

"THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM"

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SANDY'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun is shining and the sky is slightly hazy as SANDY steps out of his suburban house and walks down the sidewalk toward a major intersection where a newspaper stand occupies the corner.

He stands in front of the magazine rack and looks unconsciously at all the selections but he finally buys the newspaper.

He places his keys down on the huge stack of papers and digs for change in his unorganized pockets.

Sandy takes the receipt and throws it in the street as he folds the paper under his arm and walks towards home.

CLOSEUP - BLACK HAND

A black hand reaches up slowly to the top of the newspaper pile and snatches the keys quietly off the top.

A body grows up from the ground and OTIS slips the keys in his back pocket.

He turns and quickly follows Sandy down the sidewalk.

Sandy shuffles along toward his house, fighting internal demons as he comes closer to his castle.

Otis is some ways behind him but follows Sandy's every motion.

Sandy reaches his front door just as he is reaching into his pocket for his keys.

He searches one pocket, then the other, extolling the demons who keep causing these bad incidents to happen.

Sandy finally throws down the newspaper and is tearing at himself in anger for losing his keys.

He begins to knock loudly on the front door as Otis walks past the house and across the street.

SANDY

Sylvia!? Sylvia??!! Sylvia,
Sylvia!! I lost my damn keys.
Lost my keys for God's sake.

Sandy pounds on the door, pounds on the windows and finally he breaks one of the tall, diamond shaped panes which frame in the front door.

He reaches through the pane and around to the door and unlocks it.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - DAY

He kicks the door open further, throws his newspaper in on a small side table and then heads for a bandage in the bathroom.

SANDY

Why? Why me? Why today? Why not tomorrow, because it's a curse. The only huge meeting of the year and I can't be there because - because - I lost my keys. I can't find my keys. Jesus, what's the point? I know!! I know!!! It's rhetoric, it's life, it's my existence.

Sandy bumps into the end table next to the couch and a set of keys falls to the floor.

Sandy picks them up with his bandaged hand.

SANDY

Great. Great job Sylvia. No! Don't leave the keys where a normal person in crisis could find them. No!! Leave them where no one would ever look!! Okay. Okay.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SANDY (CONT'D)

Just get hold of yourself. Try
and think rationally. Phone!!
Phone work!!! kay, I will.
But, what am I going to say?
"I know you're not going to
believe this - but I lost my
keys. . . . again!!!" Okay
Sandy, easy, easy, put the
phone down, down, take your
keys - be a man - go to work
and tell a lie. Just get
through it - just get through
it.

Sandy grabs his briefcase, walks to the front door and closes
it.

He locks it from the outside. All is quiet except for the
television which is playing "Mr. Rodgers Neighborhood".

A key is inserted in the door.

The door opens but there is no one there. After a moment,
Otis, an African/American, looks around the door into the
room.

He enters the living room and closes the front door behind
him.

He turns off the television and walks around examining the
furniture.

OTIS

Now this is Urban America.
Here is a congested mind..

He finds some of SYLVIA'S underwear on the couch and picks
them up.

OTIS

...joined with a congested
personality.

Otis walks back to the front door and opens it and drags in his bag.

He drags the bag to the back of the house and disappears.

Another key is inserted into the front door lock and the door opens.

SYLVIA kicks the front door open and staggers into the house with her hands full of groceries.

She kicks the door closed, drops her purse on the entry hall table and rushes into the kitchen.

She comes out immediately and turns the television back on.

SYLVIA

Huh?

Sylvia goes back to the kitchen where she is heard SLAMMING the GROCERIES AWAY in CUBBARDS.

She comes back into the living-room and primps her hair in front of the mirror over the mantle.

She cruises back out the front door, grabbing her purse on the way and locking the door from the outside.

Otis sticks his head around the corner of the hall and then enters the living-room where he turns off the television.

He walks quickly to the front windows where he looks out to see that she is gone.

OTIS

This is all very charming.
This is a gift. The future
you plan to leave your
children. The mayhem of
America.

Otis goes out to the kitchen and returns crunching on a piece of celery.

OTIS

This is a good sign, a fresh
vegetable in the house.

He sits on the couch and puts his feet up on the coffee table.

OTIS

You have to be very careful
these days, who you live with.
There are international germs
out there that break all
barriers, including the death
barrier.

Otis feels the rich fabric of the couch as he looks at all
the gadgets and toys.

OTIS

This all could have been mine.
But I lost interest.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a written list.

OTIS

Wood, hammer, nails - saw.

Otis finds the keys and lumbers towards the front door.

He goes out the door and locks it from the outside.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sandy comes out of the kitchen carrying a plate of food.

He sits on the couch and puts his food on the coffee table.

He is talking to Sylvia who is still in the kitchen. Sandy
wears a T shirt, sweat pants and socks.

SANDY

...and I walked away from the news
stand and then realized it, my
keys were gone - again - and I
went - I mean I just went - well
you know. I told you the rest
of the story. New keys from the
key place, the spare keys weren't
where any normal person could have
found them.

Sylvia comes in with her food and stuffs herself into the big chair next to the couch.

SYLVIA

Don't get started on me - I didn't lose your keys - again and what about the television?

SANDY

What about it?

SYLVIA

I thought we were leaving it on to scare away burglars?

SANDY

I thought it was rapists?

SYLVIA

Maybe that's what I need, a little forced entry!!

SANDY

I didn't touch - touch - the damn television!!

SYLVIA

We're not talking about the television right now. We're talking about our lives together here and I get the feeling lately that I've stayed too long and maybe I should go back to my own apartment.

SANDY

No! I mean don't. I'm just having a hard time lately and it doesn't make me want to...

SYLVIA

...have a hard time!

Sylvia collects her food and moves off towards the kitchen.

SYLVIA

It wasn't like this in the beginning. You just don't seem to remember anymore.

Sandy collects his food and makes his way to the kitchen. He repeats her last lines in sarcasm.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The television is blaring some super violent, late night movie. A few house lights are still on. A key enters the front door lock but the key doesn't work.

Otis carefully pushes his hand past the taped-up diamond glass pane and reaches around and unlocks the door and the door opens slowly.

Otis looks in and then drags some wood into the front room and then into the hallway.

He comes back into the living-room from a different direction and as he passes the television, he turns it off.

Otis collects some tool from the front porch and the locks the front door.

He finds the spare keys on the mantel and he compares his key with the new/old one.

He removes the front door key, puts the other keys back and disappears down the hallway.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Bird calls greet Sylvia as she walks, glazed, down the hall and toward the kitchen.

She wears a T shirt and socks.

Sandy arrives only seconds later in the hallway wearing pants, shoes, half tucked in shirt and tie partly on.

They bump into each other in the hall and kiss.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sandy makes his way into the living-room where he turns on the television.

He picks Sylvia's underwear off the couch and holds them in mid air.

Sylvia comes out of the kitchen wriggling into a dress. She stops and grabs her under things and drops them back on the couch as she disappears down the hall.

Sandy walks to the mirror and tries to straighten his tie.

Sylvia comes out of the kitchen with coffee and walks to the mirror to primp her hair.

Sandy takes the coffee as they pass and finds his coat by the front door.

Sylvia picks up her purse and bag and walks to the front door.

Sandy puts down the coffee, picks up his briefcase and opens the door.

Sylvia walks out the door and Sandy comes out after her and locks the door from the outside.

Otis head peers around the corner of the hallway.

He comes out in his robe, picks up Sandy's coffee and carries it to the kitchen.

He comes back out of the kitchen with toast and Sandy's coffee and goes into the living-room where he immediately turns off the television.

He sits on the couch where he finds her underwear. He holds it up.

OTIS

Just needs a brain to go along
with that over supplied body.
Of course, you have to pay the
price for that. There's a price
tag on everything.

Otis is thinking and then he begins to laugh. He puts her things down.

OTIS

I watched him. He put his keys down on the New York Times where Israel was making a pack with the PLO and another lake somewhere was discovered to be polluted and of course there were more cops beating up on more innocent people in the name of the law - and that's where he put his keys. Now I said to myself, self? - you should return that man's keys to him but I couldn't because I was mad to see inside of his house. Now I can't explain that, so who cares anyway? He walked away. I watched him. I took his keys and I followed him - and here I am.

