in Heartbreak Hotel, one of us hasn't. I tell you, it makes you appreciate your own bed.

BETH notices HEATH and DOUG walking into the restaurant.

BETH (CONT'D)

Oh my God. My brother's here. I'm going to go say hi.

BETH gets up. TRENT, unsure whether he should follow, pauses then stands and moves towards the door.

BETH (CONT'D)
 (to Heath)
 Pardon me for sounding forward, but you are quite possibly the most attractive man I've seen in my life.

HEATH
 Doug, this used to be my sister, Beth.

BETH
 Hi, nice to meet you.

DOUG
 Hi.

BETH
 Heath and Doug, this is Trent.

BETH (CONT'D)
 Hi.

HEATH
 (disappointed)
 You look normal.

TRENT
 Sorry.

BETH
 So what are you doing here? I thought all your friends were going to Louie's.

40 INT. HEATH'S BEDROOM - DAY

40

HEATH is interviewed in his room. Various art projects surround him.

HEATH
 Just be yourself. Just be *yourself*. Maybe, if yourself happens to be the bass player for Oasis. Better advice--just don't be a spaz. Just *don't* be a spaz. Then again, I hate to set my goals too high.

41 INT. THE EMPIRE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

41

We return to HEATH'S awkward moment.

HEATH

We thought this place would be cool. I see those guys all the...

At this moment, DEAN and CAROLYN enter the restaurant.

DOUG

Mom!

CAROLYN

(suspiciously)

Ann. Hello Heath. Weren't you going to Louie's?

HEATH

Change of plans.

DOUG

Uh, Mom, Dean, this is Trent and ...Heath's sister ...uh.

BETH

Beth.

DOUG

Yeah, Beth. I'm sorry.

CAROLYN

(shaking hands)

Please call me Carolyn.

The group is approached by MR. HUE.

HUE

Table for six?

Everyone, save DOUG, who looks to the others for consensus, gives their own variations of emphatic *Nos*.

42 **INT. EMPIRE KITCHEN - NIGHT**

42

LU leans against the desk where Garrett is feverishly working. There is a bulletin board above GARRETT'S work station. On it, an extra large, Post It note-sized fortune is tacked up. LU notices it while he's addressing Garrett. When LU speaks in the kitchen, he has no accent.

LU

...two crystal gazing, swimming-with-the-dolphins, New Age flakes. Make it extra crunchy. What's this...

GARRETT

What it is--is intensely private,
personal...

Ignoring Garrett, Lu removes the pin holding the fortune.

LU

So why hang it up where anyone can see
it?

GARRETT

(still scribbling)
...intimate, confidential. Because I have a
general belief in the goodness of man.

LU

(reading)
You are radiant and sublime.
Old Ben Jonson's engine for time!

GARRETT

You're robbing me of my innocence, Lu.

LU

If there's longing inside you, if it
crawls up your spine.

GARRETT

I might as well take that job at the
nuclear plant.

LU

K, L, M, two, three, one, nine. Yep, I
think this could get you fired.

GARRETT

I haven't sent it out. I just saw this
woman in here once. This woman. More than
a woman.

LU

She reminded you of a clock?

GARRETT

(confused)
A what?

LU

You call her an engine of time. Ben
Johnson--is that the runner on dope?

GARRETT

Ben Jonson. No H. The British essayist who spoke of an engine that could keep back all clocks and make the sun forget its motion.

LU

Now that's a woman.

GARRETT

Yeah. So if I ever see her in here again, I'm risking it all.

43 INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

43

HEATH and DOUG look over the menus. DOUG has been positioned so that she has to keep looking over her shoulder to see her mother's table. She does this with annoying frequency.

DOUG

You wanna split the rib appetizer?

HEATH

Sounds good.

DOUG

Do you feel kind of stupid here? Dressed like this? I'll bet everyone around us is checking us out, and they're telling each other about their own proms. We're like this conversation piece saving everyone who's trying to keep a conversation going, don't you think?

HEATH

Yeah.

The two glance about a bit with this thought in mind.

DOUG

Wouldn't it be funny if I threw a glass of water in your face and yelled, "With my sister!? MY SISTER!?"

HEATH

Yeah.

HEATH glances around again, this time because he thinks DOUG'S being a little loud. DOUG begins realizing she can push HEATH around.

DOUG

Or you know what would be funnier?

(CONTINUED)

HEATH shakes his head.

DOUG (CONT'D)

If you got up like you were mad, and you tried to walk out, but I grab onto one of your legs, and you're like, dragging me out. People would remember that.

HEATH

Yeah.

DOUG

You wanna do it?

HEATH

(nervously)

Really?

DOUG

No.

LU approaches the table. When he's in the dining room, he adopts a thick Chinese accent. He's extremely accommodating to a customer's face. Less so, in the back.

LU

An appetizer to start?

DOUG waits for HEATH to order the appetizer they've decided on, but he's in outer space. She orders with barely-hidden annoyance.

DOUG

The ribs.

CAROLYN stands behind the counter at Les Video.

CAROLYN

Well, the nice thing about dating someone for a long time is that all that silly stuff you go through at first--you know, nervously laughing when you don't know if something he says is supposed to be a joke or fretting about the attempted good night kiss--it's all behind you. No more game playing. I can just tell what Dean is thinking most of the time. And the same goes in reverse, which is good, because I don't know what I'm thinking sometimes.

45 INT. EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

45

CAROLYN and DEAN haven't even picked up their menus yet.

CAROLYN
San Francisco?

DEAN
Six Figures.

CAROLYN
California?

DEAN
Iowa.

CAROLYN
(attempting enthusiasm)
Oh, Dean, that's great. Congratulations.
Boy this calls for a celebration. Is
there a new title in it, too?

DEAN
Yeah, I'll be The Man.

CAROLYN
Convenient.

DEAN
I'll say. But it's not a done deal yet.

CAROLYN
But they've offered it?

DEAN
They've offered it, but I'm playing it
cool, which for an accountant means I'm
not high-fiving anyone in the hallways.

CAROLYN
Well what are you waiting for? It's what
you've wanted.

DEAN
There are other considerations.

CAROLYN
Such as?

LU is passing by the table. DEAN catches his attention.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Could you get us a bottle of wine,
please?

LU

It would be my privilege. Would you like
to see the list?

CAROLYN

Just get us anything white and
Californian.

LU nods and continues towards kitchen.

LU

(to himself)
A glass of Ronald Reagan, perhaps?

CAROLYN

So what are these other considerations?

DEAN looks at CAROLYN for a pregnant moment before
responding.

DEAN

What yard line my 49ers season tickets
will be on.

46 INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM-NIGHT

46

TRENT and BETH have their meals in front of them. TRENT uses
chopsticks, expertly. BETH observes this feat with a mixture
of awe and suspicion.

BETH

You're scaring me.

TRENT

(confused)
How so?

BETH

The rose. You ordered the wine in French.
You're like Edward Scissorhands with
those chopsticks. Next, I'm afraid you're
going to stick this flower in your mouth
and tell me you know how to tango.

TRENT

You don't?

BETH

Trent Kennedy, are you a player?

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Player? Like Warren Beatty is a player?

BETH

Player like Warren Beatty calls you for advice.

TRENT

I think it's my job.

BETH

Suave is your job?

TRENT

Sort of. Never being at a loss for words. It's kind of like dating.

BETH

You go out a lot?

TRENT

Not really. You?

BETH

Full moons. Usually I'll line up someone to watch Haley's Comet with me.

TRENT

So, if you're the broken heart expert, tell me what it's like--this love thang.

BETH

Oh it comes in stages. You start with infatuation. You hear yourself saying things like, "Sure, I'd love to go see Pat Metheny with you."

TRENT

Yikes.

BETH

Wait a minute. This is still the good part. For an all-too-brief splendid blip in time, it hits you. You feel complete for the first time ever ...even though you didn't know you were missing anything. Every song on the radio becomes "Ode to The Two of Us." You're not sure if the planet has continued to spin outside of your bedroom. You burn through more candles than the Little House On The Prairie. You have playful arguments over whether to name your unconceived daughter

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

BETH (cont'd)

Nena or Emma. Gradually the line between you and the other person begins to blur. Mere loss of identity serves as a precursor to outright slavery.

TRENT

Are we still in the good part?

BETH

Until one day, one of you wakes up and decides it's not right. It's not perfect. It's time to move on.

BETH stops abruptly and takes a drink of water.

TRENT

I've heard something about swooning.

BETH

That's from lack of oxygen. Side-effect of rushing in where angels fear to tread.

47 **INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM COURTYARD - DAY**

47

DOUG wears her cheerleading practice clothes.

DOUG

I think it took me until eighth grade to completely figure out boys. Then, once I had, I was embarrassed it took me that long. I mean, they're that simple. What I figured out was that, if you want one, you make him the center of the universe. Everything revolves around him. His day. His football practice. The little bruise on his elbow. The kind of car he wants to drive someday. Then, during my sophomore year--I think it was pretty soon after my boyfriend at the time, Bobby Snowden, missed my Dad's funeral because of an Aerosmith concert--I decided I wanted the world to revolve around me.

48 **INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

48

LU delivers the rib appetizer to DOUG and HEATH. DOUG serves herself, but HEATH only watches.

DOUG

Aren't you going to have any?

HEATH

Uh, no.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
What's wrong?

HEATH
Well, I'm a vegetarian.