Otis looks around the room again.

OTIS

I guess the price tag was just too big for me. But look - now I have it all for free.

Otis takes his things into the kitchen and returns with towel tied around his waist and a broom.

He sweeps into the hallway and disappears.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sylvia is wearing a T shirt and socks and is sitting in the living-room where the television is playing endless commercials. She is stuffed into the stuffed chair with her book and a cup of tea.

Sandy comes in from the kitchen in Bermuda shorts, T shirt and socks. He watches Sylvia for a moment.

SANDY

I thought we made a deal?

SYLVIA

What about?

SANDY

You folded all my T shirts and put them away in nice perfect piles.

SYLVIA

I did no such thing. And speaking of deals, why did I get such a round of hooey about the television when every time I come home lately, it's off!!

SANDY

I haven't touched the damn TV.

SYLVIA

And I haven't touched your damn drawers, except to get this T shirt to wear to bed. Do you want it back?

She stands up and slowly pulls up the shirt till it just reaches her breasts.

SANDY

No. Not just yet. See, I'm trying to understand how my shirts got folded.

SYLVIA

You didn't do it?

Sandy thinks for a few seconds.

SANDY

I - can't - remember.

SYLVIA

Why not? Maybe you just need
a little help. A little help
from 'mother helper'. Does
Sandy want me to be 'mother
helper'?

Sylvia is out of her chair and closing on Sandy slowly. Sandy
is inching towards the hallway.

SANDY

I - huh? I...

SYLVIA

Shall Sylvia be little nursey
like we did before?

Sylvia catches up with Sandy and leads him out of sight down
the long and dark hallway.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Let Sylvia help Sandy. You
know I can.

Otis's head appears out of the kitchen

He comes out eating chocolate chip cookies and drinking milk.

He looks quickly down the hallway then he crosses over and
turns off the television.

He too disappears down the long dark hall and the room is
quiet.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

The same birds chirp outside. A key enters the lock and Otis
kicks the front door open and carries in a potted plant which
he places in the entry way, next to the door.

He lumbers on down the hall just as the front door opens and
Sylvia enters and goes directly to the kitchen.

She emerges moments later carrying a carton of milk.

Sylvia calls down the hall.

SYLVIA

When did you start drinking
milk?

(Sandy stumbles in trying to tie his tie.

SANDY

I didn't

SYLVIA

What's this?

SANDY

Maybe it's Jo Anne's!

SYLVI

Why would Jo Anne leave
food in your refrigerator?

Sandy is trying not to be late

SANDY

I really don't know!! How the
hell should I know? She cleans
the house one day a week. She
must eat here. She probably
forgot. I'll leave her a note.

They both disappear down the hallway.

They reappear in just a moment, fully dressed and they
give each other a peck.

They both leave at the same time, locking the door from
the outside.

The vacuum starts in a back room. In a moment, Otis appears
vacuuming.

He vacuums into the kitchen and then back out again into
the living room where he turns off the television.

Otis sits on the sofa with his feet up on the coffee table.

OTIS

Cars and television, that's where America went wrong. They believed the car would take them somewhere faster and this is where they got to.

He picks up the newspaper next to him and reads the headlines.

OTIS

Today, the air is unhealthy to breathe. Am I surprised? Tomorrow the water will be unhealthy to drink, like they found out in Flint, Michigan. Will the world be surprised? No. Surprise is gone and has been replaced by the cell-phone. That - is our new wonder, the new Messiah.

Otis gathers the unopened mail from the side table next to the couch.

OTIS

Credit Cards. That's the other little devil right behind the T.V. and cars. My God, look at the APR on this sucker. What a sin. Are you kidding me? A hundred dollars for Cable television? Why? More Credit Cards. Look at all this junk. Here is his castle and there's probably Radon Gas in the basement. I better get a test kit. I would never forgive myself if I got sick living off this guy and his girl friend. In fact, I better get one right now.

Otis rushes down the hallway. The back door opens and closes. The front door opens and JO ANNE, the house cleaner, enters with her cleaning equipment. She sees the vacuum out and puts her things down.

JO ANNE
 Huh, I wonder if they got
 someone else?

She picks up Sylvia's bras and turns on the television.

Sylvia carries her cleaning equipment down the hallway.

Jo Anne is singing in the back of the house when the front door opens and Otis comes in carrying a small, paper bag.

He takes the Radon Kit out of the bag and puts on a pair of reading glasses.

Jo Anne comes out of the hallway and sees Otis and screams.

Otis drops the kit and screams.

JO ANNE
 Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

OTIS
 Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

JO ANNE
 Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.

OTIS
 Ahhhhhhhhhhh. Ahhhhhhhhh.

JO ANNE
 Who are you?!!!

OTIS
 Who are you?!!!!

JO ANNE
 What are you doing in this house?

OTIS
 It's a test? To test. Radon.
 In the basement.

JO ANNE
 There's Radon in this house?

OTIS

I'm going to test - it. Here.
This is the kit. My name is
Otis.

He picks the kit up off the floor.

JO ANNE

Jo Anne but my friends call
me Jo. Where are you from?

OTIS

The neighborhood.

JO ANNE

(surprised)

This neighborhood?!!!

OTIS

No. Around - the neighborhood.
Local.

JO ANNE

A huh.

OTIS

I'll be down in the basement
now so, don't go scaring me
again.

Otis and Jo Anne look at each other and then slowly move
off to their separate jobs. The house is quiet except
for the television.

Jo Anne comes in from the hallway pulling a sweater around
her shoulders. She calls behind her in the hallway.

JO ANNE

Otis? Otis. You still here?
Otis. Huh. Hope he locks the
door.

She collects her cleaning equipment and goes out the front
door which she locks. A moment later Otis runs into the
room and turns off the television.

OTIS

Oh my God, it is finally off!!!
She's gone, no Radon, no
television. Which could be
worse.

Otis focuses on something across the room and walks to
it. He picks up an ash tray and a pack of cigarettes.

OTIS

I thought you were here. I
thought I smelled your little
habit. Which one?

He lifts a cigarette out of the ash tray and sees the
lipstick.

OTIS (CONT'D)

Hers. Now look at this and we
can really see how far we have
come. Right here, on the side
of the package. Warning!! You
could die from doing this.
She'll have to be punished for
this. This is right up there
with the car, television and
credit cards. We have to plan
this very carefully.

Otis keeps the cigarettes and leavers down the hallway.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATER DAY

Sylvia Comes flying through the front door. Drops her
purse on the table by the door and comes into the living
room.

She glances at the television as she walks to where her
cigarettes are and reaches down but the pack is gone.

She looks everywhere as Sandy comes in the front door
carrying his briefcase which he leaves in the entry
way and walks into the living room.

SYLVIA

The television is off. My cigarettes are gone and I am not in the mood for a joke, so - why do you keep turning the television off and where are my cigarettes? Where?

Pause.

SANDY

I have not touched the set for three days. I don't know where your cigarettes are and I don't appreciate the tone of your voice when I just get home from a miserable day in that miserable office in the miserable hear of this miserable town and - where did that miserable plant by the front door, come from?!! Where?!!

SYLVIA

Are you trying to get me to stop?

He backs away from her, still looking at the plant.

SANDY

I don't care right now. I just want to hide. From the world. From life. From you. From that. And I just got home. Give me a few minutes and maybe I'll want something else.

Sandy leaves and walks down the hallway. Sylvia grabs her purse, rushes for the door, stops and looks at the plant and then runs out the front door slamming it.

A moment later, Sandy comes back in in Bermuda Shorts and T shirt and flops on the couch.

He looks at the whole living room, leans over and puts his face in his hands and screams.

He sits up and gives a long sigh. He stands and goes into the kitchen but gives the plant a look as he goes by it.

Moments later, Sylvia comes back in the front door with a pack of cigarettes and places them on the table in the entry hall.

She walks down the hallway and a door opens and closes in the back of the house.

Otis comes out of the hallway, looks quickly around and sees the cigarettes and takes them. Otis is dressed to kill and goes instantly out the front door.