DOUG
A vegetarian? I thought you said the rib
appetizer sounded good.

HEATH
I meant it sounded good ...for you. If
that's what you wanted.

DOUG
We could have gotten something else.

HEATH
I don't really like Chinese food.

DOUG
Why did you say you wanted to come here?

HEATH
It's fine. Really. I can find something
I'll eat.

DOUG is clearly exasperated.

DOUG
Look, could we trade seats?

HEATH
Um, yeah.

DOUG
Thanks.

The pair gets up and changes seats. The process is awkward. All the dishes and glasses have to be traded as well. Once the process is complete, it's clear that DOUG is looking over HEATH'S shoulder while they're talking.

HEATH
Why did you want to change?

DOUG
Sorry?

HEATH
Why did you want to trade seats?

DOUG takes a moment to decide whether to tell HEATH. She's keeping a constant watch over HEATH'S shoulder.

DOUG

Dean's spare glass eye? I think it's really a ring which means he's going to pop the question to Mom tonight, and I want to see her reaction if he does.

HEATH

Oh. What'll she say if he does?

DOUG

Yes. I'm almost positive.

HEATH

Not many people get to see one of their parents get asked that question.

DOUG

I wish I had a video camera.

HEATH

Do you get to see your real Dad much?

DOUG

Nope. He's dead.

HEATH

God, I'm sorry. It's just that... Well, I don't know. It's just that all my friends' parents are divorced. I just assumed...

DOUG

No sweat. Really.

DEAN'S cubicle has photographs tacked up around it. Most are of little league teams he has coached, but there's also a large one of CAROLYN, and a small, school-picture-sized one of DOUG.

DEAN

You know how, sometimes, something that just starts as a little misunderstanding gets repeated and changed so much, that it becomes, like, a new reality. That's what's happened with the story of my near wedding. I was twenty-seven at the time, and I had been dating this woman for seven years. All of our friends thought

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

DEAN (cont'd)
of us as married anyway, so eventually we decided we might as well make it official. It was a huge deal. We're both from the same hometown, and I think we invited everybody. I told Carolyn how awful it is for someone to get stood up at the alter. I guess it's the way I told the story--she always assumed I was the one who got stood up.

50 INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

50

CAROLYN and DEAN finish giving LU their order.

CAROLYN
And the chicken lemon grass, ...and he'd like some more water.

LU
How spicy you want your food?

CAROLYN
On a scale of one to ten...

LU
Ten being spicy?

CAROLYN
Ten being spicy. Make mine a two and his a sixteen.

LU
Very good.

DEAN
I've got it.

CAROLYN
Got what?

DEAN
I know where I've met Doug's date.

CAROLYN
I wish you'd at least call her Ann.

DEAN
Ann's date. I coached him. It must have been eight or nine years ago.

CAROLYN
Was he good?

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Played him in right field.

CAROLYN

Right field.

DEAN

Least skill-intensive position. Frequent spaz repository.

CAROLYN

Dean!

DEAN

But I know why I remember him now. I mean, I've coached a lot of kids. But there was this play, I don't think I'll ever forget. Something you just don't see in most lifetimes. We were in the playoffs, and we were into extra innings. We had a one run lead, but whoever we were playing had runners at second and third with two outs. Their batter hits a line shot out to right. I figure the game is over. That kid, Heath, he did have some speed, but he couldn't catch a cold. Anyway, he runs this fly ball down, dives...

CAROLYN

Catches it, and you win the game? The Rocky theme music plays.

DEAN

Well that's what it looked like from where I was sitting. And from where the ump was to, because he called the batter out which meant we won. So everyone is celebrating. The team is throwing their hats in the air, and I spot Heath talking to the umpire. The next thing I know, we've lost the game.

CAROLYN

How?

DEAN

He's told the umpire that he trapped the ball. He didn't catch it on the fly, so the two runners scored.

CAROLYN

So you've always resented this kid?

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

No, I've always admired him. I don't think I've ever seen an eight-year-old do anything more noble. If I ever have a child, I hope, well first off, I hope he has better hands, but after that, I hope he's got balls that big.

CAROLYN

Dean Jeffries, you gross me out, and I truly love you.

51 INT. THE EMPIRE - MEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

51

TRENT walks into the bathroom and finds HEATH sitting on the floor. TRENT, self-consciously, goes about his business.

TRENT

Date going well?

HEATH

I don't get it. I don't understand why the nicer I am, the meaner she gets. How long do you think I'll have to stay here before she'll leave?

TRENT

Niceness is overrated. Something they say they want, but in the end...

HEATH

Yeah?

TRENT

(thinking better of expounding
on this theory)

Look, do you have any anecdotes?

HEATH

Any what?

TRENT

Anecdotes. Little stories to fall back on.

HEATH

Like what?

TRENT

I don't know. They have to be your stories, but don't tell her about leading the county in rushing yardage or about

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

TRENT (cont'd)
all the babes that call you in the middle
of the night.

HEATH
Don't worry.

TRENT
The best anecdotes...hmm. At first they
sound self-depreciating, but used
properly, they reveal your sensitive
side. They show how vulnerable you are.
If that doesn't work, make fun of the
fattest kid in your school.

HEATH looks at TRENT with something approaching shock.

TRENT (CONT'D)
That's a joke. I tell you, though, it's
like an Olympic event. You get better the
more you practice.

HEATH
Sort of ironic, isn't it?

TRENT
(laughs)
Ironic? You are your sister's brother.

HEATH
It's ironic because, it seems like, if a
guy was *really* good at it, he would never
get enough practice to become Mr. Gold
Medalist Dater.

As the implications of that statement bloom on TRENT'S face...

52 INT. THE EMPIRE - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

52

We see Carolyn reapplying make-up in the mirror. As she tries
to maintain a stoic face, she breaks down. A tear runs down
her cheek.

53 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

53

HEATH returns to the table. The meal has arrived. DOUG has
already begun eating. The only thing waiting for HEATH is a
heaping bowl of white rice. DOUG works on some extravagant
and colorful dish.

DOUG
Hurry, we wouldn't want your meal to get
cold.

HEATH sits down and begins eating.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG (CONT'D)

So what made you become a vegetarian?

DOUG shovels in an especially large morsel of meat.

HEATH

Just ...I don't know... became one.

DOUG

I mean, do you just not like meat? Or do you not believe in killing animals? Or are you just into the health factor?

HEATH

None of those I guess. I used to eat meat. I liked it fine. I just don't anymore. I'm not really much of a vegetarian either. I don't like vegetables all that much.

DOUG

So what happened? Did you get locked in a slaughterhouse or something?

HEATH

This is a really bad anecdote. Makes me look stupid.

DOUG

What?

HEATH

I'll tell you, but you won't believe it.

DOUG

Try me.

HEATH

It's because of my pen pal.

DOUG stares at HEATH uncomprehendingly.

HEATH (CONT'D)

In eighth grade, Mrs. Russell signed us all up for pen pals in honors English. Remember?

DOUG

You were in that class?

HEATH

Yeah.

DOUG

Mine was from France. I think I wrote her twice.

HEATH

Mine was from Somalia. His name is Achmad Housbhenni, and we still write every once in a while.

DOUG

Wow, really? And he convinced you to become a vegetarian?

HEATH

It's not quite that simple. He's not even a vegetarian. He just wrote to me a lot about being hungry. All of his letters were about meals he had or questions about what I eat. After a while, I started thinking about what I was eating every time I put food into my mouth, imagining how Achmed would be enjoying this burrito more than me, or the poetry he would write if he ever got his hands on one Big Mac. I started reading about the famine, what caused it, the relief efforts, all that, and one of the things they kept mentioning, one of the reasons the U.S. couldn't export more grain, is because we use it to feed livestock.

DOUG

Well, doesn't that balance out? Wouldn't we be eating that grain if we weren't eating those cows?

HEATH

Yes and no. See, it takes like three times as much energy and land to produce the same amount of food as meat as it does food as grain, but in first world countries, that doesn't seem to bother anyone. We can afford it. In third world countries, it's a different story.

DOUG

So that's when you became a vegetarian?

HEATH

Not right away, but after a few months of picturing little kids with bloated bellies every time I put meat in my mouth, I just sort of gave into it. I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

HEATH (cont'd)
 guess I guess I'm not really making much
 of a difference. I never really try to
 convince people to join me.

HEATH puts a forkful of rice into his mouth. DOUG hesitates
 before resuming her meal.

54 INT. THE EMPIRE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

54

TRENT and BETH are finishing up their meals.

TRENT
 So it's your turn to pick the novel for
 the book club next time. Do you know what
 you're going to pick?

BETH
Ladder of Years, I think. It's the newest
 Ann Tyler book. Have you read it?

TRENT
 No, I've read *The Accidental Tourist*,
 though.

BETH
 I am impressed. I can't believe you're
 the same guy who calls people at six in
 the morning pretending to be a sex-toy
 salesman.

TRENT
 That's not me. That's the ninety one
 point seven guy. I'm the one who does
 "Strange Body Sounds."

BETH
 Forgive me. I'm still surprised.

TRENT
 That I can read?

BETH
 Not that you can read, that you're well-
 read. There's a big difference.

TRENT
 Yeah, well, it's the result of a ...uh,
 complicated childhood.

TRENT waits a beat for BETH to bite; she doesn't. He proceeds
 in his "anecdote" mode.

TRENT (CONT'D)
 When I was a kid, I was afraid of bees.