Sandy comes out of the kitchen with a drink just as Sylvia emerges from the hallway in a loose, cotton dress and walks to the table but her cigarettes are gone.

SYLVIA

Okay. O-kay. Just tell me plainly that you want me to go back to my own apartment. Just spell it out.

SANDY

What - is the matter - now?!!!

SYLVIA

don't play that stupid game with me. I'm tired of your stupid little games.

SANDY

I can't take this anymore. They are trying to move me down at my job. I am fighting for my life to stay above water and suddenly, you are Miss. Riddle with an attitude.

SYLVIA

Where - are the cigarettes?!!

SANDY

I don't know, I don't smoke.

SYLVIA

I just brought in a pack from my car. I put them right there on that table. Just seconds ago. Now they're gone. Where in the hell did a full pack go to?! It's just like sex, isn't it Sandy? You want it only when you want it. Only. It's all up to you. I just fall in on your fantasy once in awhile and then you disappear into another world where I am not welcome.

SANDY

How did you get from cigarettes to sex?

SYLVIA

(shouting)

Stop changing the subject!!!
What are you trying to do to me?

SANDY

(shouting)

Stop shouting at me. This is my house - my life - I own this and you will not shout at me here!! I am safe here and you can't shout.

Sylvia plays her little girl act.

SYLVIA

Oh baby - is Sandy angry at Sylvia. Is Sylvia all red in the face and heated up? Is Sandy ready for play time - with all the special toys mommy has for him?

Sandy is slowly backing out of the room with Sylvia stalking him like big game.

SYLVIA

Just tell mommy where you put
her cigarettes and mommy will
help you out in her special way.

Sandy stops and suddenly explodes in anger.

SANDY

I didn't touch the damn
cigarettes.
I haven't touched
the damn cigarettes or the damn
television set. And - if you
want to go home to your house -
go!!! Go home. Go!!!

Sandy rushes out the hallway.

Sylvia is crushed and falls into a chair in despair.

PAUSE

She slowly stands and collects a few of her things that
are close and exits down the hallway. She returns with
more clothes and leaves out the front door which she locks.

Sandy wonders back into the room.

SANDY

I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.
I'm having a very hard time at
the office. Sylvia? Sylvia.

He rushes over and looks out the front door.

Sandy closes the door and falls into one of the stuffed
chairs, crushed. He finds the remote and turns on the
television. It's the news and it's bad.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Otis enters from the hallway and covers Sandy up with a
blanket.

He turns off the television and leaves.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

The birds sing outside. Sandy wakes up and examines the blanket.

He jumps up quickly and runs to the hallway.

SANDY
Sylvia?!! Sylvia?!!

Suddenly the front door opens and Sylvia steps in.

SYLVIA
I just came back for a few...

SANDY
...I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.
It was just a moment. It's so
hard for me lately. Everything
is so stressed out in the world
that, I don't know if I'm
coming or going. But - I need
you - and I - need you here.
I - I - ahhh...

SYLVIA
(hoping)
...yes, yes?!!

SANDY
I - need - ahhh?

SYLVIA
What are we doing?

SANDY
My life is so crazy. I just
can't take anything new. When
my deodorant gets moved, I can't
seem to get over it. It's like
a personal insult.

SYLVIA
I have to go to work. We can
talk about it tonight.

SANDY

What time is it?

He looks at his watch and they both shift into high gear.

They both run to the back of the house and almost immediately return, half dressed, dressing each other as they work their way out the front door.

Sandy comes in immediately and turns on the television and then goes back out and locks the door.

PAUSE

The door is unlocked and Otis enters, wearing a respirator which covers his whole face.

He walks directly to the television and turns it off.

He goes back out the front door and returns with paint and brushes. He takes off the mask.

He sits for a moment and opens the newspaper on the couch.

OTIS

The air is very unhealthy today.
 But - that's what we get. That's
 what we're paying for. All this,
 all this house, furniture, car,
 television, food at a market.
 We get all that but we also get
 polluted air, dirty water and
 high crime along with it. What's
 the point? I have all that stuff
 and - a house for free. This is
 what I would want my son to
 understand.

He walks back to get the paint just ass Jo Anne opens the front door and almost runs Otis over coming in the house.

JO ANNE

You not done with the test?

OTIS

Paint. Paint now.

JO ANNE

Paint now?!! How can you be painting with me cleaning in here? I better call him.

OTIS

No!!! I'll wait. I'll do it later. Today.

JO ANNE

Why don't you give me your card? I have some people who need a little handy work.

OTIS

You know, I'm all out of those cards. But, you could call me - here and I would get the message.

Jo Anne sets up her equipment

JO ANNE

Are you sure, these people are ...

OTIS

I'm sure. I'll just go till you finish.

Otis carries the paint and brushes to the back of the house as Jo Anne turns on the television and starts cleaning. She cleans into the kitchen. The house is quiet except for the television.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sylvia unlocks the door and rushes into the living room looking for her cigarettes. They are gone.

She runs through the house hysterical, looking.

Sandy enters the unlocked door as Sylvia rushes out from the hallway and runs into him. She is a wreck.

SYLVIA

It happened. It happened to me. It happened to me today. In my car.

SANDY

What happened?

SYLVIA

A man. A black man. A huge black man reached into my car, at a stop light - and - and...

SANDY

...and what?!!!

SYLVIA

Tried to take my keys. He wanted my keys, Sandy it was awful. He wanted my keys and the car and my purse and - probably everything.

SANDY

That's it. I'm out of here. This house is going on the market tomorrow and I don't care what kind of bath I take, I'm selling it. I'm gone.

SYLVIA

It happened to me!!!

SANDY

I know - I mean - we're gone. I mean...

SYLVIA

(hoping)

Yes. Yes. Yes?!!

SANDY

He could have killed you.
 What would I have done?
 He could have driven you to
 some dirty alley and - and
 - raped you!!! Torn off
 your clothes, ripped off
 your underthings, soiled
 the seats in your car with
 his huge...

SYLVIA

...I closed the window on his
 arm. Power windows. Worked
 like a charm. He was stuck.
 I hit the pedal and dragged
 him down the street. Then -
 I really hit it and pushed the
 window button down and he
 rolled into the gutter. Some
 street people came out of no
 where and helped him.

SANDY

I feel sick.

SYLVIA

I know. Come on. Let's lie
 down for a while. Let's just
 be together.

They start down the hallway as Otis comes out of the
 kitchen and rushes into the living room where he watches
 them until they close their bedroom door.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

I saw it out of my rearview
 mirror. They were all, shaking
 their fist at me like it was
 my fault. He had a bag of
 oranges in his hand.

All is quiet except for the television. Otis is shaking his
 head in wonderment.

OTIS

I may not be able to stay here.

He picks up the remote from the couch and turns off the television.

OTIS (CONT'D)

It may be too complicated. For me.

He walks across the room, opens a cabinet and removes a bottle of liquor and pours himself a drink.

OTIS

On the one hand, it's free except - nothing is really free. I have to put up with her whining - her trying to get him into bed all the time - him trying to fake a head ache so he won't have to. They don't know what they've got. They need to be street people for a while. Then you see how you disappear from the sight of your own people. When you're pushing a cart down the street with everything you own in your life, inside the basket, you should command some kind of respect. But the fact is that people look at you just like they look at a dog. They kind of guess your breed, your age, your sex and then they sort of wonder how you could have come to be so low that they have to see you - broke and homeless in your life - as long as it's not them and they don't have to pay for you. Maybe they buy your oranges.

Otis puts the glass down, walks to the front door and closes and locks it behind him.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Sylvia comes out in just a T shirt, finds the empty glass, smells the alcohol and makes an odd face.

She takes the glass into the kitchen and returns to the living room where she turns on the television and then she returns to the bedroom.

All is quiet except for the television.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sandy comes out dressing, half asleep, shaving cream still on part of his face.

SANDY

Since when did you start using my razor and why is the shaving cream on the other side of the medicine cabinet? Where are you?

Sylvia comes out and goes immediately into the kitchen.

SYLVIA

And what smells in this house? It's like - it's just like - you know - paint. Did you paint something?

Sandy goes back down the hallway

Sylvia comes out of the kitchen with a glass of juice.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I never knew you liked tomato juice. Actually, it's kind of good.

SANDY (O.S.)

Sylvia, Sylvia, come in here and look at this

Sylvia stumbles down the hall.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Wow. Maybe Jo Anne cleaned the wall.

SANDY (O.S.)

No one could have painted this wall - that color. What is going on here?

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Call Jo Anne and ask her.

They come back to the living room

SANDY

I can't.

SYLVIA

Why not?

SANDY

Because she works - in other houses. I'll have to wait until next week. Could it have been that dirty?

Sylvia takes her empty glass back to the kitchen.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Boy, it smells. She must have used some really strong soap.

Sandy walks back towards the kitchen.

SANDY

Why would she do it now, when I'm right in the middle of all these high-powered meetings?

Pokes her head out of the kitchen.

SYLVIA

She doesn't know.

SANDY

Of course she doesn't know. I was only wondering about what it meant that she did it now.

Sylvia comes out of the hallway pulling on a dress.

SYLVIA

You mean in the bigger picture
sort of?

SANDY

Sylvia, look, this week is very
important to me and to everything
I've worked for. Maybe it would
be a good idea if...

SYLVIA

...I spent the week in my own place?!
After I was almost raped yesterday,
because you can't take the pressure,
and I can't do anything for you that
would help take the pressure off?
Is that it?! Is that the - if?!!!

SANDY

(demoralized)

Yes.

SYLVIA

Great!! Just great!! That's just
great!!!!

Sylvia goes ballistic as she collects certain items, all
unrelated.

She goes to the door, arms stuffed and Sandy opens the door.

Sylvia steps out, Sandy closes the door and locks it.

SANDY

I need an Alka-Seltzer.

He disappears in the back and returns with a foaming glass and
sits down on the couch as the television hums away.

The lights slowly get darker all around him until it is dark
except for the television light and Sandy, still on the couch.

The phone rings and the answering machine takes a message for
Otis. Sandy does not hear or is asleep.

SYLVIA

The - room-mate? But - how?

OTIS

Otis.

SYLVIA

I mean - when? O-tis? Otis?
Hi. I'm - Sylvia. I live -
used to - live here.

OTIS

Oh. Did you need something?

SYLVIA

I think I'll just call Sandy.

OTIS

You don't have to do that.

SYLVIA

I don't?

OTIS

No. Just get what you need and
take it. He won't care.

Sylvia

He won't?

OTIS

Why don't you come in and sit
a spell? Ahh. I think these
are yours.

Otis produces a package of cigarettes from his pocket.

SYLVIA

Oh God. Ahhh. Thank you. I
will sit down. Just for a
moment.

OTIS

Why don't you let me take care
of these for you?

Otis walks to her and carefully takes the flowers.

SYLVIA

But - you're black.

OTIS

I don't think the flowers mind.

He takes the roses into the kitchen and returns with the flowers in a vase with water. He places them on the mantel.

OTIS

Kind of romantic.

SYLVIA

Why - did he get a - black room mate?

OTIS

Guess he needed a change.

Sylvia lights a cigarette and Otis collects the ash tray for her.

SYLVIA

Thank you.

OTIS

It's my pleasure.

PAUSE

SYLVIA

So - ah - what do you do - Otis?

OTIS

Handyman. Repair. Replace.
Repack. Fill in the old with
the new and the enlarged.

SYLVIA

A huh.

OTIS

I've been in the neighborhood
for a long time. Just couldn't
find the right place or the
right opportunity. That's the
key, you know. Opportunity.

SYLVIA

A huh!!

OTIS

You have to take it when it's offered to you.

They both stare at each other. She looks once at his crotch.

SYLVIA

How long have you known Sandy?

OTIS

Oh. Awhile. I've done some work for him before.

SYLVIA

Oh. He just - never mentioned you before - to me.

OTIS

You both were probably too busy fighting.

SYLVIA

He - talks about -our - me?

OTIS

Would you lie a drink?

SYLVIA

A drink? No. Yes. What kind? No. Yes. Anything. A lot of anything. And just exactly what has he told you - about me?!!

OTIS

That you're sexually frustrated.

She stands bolt upright and then sits immediately

SYLVIA

Noooooo!!!!

Otis moves quickly to make her as lot of something.

He brings her the glass and she throws down the drink and gives the glass back to him.

He makes her another and hands it to her. She throws it down and he makes one more but places it on the coffee table.

SYLVIA

Soooo!! How very nice for you. That you know all about my personal little secrets and I don't know anything about you except that you are black.

OTIS

And big.

Sylvia
(CAUTIOUSLY)

And - big.

OTIS

If you want to know about me I would be glad to tell you the whole story.

SYLVIA

Not - right now!!

She takes the glass from the coffee table and slugs it down.

SYLVIA

And so Otis. Are you a professional counselor of some sort that Sandy freely tells you about these - things?

OTIS

He's just trying to get some answers I suppose.

Sylvia

About what, for instance?

OTIS

You're sex life for one thing.

SYLVIA
(she's hot)
And!!! What about my - sex life?!!!

OTIS
It's not very good, he says.

SYLVIA
A huh. And what did you tell
him?!!

OTIS
I thought that maybe the problem
was that you were just not trained
well.

She stands up rigid but the alcohol sinks her back down again.

SYLVIA
How could he dare - ask you that!!

OTIS
We're close. Very close.

SYLVIA
Obviously, you are - very close.
So close, he's never mentioned
your name or anything about your
presence to me.

OTIS
He told Jo Anne.

SYLVIA
Oh!! He told Jo Anne!! About
you? Did he tell her about our
sex life also?!!

OTIS
He just thought you needed help.

SYLVIA
And he thought you - could
help me, right?!!

OTIS

Oh, that's very simple. He thought we could meet and I could give you some advice. About what he really needs from you. Sexually.

She stands and walks across the room, tripping slightly, and pours herself another drink and she drinks it all at one time.

She slowly stammers back.

SYLVIA

Okay - Otis. What does he - really need from me?

OTIS

It might be easier to show you.

Sylvia is back up on her feet and she backs across the room, never taking her eyes off Otis.

SYLVIA

What? Now wait a minute. If I'm going to take sex lessons it won't be from an older, black man and it won't be in my boyfriend's living room drunk.

OTIS

You only say that because you probably think you can't take all of me. You know - black men are - big.

SYLVIA

You men have such big ideas about how well you perform in bed but - when it comes down to it - your size is nothing like a baby. Nothing.

OTIS

Ah - why don't we just calm down here and...

SYLVIA

...I don't want to calm down. I want to get all heated up!! Because I'm mad!! I'm more mad than I have ever been in my life. Do you understand that?!!!

OTIS

Yes ma'am.

SYLVIA

Don't call me ma'am. My name is Sylvia. I'm not your mother!! Well big Otis. Why don't you let me see it?

OTIS

Why don't we find a better room?

SYLVIA

(shaking)

And what room would that be counselor? The Kitchen? The bathroom? Oh - how about the - laundry room? This is for therapy, right? I should get this taken off my major medical wouldn't you say?

OTIS

I'm going to give it to you for free.

SYLVIA

(laughs)

A gift. What if the therapy doesn't work?

OTIS

I guarantee my work.

SYLVIA

And then what? Do you tell Sandy I've been - plumbed? Repact? Enlarged?!! By the best in the local business so, I am now ready for you?

OTIS

I don't tell him anything. It's what you do to him after - that makes the difference.

SYLVIA

Screw School. What a concept.

OTIS

Some people need it.

SYLVIA

I'm not one of those people. I know what to do with all the parts. I've been doing it for years. But - no nevermind, now we're going to do it for a test. We are being tested and I am the tester.

Sylvia walks down the hallway as Otis rushes to the liquor cabinet and pours himself a double and downs it.

He pulls off his socks and tosses them.

He pours another shot and downs it as Sylvia comes back in in a T shirt, which barely makes it down to her thighs.

SYLVIA

Hi

OTIS

Hi. Hi, hi, hi. Hi.