(CONTINUED)

BETH

Bees?

TRENT

Yeah, bees. I fell into a hive once. Got stung like eight times. After that, you couldn't get me to go outside.

BETH

I don't think bee-phobia qualifies you for "complicated childhood" status.

TRENT

I'm talking for a couple years. Anyway, after school each day, I had to go over to my Meemaw's house.

BETH

Meemaw?

TRENT

What do you say?

BETH

Queen mother.

TRENT

(laughs)

So, Meemaw lived near this pond and all these dragonflies would be buzzing around her yard, but I didn't know what dragonflies were. I thought they were giant bees.

LU approaches the table.

LU

Would you like these plates cleared?

TRENT

Sure. I was afraid to go outside, and Meemaw didn't have a TV, or it was always broken, I can't remember. But she did have Dad's complete Hardy Boys collection. That's when I started reading. I think I read them all two or three times.

BETH

You were afraid of dragonflies? That's why you became an avid reader?

TRENT

That, and my endless quest for truth. Hey, could you believe Randall chose The Hobbit for the group last month. Did he think we were all in sixth grade? Did you see the "I Break For Unicorns" bumper sticker on his car?

BETH

The Hobbit is a great book.

There is an awkward pause.

BETH (CONT'D)

I mean it. A classic.

LU, wearing an expression of amusement, takes the plates back into the kitchen.

55 **INT. THE EMPIRE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

55

LU sets the dishes down before moving over to GARRETT'S station. GARRETT is blow drying a fortune.

LU

Table nine. Looks like a first date.

GARRETT

Him?

LU

A regular.

GARRETT

Her?

LU

Unimpressed.

GARRETT

I'll see what I can do.

56 **INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

56

DEAN and CAROLYN ignore their food. They hold hands across the table.

DEAN

I don't know if I ever told you this, but you were supposed to be Gerald's account.

CAROLYN

Gerald?--the one that names his pencils?

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

No, that's Albert. Gerald's the one who does that dance, the deduction dance, right at midnight every April fifteenth. He uses staplers as castanets.

CAROLYN

So what happened?

DEAN

I saw you. You were in our lobby. Apparently some old timer waiting next to you suggested you not make any financial decisions without consulting your husband first. As I walked through, you were listing orifices in which he might have better luck introducing his theory. Gerald was next in line for new accounts, but I traded him the Madison Beer Garden account for the privilege of working with the lovely and vocal proprietress of Les Video.

CAROLYN

(impressed)

You traded a sports bar for me?

DEAN

I'm a big believer in long-term, consistent performers.

CAROLYN

You're so smart. And sweet. I appreciate how slow you took things in the beginning. I didn't think I was ready to get back out there, play the dating game.

DEAN

Uh, Babe. That wasn't sweetness. That was fear.

CAROLYN

Dean, what's going to happen to us?

DEAN

Let's see. You're easy. Twenty years from now you'll be retired--if you keep putting that money into tax-sheltered annuities like I told you. There'll be little Les Video franchises across the state. You'll live in a lake house, spoil your grandchildren.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

By myself?

DEAN

Oh, Carolyn, you can have anyone you want.

57 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

57

The check and the fortune cookies have arrived on TRENT and BETH'S table.

TRENT

What does yours say?

BETH

I thought you weren't supposed to tell anyone.

TRENT

Those are wishes. Fortunes you're actually supposed to tell.

TRENT breaks open his cookie and reads his fortune.

BETH

So?

TRENT

(reading)

"He who is lonely is he who is always..."

BETH

Yeah...

TRENT

That's it. I think the ending got torn off. Makes sense if you add "in bed."

BETH

I always thought you were supposed to add "after sex."

TRENT reads to himself.

TRENT

It doesn't make sense that way.

BETH

Yes it does. Think of after as a verb, not an adverb.

TRENT

(reading)

He who is lonely is he who is always
*after sex. Oh, yeah. (He lets' that sink
in.) So what about yours? What does yours
say?*

BETH

Mine's bizarre.

TRENT

Let me hear it.

BETH

(reading)

Abba Gold thirteen colon four.

TRENT

Sounds like something from the Bible:
Book of Abba, chapter thirteen, verse
four.

BETH

If I read it, do you think I'll be Bjorn
again?

TRENT

You know, this is why not everyone is
given a radio show.

58 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

58

HEATH and DOUG have finished their dinners. DOUG'S plate is
clean. DOUG still has a half bowl of white rice in front of
him.

DOUG

So what made you ask me out?

HEATH

What do you mean?

DOUG

Well it's not like we'd ever really
talked.

HEATH

True. Do you remember when we had that
square dancing unit in P.E. in junior
high.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

Square dancing: has anything ever been named so perfectly?

HEATH

Anyway, remember how they would number all the girls, then number all the boys and you were supposed to find the person with the number that matched and that was your partner.

DOUG

Yeah.

HEATH

Well, if one of us happened to luck out and draw someone recognizably female and then refused to trade, the football players would threaten to dismember us. So, even under this outwardly egalitarian system, the bold and the beautiful still always ended up together. There's only one time I can remember that it didn't play out like that. You ended up with this dork who had grown six inches in fourteen months. He could hardly stand upright let alone swing to the left. Anyway, some walking Coke machine tapped this lucky fellow on the shoulder and gave him a quick lesson on social Darwinism. So this guy's already walking back down to dance with Paleolithic woman, but you grabbed his hand, and told the football player to get a life.

DOUG

I said "get a life"? Ugh.

HEATH

Yeah, well, I've wanted to ask you out ever since then.

DOUG

That was you?

HEATH

(indignant)

No. No, that wasn't me. No ...it was my best friend, Ryan.

DOUG

God, I don't even remember that.

HEATH

Ryan does. He was pretty thrilled when I said I was going with you. You're the one cheerleader he refuses to make fun of.

DOUG

(facetiously)
I'm honored.

LU approaches the table. He begins clearing dishes.

LU

Could I tempt you with any dessert?
Perhaps a Hershey Bar for the gentleman?

DOUG

I'd like one.

LU

But of course.

59 **INT. THE EMPIRE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

59

LU enters GARRETT'S sanctum.

LU

Table seven: first and last date for
Veronica and Jughead.

60 **INT. ACCOUNTING FIRM - DEAN'S CUBICLE - DAY**

60

DEAN continues his interview.

DEAN

When you're counting down the days until you hit forty and you still haven't been married, you can't help but hear the whispers. I know what they're saying, "He sure is patient." "What a full life he must lead to not need a woman in it." I can't lie. It hurts. Actually, the mistake people usually make is that they think any guy who makes it this long is too picky or fears commitment, but that's not me at all. I fear ending up with the wrong person. I really want to get this right the first time.

61 **INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

61

DEAN and CAROLYN continue ignoring their food.

DEAN

We'll rack up a bunch of frequent flyer miles. It won't be so bad. A couple weekends a month--we could do that.

CAROLYN

Maybe...at the beginning. But then some weekend we plan on seeing each other, you'll have some major deadline, so we'll skip that and tell each other, you know, it's okay--it's just one weekend. After a while all that time in airports and on planes will get tiring, and besides there's that "hot little number" in acquisitions that's always dropping hints.

DEAN

"Hot little number?" Is that an accountant joke.

CAROLYN

(chuckling)

No. Strike that. You're a better man than that, Dean. It'll be some smart, attractive woman who recognizes the same things in you that I do.

DEAN

You're being bad.

CAROLYN

I'm being realistic. Look every teenaged girl at some point in her life, falls for a boy on the other side of the lake, and no matter what promises are made: I'll write, I'll see you next summer, I'll wait for you. It never works. Long Distance Relationship is one of the world's great oxymorons.

DEAN

Then what do you propose?

CAROLYN

Nothing, Dean. I'm very happy for you, but I can't help being sad for us.

DEAN

How sad?

CAROLYN

What?

DEAN

How sad? I mean, if I got down on my knee right here, handed you a ring, what would you say?

CAROLYN

Don't be silly, Dean. I wouldn't want you to.

After a long pause.

DEAN

Then who are we kidding?

62 **EXT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT**

62

TRENT and BETH ride in TRENT'S car.

BETH

Another game?

TRENT

C'mon, be a sport.

BETH

A sport? Gee, Pops, I'll try.

TRENT

That's my girl. This one's called "Surreal Date." Here's how it works. You get two choices. You pick of them. By the time we're finished, I'll have a complete psychological profile on you.

BETH

Shoot.

TRENT

First, your date. Woody Allen or Sylvester Stallone.

BETH

I don't suppose Ralph Fiennes is behind curtain number three.

TRENT

He is, but he's feeling surly, reclusive. It's the Woodman or Rocky tonight.

BETH

I don't like these choices. I don't like what either one of them says about me. But I see what you're doing. They're so

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETH (cont'd)
different, you think picking one over the other defines my character.

TRENT
Hardly. Honestly, I have a tough time remembering which is which.

BETH
Stallone and Woody Allen?

TRENT
Both of them are Oscar winning screenwriters. They've dated some of the hottest babes in show business?

BETH
Mia Farrow is a hot babe?

TRENT
Frank Sinatra thought so. Okay, what else? Woody Allen visited Dallas to promote Everything You Wanted To Know About Sex. Sly had sex after auditioning for Dallas.

BETH
Who even says "hot babe?"

TRENT
Charlie Sheen. Rod Stewart.

BETH
Fine company you're keeping.

TRENT begins singing the Jeopardy music.