SYLVIA

I want you to crawl over here on your knees.

Otis carefully gets down on his knees and starts towards her.

OTIS

You've never had a black man before have you?

SYLVIA

I'm about to break the myth.

OTIS

I had a little surgery on my back couple of years ago, so -

SYLVIA

Keep coming.

OTIS

It's a little hard on the old knees.

SYLVIA

What did you have for lunch?

OTIS

Black bean soup for breakfast and hadn't had no lunch yet.

He reaches Sylvia and she grabs the back of his hair and pulls him down the hallway whimpering.

SYLVIA

Bon - a - pe - tite.

Moments later the sound of two bodies THRASHING AROUND on a bed in the back. Then it is quiet. Otis squeals and then lets out a scream. Then it is quiet. The intermittent sounds go on until the light fades into the afternoon.

Sylvia reenters the living room, completely dressed and looking fresh as a spring flower.

Otis barely walks in wearing only his pants. He is hurt and hunched over and barely makes the couch where he fits himself into a corner and cowers.

SYLVIA

And?

OTIS

And? You mean like a verdict?

She laughs.

SYLVIA

Listen Otis and listen carefully. No one, and I mean, no one - will ever know what we did and - we will do it again and again and again until you learn these little rules.

She crosses to him and stands directly in front of him on the couch.

SYLVIA

The rules like the ones you tried to learn today. I'm leaving for a week to see my mother. Tell Sandy. Tell him not to call because I won't answer - and nothing else. Do you understand?

OTIS

You went from the student to the teacher mighty fast.

SYLVIA

And the lessons are not over. None of this would have ever happened if you hadn't come into the picture. But, Otis - the picture isn't over. I didn't spend two years in this relationship to be dumped for an ageing Blackman who does handy work. Repair. Replace. Repack. Fill in with the old.

OTIS

You say things sometimes in your life you just wish you could take and eat right away - so nobody would have heard it.

Sylvia crosses to the front door.

SYLVIA

He like for you to leave the television on while the house is empty. It's supposed to scare away burglars.

Otis shakes his head yes as he tries to straighten out a stitch in his back.

They look at each other awkwardly and then Sylvia leaves locking the front door from the outside. Otis works himself up to a standing position and then drops to the floor on all fours.

He looks up and sees the phone. He crawls over to the phone and dials 911.

He whispers because he is in pain.

OTIS

(raises his voice)

I said, the front door is locked Locked!! I can't open it, so come through the front window. Break it. Of course you can break it - I said so. I'm waiting. I'm waiting.

He drops the phone.

SIRENS are heard in the distance.

Otis tries once more to stand but falls all the way to the floor.

SIRENS come closer and closer and finally right in front of the house.

A front window breaks as many men and women call into the house.

Someone crawls through the front window but Otis is sinking into unconsciousness.

The room gets darker and darker until it goes black.

PAUSE

In the darkness, a key is fitted into the front door and the door opens.

Sandy enters the dark house and walks to the television and turns it on.

He crosses to the wall switch and turns on the lights.

His house is trashed with furniture moved, broken glass and a vase of roses on the mantel.
Sandy is stupefied.

He starts picking up things unconsciously until he gets to the phone where he dials Jo Anne.

SANDY

Hello? Jo Anne. It's Sandy.
I'm sorry, please forgive me,
I know it's late, but - my
house is wrecked. There's
glass on the floor and -
furniture - and cigarettes
smoked but she's gone and -
what? You can? You will?
Oh God Jo Anne, I don't
know how I will ever be able
to repay you. I'll leave
the door open. Thank you.
Bye. Bye.

Sandy fades into the couch. He reaches down and finds Sylvia's underwear and holds them up in front of himself.

SANDY

Oh God, why now!!!

He gets up and walks to the hallway and disappears.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

A vacuum starts and Jo Anne comes out of the hall and into the entry way.

She replaces things, moves furniture and picks up the endless trail of glass.

Sandy comes in and sits on the couch looking around. He wears Jeans and socks and a long sleeve dress shirt with the sleeves partially rolled up.

JO ANNE

What do you think happened?

SANDY

I have no idea.

JO ANNE

Who sent the roses? Maybe they know.

Sandy crosses to the mantel and finds a note in the flowers.

SANDY

Sylvia.

JO ANNE

Why is she bringing you flowers?

SANDY

We - sort of - broke up, for a while. Until all the crap at my office quieted down.

JO ANNE

You left her because something is happening at your work? That's crazy.

SANDY

And - other - personal things.

JO ANNE

A huh. Like what?!

SANDY

Jo Anne, it's very kind of you to - but - it's very late and...

Jo Anne keeps cleaning but not really.

JO ANNE

Like. . .?

SANDY

Oh - you know - the normal,
everyday -

JO ANNE

Sex!!

PAUSE

SANDY

Ahhh - our ah - we shared some
problems on - that level.

JO ANNE

Like what?

SANDY

(like a child)

Ah Jo Anne. I can't talk about
that with you.

JO ANNE

Sure you can. I'm your
housekeeper. I've seen every
secret and nasty place you
could ever have and cleaned
them too.

SANDY

Ah huh.

JO ANNE

She didn't like it?

SANDY

(cautious)

Oh no - she loved it. All
the time. Anywhere.

JO ANNE

You didn't like it anywhere?

SANDY

Look. I have to find out what happened here in my house last night - that is my main focus. So...

JO ANNE

Where did you like it?

SANDY

(teenager, hip yuppie)
On the bed. . .

JO ANNE

. . .missionary position.

SANDY

How - did you know that?

Jo Anne walks across the room and makes Sandy a drink.

She takes a sip and then returns it to him.

SANDY

Thanks, I should have thought about that before. Myself. Should have thought of it.

JO ANNE

What's the matter?

SANDY

Nothing. Nothing. My heart just - you know. I mean - my front window, my furniture, my house has been violated.

JO ANNE

I've been violated, all my life.

Jo Anne moves to the back of the couch and begins a slow, sensuous message on Sandy's back, shoulders and neck.

SANDY

Wow. That is great but - oh my that is sooo good - where did you learn to - do - all. . .

JO ANNE

Okay. Feel better?

Jo Anne walks away and starts cleaning and dusting again.

JO ANNE

I had a wonderful husband for
- a while and he taught me that.
Then he left me for another
woman - a younger woman and left
her eventually for - someone
else.

SANDY

I'd say the guy was pretty
stupid.

They both look at each other.

SANDY

I never knew you were married
before.

SYLVIA

I don't tell the neighborhood.
Don't you like her?

SANDY

Sylvia? Sure. Sure I do. I
like her a lot. We've lived
together for two years - on
and off. Two years. She
leaves sometimes to get some
space.

JO ANNE

And?

SANDY

She - wants me all the time and
- I get tied up in my office,
because it's my life and she
doesn't understand that when those
times come, I'm just not interested.
In - ah - doing it!

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SANDY (CONT'D)

Sex - I can't because I'm thinking about what is happening back on the old job - which is where I go every damn day after the night with Sylvia - and the morning - which is when it usually happens.

JO ANNE

And what is that?

SANDY

Oh. she accuses me of not being very receptive - or not interested or - you know - is it her? - is there something else?

JO ANNE

And - what do you think that is?

SANDY

. . . . Ah. . . .

PAUSE

SANDY

I - don't - like it, that much.

JO ANNE

Oh boy!! Did you know anything before you got into this relationship?

SANDY

Sure. What do you mean? Had I done it? Sure. A bunch of times - a lot of times. I had done it. I had had classes on how to do it and how not to do it. Is that what you mean? Look. don't get me wrong.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SANDY (CONT'D)

I see her and I get heated up and it's all right until two or three hours down the road, my God, we've seen this territory for a hundred and twenty minutes now and some of it needs to be cleaned, and some needs to be cooled and some needs to be - you know, take a break for God's sake. Give it a break, that's all I'm saying.

PAUSE

JO ANNE

I've never done this before in my entire adult life but - I have picked my way out of the woods and I am going to - give you some aid. and for my own selfish reasons.

SANDY

What are those?

JO ANNE

I've never seduced a white man before.

SANDY

Seduced?

JO ANNE

Yes.

SANDY

You're probably too old for - I mean that I'm probably too young to ah. . .

Jo Anne moves in on him as Sandy awkwardly tries to escape.

JO ANNE

Just let me = teach you.
Slowly, how to make it slowly,
richly, like dark chocolate and
vanilla.

SANDY

I - my throat is totally dry
And my heart is beating like -
in my ears. It's pounding for
my housekeeper. Will we go to
hell for this?

JO ANNE

I hope so.

Jo Anne grabs Sandy and a homing beam pulls them together.

Jo Anne pulls Sandy toward the back bedrooms.
The lights turn cold, steel blue.

There are sighs and whimpers which slowly turn into screams
and yelling and then silence. Again, more whimpering and then
screams from them both and finally they both, at the same
time, reach a huge orgasm where Sandy starts crying and
screaming and Jo Anne slowly calms him with her licorice voice
and her cinnamon breasts.

SANDY (O.S.)

I never knew. I never, ever had
any idea. God I've been clueless.
The whole time.

JO ANNE (O.S.)

You were better than that, trust me.

They both walk out into the living room. Jo Anne is in a slip
and Sandy is in his boxers.

SANDY

I just never understood the
finesse and - all the rest of
it.

Jo Anne goes back down the hallway.

JO ANNE

I have to go to work.

SANDY

How can you after that?!!

JO ANNE (O.S.)

It's my choice - to survive.

SANDY

You were incredible.

She comes back on dressed and collects her cleaning stuff.

JO ANNE

Well, I think you graduated to advanced techniques and I am not a service.

SANDY

I'm addicted.

JO ANNE

To older women?

SANDY

No. How old are you?

JO ANNE

A gentleman never asks a lady her age. Where did you ever find that handyman, Otis any way?

SANDY

Who?

JO ANNE

The handyman. The one who did the Radon test.

Jo Anne looks at her watch and does not wait for the answer. She opens the front door and closes it behind her.

JO ANNE

See you next week.

After a moment, Otis opens the door and comes in on crutches. He walks straight to the couch and sits down.

He rests his crutches at the end of the couch.

OTIS

Hi. I'm Otis and I'm suing you
for ten million dollars for being
injured in your house last night.

Sandy slowly walks around the front of the couch and stands in front of Otis.

SANDY

Who - who - are you?

OTIS

Otis, the handyman. The - oh
never mind. I worked on your
house and was hurt here. I have
a lawyer.

SANDY

I'm just going to put on my pants
and then I'll be back. don't go
away.

OTIS

I'm not going anywhere. I live
here.

Sandy turns around and comes back.

SANDY

I beg your pardon.

OTIS

Called 911 from that phone
and gave them this address.
They had to break a window
to get to me.

SANDY

What were you doing here in
the first place?

OTIS

Working. On a job. A big job.
Little job.

SANDY

Who hired you?

OTIS

I did.

SANDY

You hired yourself to work on
my housed?

OTIS

Our house. We live here together
and have for several months. I
live upstairs and you live down
here - with her.

Sandy turns and sprints down the hallway. A ceiling
door is pulled down and Sandy climbs up and yells
down the ladder.

SANDY (O.S.)

There's a whole room up here,
in the attic.

OTIS

My room. Where I hired myself
to work for you - us. You and
us.

Sandy closes up the ceiling ladder in the hallway and returns
to Otis.

SANDY

Did you get a good wage?

Like a joke with no punch line.

OTIS

I believe - I was paid in full.
Except for the accident.

Sandy, unconsciously walks across to the liquor cabinet and
pours himself a drink.

OTIS

It's not too early for me!

Sandy pours another and brings it to Otis.

SANDY

How did you get in her in the first place?

OTIS

Your keys. You left them on the New York Times down at the news stand. I picked them up and followed you home.

SANDY

And moved in!!

OTIS

I helped change your life. I cleaned up your dirty room, put all those clothes away, put her panties away and her other things, I cleaned the filthy bath tub. . .

SANDY

...and moved my razor, turned off the television and..

OTIS

...took her smokes, ah - the new plant, the tomato juice which she now drinks - all and..

SANDY

...painted the wall in the hall that ugly..

OTIS

...designer color that I got from Curbside Industries.

SANDY

Where's that?

OTIS

Out there!!

PAUSE

OTIS

I got her out of the house.
Took your phone messages and
washed the dishes.

SANDY

Why didn't you just drive a
truck up to the front door and
empty the place out?

OTIS

I was looking for a residence
not a furniture store.

SANDY

And, last night? You hurt
yourself. How?

OTIS

I'll consider dropping the
suit if we can reach an
agreement about the house
- and, certain other things.

SANDY

You don't have any kind of a
case. Not any kind.

OTIS

I have witnesses that I worked
for you - that I worked in this
houses - for your future health.

SANDY

This is ridiculous.

OTIS

I know this is all a shock.
Why don't you go to bed and
sleep on it.

SANDY

What are you going to do?

OTIS

Well - it's a little tough for me to get up to my regular place so, I'll just stay down here for a while until...

SANDY

You have to go. You have to leave my house. Out. Completely.

The phone RINGS and Sandy walks to it and picks up the receiver, not taking his eyes off Otis.

SANDY

Hello - Lew? Oh Lew. I wish I could tell you the whole - what? - me? - are you sure? When did he call. And who was it? Tomorrow? Sure. What time? Okay. Thanks. See you then. That was my attorney. He says - I'm being sued for ...

OTIS

...ten million dollars, US. It's just a straight deal.

SANDY

What made you think you could get away with this?

OTIS

I went to law school. I have a degree. Somewhere. In law. UCLA, long time ago. Long time.

SANDY

What did you do before you broke into my house?

OTIS

Broke into other people's houses. Tried to live with them. Lived on the street mostly.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

OTIS (CONT'D)

In between times there was maybe a nice house but - there was always a jerk - or some other problem with the house or some animal that couldn't get along with me - you know - what life is made up of - hopelessness.

SANDY

But, you stayed here.

OTIS

I followed you down the street with your keys. You were pitiful. The moment you realized you had lost them you went out of control. I was there. I saw it. The shouting the screaming - the longing to kill someone, the self-hate for your own stupidity - the failure as a person and the suicide of hopelessness.

SANDY

You - saw all that?

OTIS

I was there. And then the frantic run back, searching every inch of ground like a blood hound and in the end - nothing. And then the long walk home. It was like a movie and I watched some times from afar and sometimes I was right next to you, asked you for some spare change but you just sneered at me. You don't remember, do you?

SANDY

No.

OTIS

You see. My usefulness stretches out. An historic record for you to use to see into your own self unawareness.

PAUSE

Otis

I can't go. I don't have any where to go and I will sue you if you try and throw me out. I have - proof.

SANDY

You were never paid. No pay stub.

OTIS

True. And any court current with all our needs, will take that as your attempt to avoid paying my social security tax and the federal and state tax to boot. You are a criminal before you walk into court. The system hates you as a cheater and wants nothing more than to make you an example.

SANDY

This is not happening.

OTIS

I agree. Let's go to bed. Put it to rest. Give it a break.

Sandy sees the roses and remembers Sylvia.

SANDY

She was here. Sylvia. She left those roses with a note. What happened to her?

OTIS

She's out of town for a week.

SANDY

Where?

OTIS

At her mothers. But, don't try and call her, because she won't speak to you.

OTIS

How do you know that?

OTIS

She told me.

SANDY

(angry)

Why, in God's name, would she tell you a thing like that!!

OTIS

Because - we're close.

SANDY

You. Sylvia? But - you're black. She has never known a black man in her life. She has a phobia against blacks. Brought on by the news, mostly.

OTIS

We broke through - that barrier.

SANDY

This is totally crazy. She would never tell you those things.

OTIS

That she went to her mothers for a week?!!

SANDY

Listen, I have a migraine headache and..

OTIS

Come over here - I used to do message for...

SANDY

I don't need another message!!

OTIS

Another? We haven't even started.