BETH (CONT'D)
You're still expecting an answer?

He reaches the conclusion of the tune.

BETH (CONT'D)
Okay, Stallone.

TRENT
Surprising. Now, attending a Planet Hollywood opening or playing in the MTV Rock And Jock softball game?

BETH
Speaking of which, where are we heading right now?

TRENT
 (shaking head)
 Eh, eh, eh, eh. No getting out of this.

BETH
 Planet Hollywood, I guess. Where are we going?

TRENT
 My house. Now. Sly's ignoring you...

BETH
 Hold on. Time out. We're going where?

TRENT
 I just need to run in and give Rover some medicine.

BETH
 Oh? And I had completely forgotten--I'm expecting a call from my grandmother. Maybe you ought to drop me off. Do we have a few minutes before Rover goes into cardiac arrest?

TRENT
 I'll drop you off if you want, but I swear there's no devious motive. You could wait in the car if you wanted.

BETH
 Maybe I'll come in. I've never seen a real mirrored ceiling before.

63 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

63

An empty foil wrapper from a Hershey Bar rests on the table. Half of the bar is on a plate in front of HEATH. The other half minus a couple sections rests on a plate in front of DOUG. They work on their chocolate throughout the conversation.

DOUG
 No, you see, that's the thing that drives my Mom nuts. I have no ambition. There's no great thing I want to do. I don't want to run a corporation or dance on Broadway. I want to be an absorber. See the world. Take things in.

HEATH
 That's an ambition.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

I'll look in the paper for any openings for absorbers.

HEATH

Well, there are travel writers, museum guides.

DOUG

But that's not absorbing. That's the opposite of absorbing--things going out instead of things coming in.

HEATH

You're saying those would be a good jobs for an exuder.

DOUG

Right.

HEATH

Hmmm. You're right, you don't have much ambition.

DOUG

I told you. But it's not like I mind working, you know--waiting tables, dealing blackjack, bottlecapping at a brewery.

HEATH

I don't think they do that any more. Robots and all.

DOUG

I just have a more European way of thinking about it. You know, where you work to live rather than live to work

HEATH

Yeah, those whimsical Germans.

DOUG

No, like the Spanish or Italians. Work for a couple hours in the morning. Take a three hour lunch, maybe a nap. Sunbathe. Come back to work for a couple hours in the afternoon.

HEATH

Overthrow the fascist regime that's taken power while you've been getting tan.

DOUG

You don't approve. You think I sound hedonistic.

HEATH

No, no. I think it sounds great. I hope you're able to do it.

Lu approaches the table, but a customer scoots out his chair causing the fortune cookies he's carrying for HEATH and DOUG to pop into the air. He catches them without dropping them, but it's obvious he no longer knows which cookie goes to which diner.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Thank you.

DOUG

So what about you? Do you have ambition.

HEATH

(facetiously)

Oh, yeah, me? I'm going to make millions. Swimming pools, movie stars...

DOUG

Doing what?

HEATH

I'm going to be an avant garde artist.

DOUG

Oh we *are* talking big bucks.

HEATH

You know what I hate, maybe more than anything.

DOUG

Racism, poverty...

HEATH

Furniture stores that sell paintings.

DOUG

I was going to say that.

HEATH

Have you seen them. They set up those fake little rooms. You've got your taupe love seat. You've got your taupe coffee table. Then, you've got some sorry fruit bowl still life displayed in a taupe

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

HEATH (cont'd)
 frame. Great art doesn't match your
 couch.

DOUG
 See, you've got passion. I don't have
 anything I'm passionate about.

HEATH
 Don't even get me started on the stuff
 they hang up in hotel rooms.

DOUG picks up her cookie.

DOUG
 Do you know the deal with the fortune
 cookies here?

HEATH
 No.

DOUG
 (adopting a very serious tone)
 They *always* come true. No, just kidding.
 But they are supposed to be original.
 They write a new one for everyone who
 comes in.

HEATH
 Wow.

They both crack open their cookies.

DOUG
 What does yours say?

HEATH
 (reading)
 Lyle Lovett, Billy Joel, Ric Ocasek--you
 never know who's going to win a Grammy.

DOUG
 That's just weird.

HEATH
 Let's hear yours.

DOUG
 (reading)
 What do these things have in common:
 lawnmower, revolving door, sap?

HEATH shrugs. DOUG shakes her head in wonder.

64 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

64

The food in front of DEAN and CAROLYN is half-eaten and getting cold.

DEAN

So let me get this straight. You don't even think there's a point in trying it out, seeing if we could make it work. I don't think that's fair.

CAROLYN

What's not fair? I'm just saying it never works.

DEAN

Well the first thing that's not fair, is that you're saying it won't work out because *I'll* be too busy or that *I'll* find someone new. You're the busiest woman I know. Sorry, the busiest person. You never slow down, and it's this curse, that all the things that I love about you--the way you save receipts when we go to movies so you can write them off; the way that, when you get an idea in your head for the store, you can go ten minutes without hearing a word I say; even the way you fax me love notes--these same things are what will keep us apart.

CAROLYN

How?

DEAN

You would never sell that store.

CAROLYN

How could you even ask me to?

DEAN

I'm not asking you to. My point is, it's more than a store for you. It's validation. Proof that you can make it without a husband. Well I think you've proved it to yourself and to your in-laws. You said yourself, you don't see pity on their faces anymore. So who are you proving it to now? Blockbuster is offering you enough money that you could open a new store, twice the size anywhere you wanted..

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

Not here. They said I can't open one here. This is where Ann goes to school.

DEAN

For a few more months. Still, you act like the offer is an insult.

CAROLYN

I'm beginning to see the disadvantages of having your boyfriend doing the books.

DEAN

What are your views on love?

This is where LU approaches the table to clear dishes.

LU

(noticing the leftovers)
Was there something wrong with the food. We will gladly execute the chef.

CAROLYN

(flustered)
No. It was fine. Can we get it in a bag.

LU glances distastefully at the picked at remains.

LU

I suppose.

LU exits.

CAROLYN

My views on love?

DEAN

Maybe we should have talked about this earlier, but, what I'm saying is, where does love rank? We say it all the time. "I love you." For some people it's this consuming thing. It's like a drug, makes them think in sonnet form. For some people it's companionship and comfort. Where does it stand with you?

CAROLYN

Dean, this is difficult. I'm not sure you should be asking me this.

DEAN

Maybe it should have been a first date question.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

Would've been a short first date.

DEAN

I still want to know. I think I need to know.

CAROLYN

It ranks high.

DEAN

How high?

CAROLYN

Very high.

CAROLYN looks to Dean to see if the answer will suffice. His expression indicates that it won't.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Below motherhood. Is that what you want to know?

DEAN

Where in comparison to the free enterprise system?

CAROLYN

You're being mean.

DEAN

But I'm serious. Where do we rank in comparison to your store.

CAROLYN

You see, you want to make this an easy comparison--you or the store, but it's not that simple. It's not about the store. It's about me. The store is independence. It's self worth. Look, I married Tom straight out of high school. I went straight from being somebody's daughter to somebody's girlfriend to somebody's wife to somebody's widow. Opening that store was the first thing I did completely on my own.

DEAN

So if both the store and me caught on fire, and you only had one bucket of water...

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

CAROLYN
Well, Dean. You could roll.

65 INT. RADIO DJ BOOTH - DAY

65

We return to TRENT'S interview scene.

TRENT
Most of the women I date? Let's see, if there's one recurring trait, I would have to say that they're all fun. All fun girls. Definitely out to have a good time.

66 EXT. TRENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

66

TRENT and BETH arrive at Trent's house. They round a shrub, or wall, or similar barrier and run into a tipsy TERESA who is fishing her earrings out of the mailbox.

TRENT
Teresa ...this is a surprise.

TERESA
Found them!

TERESA turns and holds up the earrings. Only now does she notice BETH. She tries to cover.

TERESA (CONT'D)
...and you're right. They'll be perfect for my audition.

BETH
Someone's doing Bus Stop?

TERESA
What?

BETH
Nothing.

TRENT opens the front door of his house and ushers BETH inside.

TRENT
(to Beth)
Let me just make sure she makes it out to the cab.

BETH
Chivalry is not dead.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

TRENT shakes his head and escorts TERESA out to the cab.

TERESA
Sorry I didn't make it earlier.

TRENT
Don't worry about it.

TERESA
Is that going anywhere?

TERESA gestures towards the apartment. TRENT shrugs. They reach the waiting cab.

TERESA (CONT'D)
I'll be up for a while. If you want to come by afterwards. You've got my number in that little black book of yours, don't you?

69 **EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY**

69

We return to BETH'S interview scene.

BETH
I think my problem, on dates, is that I think of them as automatically confrontational. Let's face it, guys have a different set of goals by which they measure a date's success. I've been thinking about giving up on men. Maybe become romantically linked with, say, my refrigerator, or follow Amanda's advice and find love online. At least at the end of the evening, I won't have to hear the phrase, "I'll call you." Translation-- we'll bump into each other several months from now, you'll be wearing sweats and have a cold sore, and I'll introduce you to my new supermodel fiance.

70 **INT. TRENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

70

TRENT enters his house.

TRENT
So, Stallone's rented a couple movies for the limo ride. He gives you the choice of either Rocky Three or...

BETH
Okay, that's enough.

(CONTINUED)

TRENT continues walking towards the kitchen while Beth begins examining the books on the shelves--not the ones left out for her perusal.

TRENT
...Stop Or My Mom Will Shoot. Whatever you say.

BETH
So you're a jewelry consultant. Very impressive.

TRENT
She's a friend. We hang out sometimes.

BETH
There's a term for that.

BETH continues examining the book collection

BETH (CONT'D)
Norman Mailer? You like Norman Mailer.

TRENT (O.S.)
You don't?

BETH
As far as corny, narcissistic, adolescent-sounding, sexist writers full of glib schtick on highbrow topics, he's not bad. Oh look, you have his entire oeuvre.

TRENT (O.S.)
Well, we can't all aspire to Ann Tyler status.

BETH
What's wrong with Ann Tyler?

TRENT (O.S.)
She's boring.

BETH
Where is this phantom dog of yours? Here Rover! Here Rover!

TRENT returns to the living room with an obviously sick kitten wrapped in a blanket.

TRENT
Sic her boy. Attack!

The sight of the sick kitten melts BETH a bit.

BETH

I think it's against some law, naming a cat Rover. Fines are involved.

TRENT

Not Rover--Ro VAIR. He's named for the French poet.

BETH

(suspiciously)
RoVAIR?

TRENT

Man, you don't let anything slide. Can you help me here.

BETH

What do I need to do?

TRENT

Just wrap up his legs here in the blanket.

BETH

Like this?

TRENT

Yeah, that's good.

The maneuvering and repositioning TRENT and BETH undertake in order to medicate the cat forces them into close physical proximity to each other.

TRENT (CONT'D)

This is not the most pleasant part of his day. He's like one of those Aliens trying to claw out of someone's chest. Okay, Ro-- it's time for your Shirley Temple.

TRENT withdraws a small bottle of pinkish medicine and a dropper that he tries to force into Rover's mouth.

TRENT (CONT'D)

(singing)
"On the good ship, Lollypop. It's a something, something, to the candy shop."

BETH

Sweet trip. How old is he?

TRENT

I'm not sure. I just found him out in the alley going through my garbage. I don't think he comes from a very good family.

TRENT successfully gets ROVER to swallow his drops. He sits down on a couch and pets the kitten while Beth wanders back to the bookcases.

BETH

You have every Doctor Seuss book.

TRENT

(slightly embarrassed)
Not every one.

BETH

What are you missing?

TRENT

The Cat In The Hat Comes Back. I don't go for sequels.

BETH

You're so cool.

71 **INT. HEATH'S CAR - NIGHT**

71

HEATH and DOUG drive towards the dance. DOUG appears distracted or upset.

HEATH

I'm sorry you didn't get to see Dean propose.

DOUG

It's not just that. They didn't look happy.

HEATH

My parents never look happy. I think that's just part of being old.

DOUG

Yeah, but you should see them together most of the time. It's like they can't keep their hands off each other. It always embarrasses Troy.

The present tense mention of Troy seems to bother HEATH.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. That's rude.

(CONTINUED)

HEATH

It's not that. I just got this mental picture of my mom kissing some strange man.

HEATH shudders.

DOUG

Well Dean's cool. And I want Mom to be happy.

HEATH

I think that's what makes you different.

DOUG

Different from what.

HEATH

From the stereotype.

DOUG

What stereotype?

HEATH

From the "Girls who could get by on their looks" stereotype.

DOUG

In case you were wondering. I'm not taking this as a compliment.

HEATH

Yeah. I'm sorry. That does sound bad. All I mean is that it must be a challenge. Everybody wants to make you happy, somehow or in some way. I think it would be hard to keep from thinking the world revolved around you.

DOUG

What makes you think I don't? Because I danced with your friend in junior high?

HEATH

No. More than that. That you're excited for your Mom. That you don't care if she embarrasses you in front of your boyfriend. That you actually try hard in Trig. I don't know, partly it's because you said you'd come to this with me.

HEATH pulls into the parking lot of the hotel where the prom is taking place. Other couples, similarly attired, move past their windows towards the entrance.

DOUG

Let's not.

HEATH

What?

DOUG

Let's not go to the dance.

HEATH

I don't get it. Are you serious?

DOUG

I just don't feel like it.

HEATH

You don't feel like it.

DOUG

Have you ever been to these things? The band is always lame. It costs too much. A bunch of drunks stepping on your feet.

HEATH

To answer your question, no, I haven't been to one. Four years of high school. Zero formal dances. You're the first person--well, no, your mom is the first person--you're the second person ever to see me in a tuxedo. These things may be stupid, but I'd like the chance to find out for myself.

DOUG

We could do something else.

HEATH sighs and shakes his head.

HEATH

I don't know exactly what your problem is. I don't know if you're embarrassed to be seen with me. Maybe you're afraid you'll see Troy with someone else. Maybe you really do hate dances. But I wish you would have just said no when I asked you.

DOUG

It's not...

HEATH

I'm gonna go in. I'm gonna talk to my friends. Get my picture taken. See if anyone'll dance with me. You can either wait here, or, if you want, I'll give you a ride home. Whatever you want.

DOUG

Just take me home.

72 INT. THE EMPIRE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

72

The dishes have been cleared away from in front of CAROLYN and DEAN. The check and the fortune cookies sit untouched on a small tray beside them.

DEAN

So that's it. I guess I'll tell them I'll take it.

CAROLYN

You have to.

DEAN

They want me out there in a month.

CAROLYN

Then let's make it a good month.

DEAN

I don't think so.

CAROLYN

You just want to call it off right here.

DEAN

One year. It has a certain mathematical perfection to it.

CAROLYN

(sadly, hopefully)
And we all know how important that is. It does give us the rest of tonight.

DEAN

So what do you want to do?

CAROLYN

What's playing at the Majestic?

DEAN

I have no idea. I haven't been there for...

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

A year.

DEAN

Yeah, that's right. A year.

73 **EXT. CHEERLEADING PRACTICE - DAY**

73

Return to DOUG'S interview scene.

DOUG

Mom doesn't know this, but I did go out with a college guy for a couple months. I think those were the months right after my lobotomy. The only difference I could ever figure out is that he didn't ask me to wear his letter jacket. The thing about guys--and I can't decide if this is a minus or a plus--is that they're predictable. You know exactly what they're going to do.

74 **INT. HEATH'S CAR - NIGHT**

74

HEATH and DOUG ride in silence.

DOUG

Heath, I want to tell you something. First of all, I wouldn't be embarrassed to go to the dance with you. Not at all. When we left tonight. I had every intention of going through with it.

HEATH

Go through with it?

DOUG

I don't mean it like that. The truth is, Troy called me before you came to pick me up. He wants to get back together--after tonight. He already had a date.

HEATH

So you don't want to screw it up by going in there with me.

DOUG

No. That's not it. I was going to make him jealous. To punish him. To show everyone I wasn't just sitting around waiting for him to come back to me. And I was using you to do that. And that was okay when you were just some guy I didn't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOUG (cont'd)
really know. Somebody who shocked me into
going with him.

HEATH
As long as we're confessing. I was
counting on that.

DOUG
On what?

HEATH
On the surprise factor ...when I asked you.

DOUG
Good strategy.

HEATH
So what made you change your mind?

DOUG
About the dance?

HEATH
Yeah.

DOUG
You got too real.

HEATH
My bad.

DOUG
I don't have to be home yet.

HEATH
Where do you want to go?

DOUG
You pick.

75 **INT. THE EMPIRE KITCHEN - NIGHT**

75

LU brings the uncracked fortune cookies from CAROLYN and
DEAN'S table and sets them down in front of GARRETT who
continues to work on new fortunes.

LU
Not even opened. Breaks my heart.

GARRETT
Now I know how the guys who write for
Playboy feel. Whose were they?

(CONTINUED)

LU
The couple breaking up.

GARRETT
What insight did I offer?

LU cracks open the fortune cookies.

LU
"Sometimes one plus zero equals more than one plus one." And... "By the time Glenn Campbell got to Phoenix, his girl back home had placed a personal ad." Garrett, You are cold-blooded.

GARRETT
Hey, wisdom ain't always pretty.

LU tears up the strips and throws them in GARRETT'S trash can.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
What are you doing? I can still use those.

LU
You can't recycle people's destinies.

GARRETT
You don't really believe that what I write back here has any bearing on what happens out there in the real world.

LU
Look, my grandfather never opens his fortune cookie. He says he doesn't need the advice it offers or want the future it holds.

GARRETT
You're scaring me, Lu. You don't believe that if you step on a crack you break your mother's back.

LU
No. That's just stupid.

BETH continues to rummage through TRENT'S book shelves. Rover wanders about. BETH pulls a book off a shelf.

BETH
What's this? "Everything I Know About
Sex" by Trent Kennedy.

TRENT
Open it up.

BETH
Blank pages.

BETH laughs.

TRENT
It was a gag gift.

BETH
What was her name?

TRENT
Mom.

BETH
Kinky.

Returning her attention to the book shelves.

BETH (CONT'D)
You know, most of the time, I don't mind
being a destitute graduate student. I
just don't need that much money to be
happy, but this makes me jealous. All my
books have due dates stamped inside.

TRENT
I think half my paycheck goes straight to
Book 'Em Dano's.

BETH
I love that store.

TRENT
No string quartets playing on the
staircase. No croissant peddling
cappuccino bar. No events for single lit
lovers. Just floor-to-ceiling books. God
bless 'em.

BETH pulls a book off the shelf.