OTIS

Okay. Okay. Otis. You just stay right there. You hang out down here till tomorrow and by tomorrow afternoon, I'll better understand what you can do to me in court and then I'll come home and we can talk about it. I trust that you won't kill me in the night since you haven't already done so. I'll be out of here in the morning and try and not disturb you when I leave. Please, lock the front door if you go out, it keeps - ah - and keep the television on because it keeps - ah - them away.

OTIS

Yes sir.

SANDY

And don't call me sir. I'm not your dad. I'm just - Sandy.

OTIS

Otis.

SANDY

I caught that. Thanks. Good night Otis.

Sandy leaves.

Otis waits a few minutes and then stands, without the crutches. He takes a Video Tape out of his bag and places it in the VCR.

The sounds of a PORNOGRAPHIC MOVIE come on. Otis returns to the couch and sits down.

Sandy re-appears.

SANDY
You were - a lawyer?

OTIS
Huh?!!

SANDY
Lawyer.

OTIS
Uh huh.

SANDY
You practiced?

OTIS
I did some work. Some, dirty work. I've done a lot of dirty work, lately.

SANDY
How did you become a - bum?

Otis is instantly angry and clinches his fists to help control it.

OTIS
I was never a bum. I was a man, an educated black man which is rare enough but - even when the overpass of a freeway was my home, I was not a bum. What is a bum. A man or woman without skills or ambition, living off the fruit of the polluted land. There are many dispossessed people now days - who are smart. Imaginative individuals living in cardboard containers by the rail road tracks because the other alternative is too devastating.

PAUSE

OTIS (CONT'D)

I represented large corporations who had brains and they used my brains to get them out of - paying for screwing the scenery.

Otis moves out to the edge of the couch and tries to stretch a bit.

OTIS (CONT'D)

For screwing up buildings that break and make someone at fault. Chemical spills, polluted water, housing tracks where children have ten times the cancer rate from the norm - I got many of them off - good huh?

SANDY

So - what happened? You just gave up?

The sounds of HEAVY GRINDING come from the television which attract the attention of both men.

OTIS

I didn't even know you could rent stuff like this.

SANDY

Where did you get this anyway?

OTIS

From your rental store around the corner, on your card. Actually, it was her card.

SANDY

So, you became a street person.

OTIS

Actually, I represented several people from the street for free just to pay myself back for the years of damage I'd already done.

SANDY

And then?

OTIS

I stopped. I figured the debt was partially taken care of. Of course it was only hundreds.

Otis shifts again on the couch.

OTIS (CONT'D)

Not the millions and billions I had done with the big boys. We're a dirty nation - you know. It's in your water - it's in your television and it's crippling the American Dream. The American Dream is crippling the 'American Dream'. Do you want some advice?

SANDY

Sure.

OTIS

Settle with me out of court because court is only for the rich and the stupid. There are no twelve people out there who are fit to sit on a jury who are not lawyers or judges. There aren't. That, was the American Dream.

SANDY

I'll take it into consideration.

Sandy leaves just as the couple in the movie have a huge orgasm. Otis is transfixed. There are no sounds except the stupid dialogue repeating the same words from a bad dirty movie.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MONTHS LATER - DAY

Otis is on the couch in a large, leg brace. The television is off.

A key unlocks the front door and Sandy comes in carrying his briefcase. The two men glance at each other.

Sandy exits down the hall and comes back moments later in sweat pants, T-shirt and socks.

He walks to the liquor cabinet and pours a drink.

OTIS

You sure have been hitting that pretty hard lately.

SANDY

Excuse me - but I do have a very peculiar problem in my life right now, wouldn't you say?

OTIS

Your girlfriend?

SANDY

(misses joke)

Look. I thought you said the whole suit thing would stop.

OTIS

Did I say that?

SANDY

Yes!!

OTIS

I mailed the letter too late so we had to go through the first portion of the litigation. But, it will stop next week, cross my heart.

SANDY

Sylvia called me today. She says she has something very important to tell me and that's why she's been away so long. Any ideas, since you two are so close.

OTIS

You have to stop pouring that stuff down your throat. It's a reversion back to your child like abuses. You do it because you're an adult which gives you the right but - that it kills your brain cells is just like the warning on cigarettes.

Sandy puts the drink down and sits down.

OTIS

Nobody cares. That's a child's response. Look at this thing in the right light. You notice anything different in the bathroom?

SANDY

Bathroom? No,

OTIS

Nothing?

SANDY

It's - clean.

OTIS

Besides that. I'm talking about the toilet paper.

SANDY

A huh.

OTIS

How it feeds.

SANDY

I don't...

OTIS

...it comes over the top instead of hanging around, down the dirty back way so you can never find the little son of a bitch.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

OTIS (CONT'D)

Especially in the night when you need the most help. I did that. It's all in the way you put the role on the holder. It just helps you free yourself from life's little traps so you can do the bigger and better things that you are equipped for.

Sandy is looking at Otis like he is crazy.

OTIS

You don't notice those things until we get to the television.

SANDY

I like T.V.

OTIS

You're obsessed with T.V. Like the rest of the world. T.V. is a tramp - a bum - a homeless vagrant with no foundation and no scruples. If we spent as much energy on the helpless and the hungry, as we do on television, they would have disappeared.

SANDY

Sylvia is coming over tonight and we would like to be alone. So - could you - ah - go, to a movie?

OTIS

How would I get there?

SANDY

I'll call a cab.

OTIS

Both directions.

SANDY

Sure.

OTIS

Popcorn money and the whole
nine yards.

SANDY

Whatever it takes!!

OTIS

Boy, you drive a hard bargain.
Okay partner, to the movies I
go but, no more alcohol tonight.

SANDY

It's a deal.

OTIS

I'm really, only trying to help
you.

Otis stands and stumbles down the hallway as the lights slowly change to seductive blue with highlights.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Seductive music plays. Sandy is standing exactly where he was and the television is off.

A TOILET FLUSHES in the back of the house and Sylvia comes down the hallway and into the living room, pulling up her panties under her too short skirt.

She makes sure he sees her.

SANDY

So - let me just try and get
this straight. You - knew him
from the street. You, use to
give him money and you would
just talk but - you don't
remember where exactly that
was?

Sylvia
 What's the big deal. He's
 your roommate and if he says
 he knew me from the street
 before - then that was where
 it was from. Are you trying
 to change the subject?

SANDY
 No. Let's have a - ah - do
 you want anything?

SYLVIA
 No. Oh - a little drink. Teeny.

As Sandy pours the drinks, Sylvia unfolds a small bundle of cocaine and pours some on the glass coffee table.

Sandy returns with the alcohol.

SANDY
 What's that?

SYLVIA
 It's cocaine silly, what did
 you think?

SANDY
 Coffee sweetener?

SYLVIA
 I wonder about you sometimes.
 It's cocaine. Come here.

She has a dollar bill, already rolled up and stuffs it in her nose and takes a giant hit.

She pulls Sandy next to her and pushes the dollar up his nose and then pushes his face down to the coffee table.

Sandy takes a medium hit and immediately stands up and hops around like he is standing on hot coals.

SANDY
 Oh man. Holy crap. Jesus.
 I have to sit down.

He sits and leans his head back toward the front door holding his nose.

Seductively Sylvia removes her blouse and her bra and then pushes her breasts out in his direction and sits on his lap with her nipples only inches from his mouth.

Sandy, sitting on the couch with both hands down beside him, his eyes closed, emits a snore. And then another. Another.

SYLVIA

It can't be true. It just can't
be true!! It can't. . .

She collects her bra and blouse and takes her purse.
She shakes him just to be sure.

In the entry way, she dresses and without looking back,
leaves.

Otis pops his head around the hallway corner and then steps
into the room.

He checks Sandy for breath.

He sticks a finger in the pile of coke and tastes it.

Otis turns on the television, covers Sandy in a blanket and
scoops up the cocaine and returns it to its package.

OTIS

First, you have to learn to
resist and then you have control.

He walks to the wall switch and turns off the lights.

In semi darkness,

OTIS

It takes a long time, sometimes
forever. Let's hope you're
smarter than that.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Sandy is gone, the television is on with an afternoon
game show about why men can't get erections.

Otis comes running down the hallway, into the living room and snaps the set off.