BETH
A Prayer For Owen Meaney--This is my
favorite book of all time.

TRENT

Really? Mine too. Well, actually, I've got like seven favorite books of all time. Check out the flap.

BETH

(opening book, reading)

"Mr. Dead, Read less. Live more. John Irving." Wow.

TRENT

They were interviewing him on our AM affiliate, so I put on Freebird--this was when we were still classic rock and I was Trent "The Grateful Dead" Kennedy.

BETH doesn't respond.

TRENT (CONT'D)

That was a joke. Anyway, I ran across the hall with a tape recorder and got him to sign my book and do a promo.

BETH

A promo?

TRENT

Yeah, I play it every once in a while for a laugh. It's him saying, "I'm John Irving, and whenever I'm in town, I rock harder on one oh one point seven." Afterwards, I get all these calls wanting to know if John Irving plays bass for Primus.

BETH

You don't strike me as the DJ-type, Trent.

TRENT

That's what my station manager was saying the other day.

BETH

I just figured DJs were obnoxious all the time. On air and off air.

TRENT

It's the voice. In high school, I went through career placement, and they said I could do this or sing bass for the Oak Ridge Boys.

(CONTINUED)

The pager in BETH'S purse starts beeping.

BETH

Uh.

TRENT

Do you need to use a phone?

BETH

Yeah, can I?

TRENT

There's one right there ...or you could use the one in the bedroom.

BETH

Great. Which way?

TRENT

(smiling knowingly)
Straight back.

BETH

Thanks.

77 **INT. TRENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

77

BETH sits on the edge of TRENT'S bed to use the phone. She does actually glance at the ceiling to make sure there is no mirror on it. The candles above the bed visibly concern her. She dials.

BETH

It's me.

78 **INT. BETH & AMANDA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

78

AMANDA sits at a computer while talking on the phone.

AMANDA

This is your bail out call.

BETH

Yeah, okay, thanks.

AMANDA

It sounds like you won't be rushing home.

BETH

I probably should...

AMANDA

But?

(CONTINUED)

BETH

He has his own copy of Horton Hears A Hoo.

AMANDA

You're at his house!

BETH

Couldn't be helped.

AMANDA

Mmmhhmmmm. Could be worse. You could be in a virtual hot tub with the fourteen other members of the Andy Griffith Online fan club.

BETH

I hadn't looked at it that way. Thanks.

79 **INT. LES VIDEO - DAY**

79

CAROLYN continues her interview.

CAROLYN

There was this guy who asked me out every day for two weeks. He was probably close to seventy, and he kept renting the raciest things we had in the store, anything with the word erotic on the cover. He would rent the maximum six tapes at a time then return them the next day and rent six more. I'd ask him if he enjoyed the movies, and he'd say, "Not as much as I would if you'd watch them with me." Then he'd laugh this little evil laugh. Turns out, he was dubbing portions of "The Greatest Story Ever Told" over every steamy scene. I had to take him to small claims court. But I remember, very clearly, missing the daily proposition.

81 **INT. CAROLYN'S CAR - MAJESTIC DRIVE IN - NIGHT**

81

CAROLYN and DEAN sit in the front seat of Carolyn's car. We see a cutaway of some schlocky, Roger Corman-esque B-movie on the drive-in screen.

CAROLYN

It's not exactly The African Queen.

DEAN

I don't know. The swamp monster has a certain Kate Hepburn quality.

Doing Katherine Hepburn

DEAN (CONT'D)

Now I mean it! I will devour you!

Laughing, CAROLYN attempts to hold DEAN'S hand.

DEAN (cont'd)

Watch it sister. That's a little friendly for a first date, don't you think?

CAROLYN

Sorry, forgot. I really couldn't believe you had the nerve to take me to a drive-in on our first date.

DEAN

Why's that? Do you have some unwholesome memories you want to share?

CAROLYN

Not at all. We didn't have a drive-in in my hometown. It's just the reputation, you know, drive-ins equal hanky panky.

DEAN

Not for me. My oldest brother used to take all five us here when we were kids. I'll always think of drive-ins as John Wayne, Coke down my shorts, and a trip to the swing set when the kissing started.

CAROLYN

You know what I remember most about our first date?

DEAN

My punctuality?

CAROLYN

No, though that was impressive, but what I'm talking about is that you didn't whine about me wanting to go dutch.

DEAN

I'm an accountant. Of course I didn't whine.

CAROLYN

Well you'd be surprised. You know I didn't date much, hardly at all, before you, but every time I tried to pay, it was like I was asking my date to get a vasectomy. Like somehow I was neutering him by not letting him pay. It showed you were confident. There's nothing more attractive than confidence.

DEAN

Now, in all fairness to those weenies you went out with before, it is a tough call. I mean, I asked you out. It only stands to reason that I should pay.

CAROLYN

What do you mean, you asked me out? I asked out you out.

DEAN

You asked me if I could come over to go over your books with you. That's not a date.

CAROLYN

I mentioned food.

DEAN

You asked me if I liked Pringles. I'm the one who suggested we make a night of it.

CAROLYN

I'm glad you did.

CAROLYN leans over onto DEAN'S shoulder.

DEAN

Do you think I should let my buddies out of the trunk yet.

CAROLYN

Make 'em suffer.

82 **EXT. FLIGHT PATH COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT**

82

HEATH'S car pulls up in front of the coffee shop. As it does, the rumble of a jet drowns out all other sounds.

83 **INT. HEATH'S BEDROOM - DAY**

83

We return to HEATH'S interview scene

(CONTINUED)

HEATH

I think my biggest fear in all this is being a sap. You know that little red headed girl that Charlie Brown has been after for, uh, let's see ..eternity. Everybody knows it ain't gonna happen. It makes you want to scream at him. Charlie hang it up. She doesn't know you're alive. But what can you really tell a guy who falls for the football trick every time? I just don't want to be like that.

84 INT. FLIGHT PATH COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

84

A few late night laptop-clacking screenwriters, bohemians and college students inhabit the eclectically decorated and dimly-lit Flight Path Coffee Shop. A twenty-something woman, ELLEN, works the counter. She sees HEATH and begins preparing his caramel cappuccino.

ELLEN

Heath, I see you got our mailing about the new dress code. (Louder) None of these other slackers did.

HEATH

Yeah. Uh, Ellen, this is Doug.

ELLEN

Hi.

DOUG

Hello.

ELLEN sets HEATH'S drink down.

ELLEN

And what can I get for you?

DOUG

Strawberry Smoothie?

ELLEN

That's a lot of work.

DOUG

I can get something else.

ELLEN

I'll suck it up. Why don't I bring it out to you. Heath, I believe your table is available.

(CONTINUED)

HEATH
Thanks, Ellen.

HEATH begins leading DOUG to the appropriate table.

DOUG
You must come here a lot.

HEATH
My rare visits are memorable.

DOUG
Mmhhhhmmm.

HEATH leads DOUG to two high-back antique chairs that face a liver shaped vintage coffee table and a puffy couch. Displayed on the wall above this conglomeration is Heath's piece d'art--a 3D cityscape fashioned out of painted boxes of various size and shape, toy soldiers, Weebles, model trains, Hot Wheels, etc. Everything is cemented down. It hangs like a normal, if bulky, painting. HEATH gives DOUG the chair with the better view of the work.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(noticing the piece)
Whoa, funky.

HEATH
Funky good or funky bad?

DOUG
(pausing for serious
consideration)
Funky good. This won't match anyone's
couch.

HEATH
Thanks.

DOUG
You did this?

HEATH
Yeah.

DOUG
Very cool. Is there a theme, some special
meaning?

HEATH
You mean like man's inhumanity to man or
something like that?

DOUG
Yeah.

 HEATH
No.

 DOUG
Good.

 HEATH
You know what would be funny?

 DOUG
What?

 HEATH
If, right here in front of everybody, we
took it down off the wall and started
playing with it. Moving stuff around,
making car sounds.

 DOUG
Wobbling the Weebles.

 HEATH
Are you going to get back together with
Troy?

 DOUG
I told him I would.

 HEATH
He seems all right.

 DOUG
He is.

ELLEN delivers the Strawberry Smoothie.

 ELLEN
Here you go.

 DOUG
Thanks.

 ELLEN
So how was prom? If I'm going to have to
listen to you go on about it for three
weeks, I deserve the scoop.

 HEATH
Boring. The band was lame. Drunks
everywhere.

ELLEN

Ah, too bad. Well the really important thing is you guys look great.

HEATH

Thanks.

ELLEN leaves HEATH and DOUG at their table. DOUG is somber.

DOUG

I am so sorry.

HEATH

It's nothing.

85 **EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - NIGHT**

85

BETH and TRENT eat ice cream cones as they sit on a bench or at a sidewalk table outside of an ice cream shop.

TRENT

I don't know what the Chinese did before ice cream. If I eat anything spicy, I've gotta have ice cream.

BETH

You know what they say. You can't miss what you've never had.

TRENT

Now *that* sounds like a fortune cookie.

BETH

That must be where I heard it.

TRENT

I read this thing the other day. It was too long to be a fortune cookie. I think it was a quote from someone semi-famous. It said that a relationship was impossible between two people if their favorite movies couldn't stand to be in the same room together at a party.

BETH

Their favorite movies?

TRENT

Yeah. If movies were personified, would they hit it off? Like, I doubt The Bicycle Thief and Porky's Revenge would be hanging out by the punchbowl together. So what's yours?

(CONTINUED)

BETH
My favorite movie?

TRENT
Yeah.

BETH
Guess.

TRENT
Something by Bergman.

BETH shakes her head.

TRENT (CONT'D)
Fellini?

BETH
Please.

TRENT
Thelma and Louise.

BETH doesn't respond. She looks disgruntled. TRENT laughs.

TRENT (CONT.)
(CONT'D)
That's it! That was so easy.

BETH
So what's yours? *American Gigolo*?

TRENT
No, but that's a party I wouldn't want to miss.

BETH
So what is it?

TRENT
Not important. How is that vanilla? I can't believe you ordered vanilla.

BETH
Not so fast, pal. Favorite flick. Let's hear it.

TRENT
I'm not saying. I'm hoping this way you'll describe me as mysterious to your roommate.

BETH

After the way I've laid my soul bare to you tonight. So, what does that leave us with? Are we back to first date word games?

TRENT

I think it may be the only safe territory. You haven't been exactly forthcoming, and every time I've gutted it up and started to tell a story, a real story, you either look like you're going to nod off or you make fun of me.

BETH

Really? I don't mean to; it's just that your stories--I don't know--the way they come out; they sound rehearsed. Maybe rehearsed is a bit harsh. It sounds like you're even tired of telling them. I know everyone has stories that they repeat all the time, but...

TRENT

You don't.

BETH

I don't. It's too easy. It's like going on dating autopilot. One story to show you're strong. One story to show you're sensitive. One story to show you've got a sense of humor.

TRENT

But isn't that what dating's about. You tell each other your stories. If you like each other's stories, you keep going out.

BETH

There has to be something more to it. I mean, what happens when you run out of stories?

TRENT

You live together.

DOUG uses a key to open the door of the closed video store. She punches in the alarm code as soon as she enters, but she doesn't turn on the lights. Light is provided by streetlights, exit sign, cars, etc.

HEATH
 (whispering)
 Are you sure this is okay?

DOUG
 (normal volume)
 Sure. I'm just leaving the lights off, so people don't try to come in and rent something. So what do you want to see?

HEATH starts walking down the aisles checking out the titles.
 DOUG follows him, not really looking at the videos.

HEATH
 You know my friend Ryan? The first day he went to work at Dunkin' Donuts, they told him he could eat all the donuts he wanted for free, so, of course, Ryan just pigged out, ate like twenty on his first day.

DOUG
 I can't believe they let him do that.

HEATH
 Yeah, well, they know what they're doing. Ryan ended up getting so sick that he says he'll never eat another donut again. That's their little plan.

DOUG
 Devious.

HEATH
 So is that how you are with movies? Sick of them?

DOUG
 They're on when I'm working, so I don't take them home very often. Besides, if there's a movie in the house, it's too easy not to do my homework.

HEATH
 If there's a toaster in my house, it's easy for me not to do my homework.

DOUG
 Well, I have this secret goal. I got two B's my freshman year, but I haven't made any since.

HEATH
 Same here.

DOUG

The rest have been A's.

HEATH

Oh.

DOUG

If I get A's the rest of the year, I'll be the salutatorian.

HEATH

Wow. I always knew you were smart, but there's smart, then there's salutatorian smart. I wouldn't have guessed you were up there. I mean... Don't take that wrong.

DOUG

No. I understand. That's the secret part. I don't want anyone to know. I never tell anyone what I made on tests or homework or what I got in a class. I don't even think Troy knows. And it's not that I'm all that smart; my SATs prove that. I just work hard at it.

HEATH

That sounds like ambition to me.

DOUG

Ambition to make good grades seems kind of pointless if there's nothing you really want to do with it, but the scholarship money will come in handy.

HEATH

So why don't you want anyone to know.

DOUG

Because it's so uncool. Not to be smart, really, but to try really hard for something. You say one of the reasons you asked me to the dance was because you didn't think I fit some stereotype, but in a lot of ways, I do. Look at me. I'm a cheerleader who dates a football player and doesn't want anyone to think she's has a brain.

HEATH

Man, I hope nobody finds out I went out with you.

87 INT. CAROLYN'S CAR - MAJESTIC DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

87

The drive in parking lot is empty except for CAROLYN'S car. The movie is over. CAROLYN is asleep against Dean's shoulder. DEAN is awake and staring blankly at the screen.

DEAN
Wake up little Susie.

DEAN squeezes CAROLYN with the arm he has wrapped around her. CAROLYN opens her eyes, yawns...

DEAN (CONT'D)
You missed it. The swamp monster managed to organize all the textile workers into a union.

CAROLYN
I was dreaming about the lake house.

DEAN
What lake house.

CAROLYN
The one you said I'd be living in when I'm retired.

DEAN
Was it nice?

CAROLYN
It was too big.

DEAN
Where to now?

CAROLYN
On our first date, you took me straight home. I thought you must not have liked me very much, you were in such a hurry to get rid of me.

DEAN
I had forgotten about that.

CAROLYN
I wasn't sure you were going to slow down when we got there. I thought I was going to have to do a Charlie's Angels roll out of the car.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

DEAN

I remembered halfway through the movie
that it was Atilla The Mom's birthday.

DEAN and CAROLYN both realize.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Shit.

CAROLYN

She's on the West Coast, she's probably
still awake.

CAROLYN starts up the car.

DEAN

Yeah, methodically clipping my face out
of every family photo.

88 INT. TRENT'S CAR OUTSIDE BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

88

BETH and TRENT sit in TRENT'S parked car.

BETH

I don't see how you do it. You're not
even going to get five hours of sleep.

TRENT

The really demented part is that this is
what DJs strive for--the morning shift.
Prime time in radio land. It's not like,
if I get better, they'll give me a shift
where I can sleep in.

The car is consumed in silence.

BETH

Well thanks. I had a nice time.

89 EXT. BETH'S APARTMENT COMPLEX PARKING LOT - NIGHT

89

BETH pulls at her door handle and starts to get out of the
car. TRENT quickly follows suit. The two converse while
moving towards the door.

TRENT

I'll walk you up.

BETH

I'm fine, really.

TRENT

If I don't I won't get my merit badge.

(CONTINUED)

The rest of the short walk is taken in silence. They arrive at the door.

TRENT (CONT'D)
Do you have a clock alarm?

BETH
Sure.

TRENT
Set it for seven.

BETH
Why?

TRENT
I'll say something to you in code on the air. Everyone will hear it, but you'll be the only one who'll understand.

BETH
Oh. I don't think that'll work.

TRENT
Sure it will.

BETH
My clock alarm--that's all it is. No radio.

TRENT
You don't have a radio?

BETH shakes her head.

BETH
I've thought about getting one, though.

As she says this, TRENT leans in and tries to kiss BETH. BETH head dodges. After appropriate awkwardness...

TRENT
Sorry.

BETH
(curious, not mean)
Have you sent secret coded radio messages to a lot of women?

TRENT doesn't respond right away.

BETH (CONT'D)
You see what I mean?

(CONTINUED)

TRENT

Women, men, friends, relatives. I guess I ought to be going.

BETH

Yeah, well, thanks again.

TRENT

I had fun.

BETH

Me too.

TRENT

I'll give you a call.

BETH gives a "Yeah, right" nod and opens her door.

BETH

Good night, Trent.

TRENT

Good night.

BETH closes the door. TRENT trudges away. He points an imaginary gun at his head and pulls the trigger.

90 **INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

90

BETH comes out of her own bedroom having changed into sweat bottoms and a T-shirt. She knocks on AMANDA'S door and walks in. AMANDA is still camped in front of her computer

BETH

Hey, what're you doing?

AMANDA

Having sex. Can't you tell?

BETH

I'll come back later.

BETH exits the room. She wanders into the kitchen, opens the freezer and contemplates her pint of Ben & Jerry's. Shaking her head in disgust, she pulls it out and gets a spoon. BETH then sits down on the couch and uses the remote control to turn on Saturday Night Live. She watches a few seconds of some lame skit, but she quickly begins eyeing the CD rack next to the TV.

BETH pulls her fortune out of her purse and begins rifling through the CDs. She refers, once again, to the fortune.

(CONTINUED)

BETH (CONT'D)
 ABBA Gold, thirteen...

BETH pulls out the ABBA CD. Her finger scans down to the thirteenth track. She takes out the CD and puts it in the deck. "Take A Chance On Me" begins to play. BETH counts the verses out loud.

ABBA
 If you change your mind...

BETH
 Line one.

ABBA
 On the mercy line...

BETH
 Line two.

ABBA
 Honey I'm still free...

BETH
 Three.

ABBA
 Take a chance on me...

BETH
 (along with male backing
 vocalists)
 Take a chance. Take a chance.

91 **INT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT**

91

TRENT drives home from BETH'S apartment. He cranks the song "Fortune Cookie" that's playing on the radio.

92 **EXT. THE DOUGLAS DRIVEWAY - NIGHT**

92

DEAN is leaning on his Suburban. He's talking to his mother on a cellular phone. CAROLYN is close enough that she can hear what he's saying.

DEAN
 ...a lot more money, Mom. ...I know I'd be a
 lot closer. ...Well, she's got the business
 to think about. ...And Ann. ...People did a
 lot of things differently in 1957.
 Listen, I just wanted to tell you happy
 birthday. I'll call you tomorrow and fill
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEAN (cont'd)
 you in on the details. Okay? I love you,
 too. Good night, Mom.

DEAN hangs up the phone and tosses it in his vehicle. As the
 two talk they make their way towards the front door...

DEAN (CONT'D)
 Sorry. Her opinions are her own and don't
 reflect those of her offspring.

CAROLYN
 I'd invite you in, but it looks like
 Ann's here with her date.

DEAN
 Do you want to come over?

CAROLYN
 I don't think so.

DEAN
 So this is it.

CAROLYN
 How soon do they want you out there?

DEAN
 A month.

CAROLYN
 We could still see each other until you
 have to leave.

DEAN
 That's no good. I'm one of those people
 who likes to rip the band aid off, not
 peel it off slowly. It doesn't hurt as
 long that way.

CAROLYN
 I've never broken up with someone that
 I'm still in love with before. This is
 one of those times when you know what it
 feels like to be an adult.

By now, they've arrived at the front door.

DEAN
 Anything you need. Ever. Just call.

CAROLYN
 I need you to do something awful--cheat
 on me, humiliate me. I can't take this
 kindness. I need you to break my heart.

DEAN

I could never do that.

DEAN and CAROLYN kiss. Both are near tears.

CAROLYN

You're a good man, Dean Jeffries.

CAROLYN kisses DEAN one more time, quickly, and enters the house.

93 INT. DOUGLAS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

93

DOUG and HEATH sit on the couch, a safe distance between them. They watch *The African Queen*.

HEATH

I think that would have been a cool time to be alive.

DOUG

Yeah, you'd have World War One and the depression to look forward to.

HEATH

I just liked the idea of wearing a cool hat and getting to say "dames," but since you put it that way.

CAROLYN comes in the front door, obviously upset. She walks right past the teenagers on the sofa and enters the kitchen. DOUG follows her.

DOUG

Mom? What's wrong? Are you okay?

CAROLYN

I'm okay. I just need something to drink.

DOUG pours her mother a glass of water. CAROLYN has taken a seat at the kitchen table.

DOUG

Something happened with Dean?

CAROLYN

We broke up tonight, honey. Dean's moving away.

DOUG

Moving away?

CAROLYN

To San Francisco. He got a promotion.

DOUG

Then what was the ring for? Who gives a 'breaking up' ring?

CAROLYN

What was what ring for?

DOUG

He had a ring. It fell out of his pocket before he picked you up. I saw it. I thought he was going to pop the question tonight. That's why we went to The Empire. I wanted to see your expression when he asked you.

CAROLYN

He did.

DOUG

He asked you? What did you say?

CAROLYN

(realizing)

I told him not to be silly.

DOUG

Mom...

CAROLYN stands. She takes the phone down off the wall and begins to dial. Deciding against that plan of action, she hangs it back up. She repeats that process. She picks up her purse, then sets it back down again. Terribly confused, she sits.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Go.

CAROLYN

All right. What do I say when I get there? Using my X-ray vision, I've noticed a diamond ring in your pocket. Do you mind telling me what you were planning on doing with it?

DOUG

Tell him not to go.

CAROLYN

I'm not sure I can ask him for that.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
I think you better.

CAROLYN gets her purse and heads back out of the kitchen, through the living room and out of the front door. DOUG follows her into the living room.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(shouting after her mom)
I won't wait up.

CAROLYN pops her head back in the door.

CAROLYN
Heath, nice seeing you again. You guys can have another half hour before Heath needs to head home.

DOUG
But Mom, that doesn't give us enough time to watch...

CAROLYN shuts the door.

DOUG (CONT'D)
...Caligula

HEATH
Do you think she was mad because I'm over here and it's after midnight?

DOUG
Why would she be mad?

HEATH
She said she wanted you home early, because you had to work in the morning.

DOUG
Oh yeah, that. She won't care. Hey, you paused the movie.

HEATH
I didn't want you to miss it...

DOUG
Wow. You're the first male of the species I've ever known to pause the movie when somebody else leaves the room.

Embarrassed, HEATH finishes his sentence.

HEATH

...because then I'd have to tell you what happened when you weren't watching.

DOUG

I'm glad you asked me out. I've needed to meet someone like you.

HEATH

I'm glad I did too. I don't think I'd rent the tux if I had it to do all over again, or take dance lessons.

DOUG

You took dance lessons?

HEATH

I figured it was necessary--unless you planned on square dancing. Don't worry. I didn't go out and pay for them. I just had my sister show me.

DOUG uses the remote control to turn the TV off. She walks over to a jambox, inserts a cassette and hits play. Some romantic slow song comes on.

DOUG

Let's see it. Show me what you've learned.

HEATH

Where's the mirror ball. I don't boogie without a mirror ball.

Doug beckons him with her finger.

HEATH (CONT'D)

All right. Try to keep up.

DOUG places her hands on HEATH'S shoulders. HEATH nervously positions his hands on DOUG'S waist. They begin a type four dance. After a moment, DOUG scoots in a little closer.

HEATH (CONT'D)

Cool. Type three dancing.

DOUG

Type three?

HEATH

Better than type four.

DOUG

Type four...

HEATH

Type four--how we dance with lepers.

DOUG

Ah...

HEATH

(obviously happy)

Type three, according to Beth, a girl, is a sure sign of non-revulsion.

DOUG

You're not going to cut off your ear and mail it to me, are you?

HEATH

No, but in my next masterpiece, there might be a weeble-ette in a red dress.

DOUG

All right--immortality.

They dance for a moment.

HEATH

Wait a minute. I know the answer ...to the riddle ...your fortune. They all get pushed around.

DOUG

A lawnmower. A revolving door.

HEATH

And a sap.

DOUG

Oh wow. I wasn't thinking of it that way. What do you think it's supposed to mean?

HEATH

I couldn't tell you. I still haven't figured out mine. I doubt I'm gonna win a Grammy.

DOUG

Who knows.

DOUG draws in closer to HEATH.

DOUG (CONT'D)
I guess this would be type two.

HEATH
(nervously)
Yeah.

They continue to dance this way for a while.

DOUG
So what's type one like?

HEATH
I don't know. I think there's a law
against siblings attempting it.

DOUG burrows in closer--cheek to cheek or lips to ears now.
As they spin and we see DOUG'S face, he wears a sublime
smile.

DOUG
You know what would be funny?

HEATH
What?

DOUG
If, on Monday, we walked through the
cafeteria holding hands.

HEATH
That would freak people out.

DOUG
Yeah, I think it would.

94 **INT. CAROLYN'S CAR - NIGHT**

94

CAROLYN speeds towards DEAN'S house. She rehearses what she's
going to say.

CAROLYN
Dean, maybe we should think over this
decision... Dean, let's not throw out
the baby with the bathwater... Dean, I
think I left some Tupperware over here.

95 **EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PAY PHONE - NIGHT**

95

TRENT gets some change out of his pocket. From the inside
coat pocket of his jacket he pulls out an address book. He
flips through the pages locating the correct number. He
dials.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

TRENT
Still be up. Still be up.

96 INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

96

BETH and AMANDA are dancing around the living room to "Take A Chance On Me." The phone rings. Beth turns the music way down. Amanda continues to dance behind Beth as she speaks on the phone.

BETH
Hello.

TRENT
Uh, hi, Beth. This is Trent.

BETH
What's up?

TRENT
Listen, I wanted to call and tell you that I ...I don't know... that I think you're swell.

BETH
Swell?

TRENT
And smart and funny and cynical. Mainly swell.

BETH
Uh, thanks.

TRENT
So what are you doing tomorrow?

BETH
(unsure)
Studying.

AMANDA has danced back over to the stereo and turned it up just in time for a repeat of the "Take a chance, Take a chance" chorus.

BETH (CONT.)
(CONT'D)
But, I'll probably be able to free up some time...

TRENT
That's great.

(CONTINUED)

BETH
if...

TRENT
Uh huh.

BETH
...if you tell me what you're favorite
movie is.

TRENT
(long beat)
Ghandi.

BETH
Ghandi?

TRENT
You asked.

BETH
You know what? That's so uncool, I think
I believe you.

97 **EXT. DEAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

97

CAROLYN knocks on DEAN'S door. DEAN answers. The two stand
there awkwardly for a moment.

CAROLYN
Marry me.

DEAN
No.

CAROLYN
Is that soup bowl of mine still here.

DEAN
You don't get to ask that question. It's
mine. I bought a ring and everything.

DEAN produces the ring.

CAROLYN
Have I spoiled the drama?

DEAN
I'm still shaking. Carolyn, the backwards
way I asked earlier--I deserved a no.

CAROLYN
Try again.

(CONTINUED)

DEAN

Marry me.

CAROLYN

I can't think of a single reason not to.

The two kiss joyfully.

98 **INT. THE EMPIRE - NIGHT**

98

We return to GARRETT'S interview scene.

GARRETT

Call me jaded, but at least I know what my job is here. I'm not in the fortune business. I'm just supposed to provide a conversation piece for our customers. Not everybody gets it. I know this guy who swears by fortune cookies, because he got four out of six numbers on the lottery off a fortune cookie and won a few hundred bucks. If it were me, I'd wonder why the cookie didn't give me the other two digits. If anything I write ever does come true, it's because it's self-fulfilling. People believe what they want to believe. And most people want to believe in happy endings.

(Long, long pause)

Not me. I like it when endings are unapologetically grim. The hero gets committed to an asylum and his lover has to marry a drug lord to pay the bills. Now that's a finale.

FADE TO BLACK.