Jo Anne rushes in from the hallway, dressed in her cleaning clothes.

JO ANNE

What, are you doing? Where did you come from? They're just getting to the best part here. Where were you?

OTIS

I don't understand how you can listen to that crap. It rots your brain.

SYLVIA

Now you listen to me. . .

OTIS

...I live here.

PAUSE

SYLVIA

Since - when?

OTIS

I am the new roommate. The girl is out.

JO ANNE

Huh. First you're the Radon Man, then the paint man, then the roommate? Pretty good.

OTIS

I didn't ask for the approval.

Jo Anne makes circles around him as she appears to be cleaning.

JO ANNE

Where is your room?

OTIS

Back. There.

JO ANNE

Where exactly?

OTIS

It's none of your business.
I live here and you can call
him if you don't believe me.

JO ANNE

I didn't say I didn't believe
you. I asked where your room
was so I can clean it.

OTIS

I clean my own room.

Jo Anne sits down, takes her shoes off and puts her feet
on the coffee table.

OTIS

What are you doing?

JO ANNE

I'm relaxing if you think it's
any of your business. You're
not paying me, are you?

OTIS

No.

JO ANNE

Then don't ask me anymore stupid
questions. When your name goes
on the check, then we can talk.
Sit down, take a load off that
leg.

OTIS

It's really my back.

JO ANNE

Oh. But the brace is on your
leg.

OTIS

I'm only saying that I've been informed about - you!!

JO ANNE

What is it about you? Suddenly you begin to look very familiar. Huh. I just can't quite - but I will. I never forget a face and I have seen yours before.

OTIS

How old are you?

JO ANNE

Old enough to have tried it all.

OTIS

Huh. Why do you do this?

JO ANNE

To feed myself and pay my rent.

Otis starts to stand up but gets a stitch in his back and falls back on the couch.

OTIS

Oh. Oh God no!!

JO ANNE

How did you do that anyway?

OTIS

I tried to be an educator.

JO ANNE

What class?

OTIS

Sex education.

JO ANNE

I see. Not so good evidently. So, why do you do what you do?

OTIS
You mean - handyman?

JO ANNE
That's what you do, isn't it?

OTIS
I'm multi-talented.

JO ANNE
Well multi-talented - let me give you some advice. Until your name is on my check, don't look at me like some public servant. And another thing. Oh. Oh. Oh My God, I can't believe it. I know. I know who you are. It just clicked. Some way you turned your head. You're him!!

OTIS
Who?

SYLVIA
Don't mess with me. You know exactly who I'm talking about. The lawyer guy. You were on the news -almost every night. Years ago, and then - you disappeared. My mother hated you. She taught me to hate you and now I'm looking at your face in - my house.

OTIS
My house.

JO ANNE
His house.

PAUSE

JO ANNE
It's you, isn't it?

OTIS

I can't remember.

JO ANNE

This is just unbelievable.
How did you get like this?

OTIS

It's a long story.

JO ANNE

I'll tell you what. I'll
leave the television off
and listen to you instead.

OTIS

You think my story is a soap
opera? Like television?

JO ANNE

My mother hated you.

OTIS

She had every right in the
world to hate me. I was to
be hated. I fought for the
wrong side, for the wrong
reasons and made all the
wrong choices with the dirty
money they paid me. So I
left. I'm gone.

JO ANNE

And now your back?

OTIS

I'm in litigation.

JO ANNE

For your leg?

OTIS

Back.

JO ANNE

Big shot lawyer and handyman.
I think that is just perfect
justice, counselor.

OTIS

Except now I'm the roommate.

JO ANNE

Do you see that as a status
symbol?

OTIS

I'm just trying to keep the
facts clear.

JO ANNE

You took the land away from all
those people in the South and
got that big company off from
causing them all cancer. How
could you do that? You took
their homes away and their
lives.

OTIS

I was trying to protect the
American reality.

JO ANNE

The rich get richer and the
poor get. . .

OTIS

...hosed and then hosed again
and that is the simple truth.
And also, I was very good at
what I did. And - the Bill
of Rights says nothing about
the right to own a home and
keep it. Nothing.

JO ANNE

And now there is Sandy. Is
he your next victim?

OTIS

I'm trying to help him. I'm going to help him. You'll see. He will be better in the end.

JO ANNE

This is too much. You are too much. You make me laugh. The right hand of the Devil is now the left hand of God. Does he know? Who you are?

OTIS

He thinks I'm the roommate.

JO ANNEW

And you don't think I'm going to tell him?

OTIS

I'm helping him with some litigation. Giving free advice. He needs me right now so - don't mess this up.

JO ANNE

And you don't mess up my house. You hear me Mr. Lawyer. Don't do one wrong thing here or so help me Harry, you will pay and pay and pay. Now you come back here with me while I clean these rooms and you tell me the whole story - so I can clean faster. Come on.

Jo Anne ushers Otis, holding his back, down the hallway.

The vacuum goes on in the back.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The television is on, it's the News and it's all bad. A key is fitted into the front door but does not open the door.

There is a knock followed by two knocks, a pause, followed by three knocks and finally followed by pounding.

Sandy lumbers out of the hallway in his pajamas and fiddles \with the front door until it opens.

Sylvia rushes past him, into the living room where she sits on the couch.

SANDY

Hi.

SYLVIA

You - owe me - an apology.

SANDY

I know. I had no idea. I just wanted to sleep. I was sooo tired and the alcohol and all the - stuff about the house. And - I thought it was suppose to arouse you.

SYLVIA

(angry)

I was aroused!!!!

SANDY

Oh.

Sandy comes in and sits in the stuffed chair.

SANDY

I don't know what to say. I'm sorry. My life is completely messed up. Totally. You. My house. Otis. Tomato juice in my refrigerator, I'm being sued.

Sylvia

Sued? By who?

SANDY

Otis.

SYLVIA

For what?!!!

SANDY

He fell. In this house - and
hurt his back.

SYLVIA

When?

SANDY

That night, when my house was
wrecked and all. . .

SYLVIA

Oh God no.

SANDY

What? What is it?

SYLVIA

Nothing. Nothing. Just...

SANDY

I thought I was happy when it
was just you and me...

SYLVIA

...it's just that...

SANDY

...then he came, and then, it
was different.

SYLVIA

...it's very difficult to
explain...

SANDY

I saw things - differently.
You, me, the house, ah - it's
just that...

SYLVIA

...why certain people in certain
situations do...

SANDY

...I suddenly understood how people
ah, could...

SYLVIA

...things - really - strange...

The conversation lingers on until the morning when the
birds sing outside the kitchen window and they are
still trying to tell the truth.

SANDY

...in the right circumstances...

SYLVIA

...without understanding...

SANDY

...could actually - with, say a
...

SYLVIA

...total stranger and - what?

SANDY

I beg your pardon?

SYLVIA

Could what?!!!

SANDY

My God, what time is it?

SYLVIA

Oh no - oh no.

She looks at her watch.

SYLVIA

How could it be this late?
I mean early. I'm going to
be late. I can't, I can't
bed later again.

They both go into high gear. Now it is just like a normal
morning in the house. Confusion, anarchy, tension and two
people, late for work - again.

Sandy turns on the television and meets Sylvia at the front door. The door is closed and locked from the outside.

Otis immediately comes in and walks across to the set and turns it off.

He tries to straighten his back as Jo Anne, languidly strolls into the room in a borrowed night gown. she leans seductively against the wall and watches him.

JO ANNE

That - was wonderful. Do you give that to all your little conquests?

OTIS

Somehow, I don't feel like the conqueror.

JO ANNE

Ha. You are. You did. It was.

She holds herself sexually and moans. She walks to the couch and sits down.

JO ANNE

Lucky for us she had all this finery in the house. And - you had your little, white gift, yum. No wonder it's illegal. My God, what a night. I'm amazed we can stand.

OTIS

My back...

JO ANNE

(laughing)

Your back. Oh yes, of course. Your back from the sex-ed class, right? How could you? A grown man, an adult. That girl is just a child. She could be your daughter.

OTIS

She's white.

She gives him a love slap.

JO ANNE

Don't get smart with me. You know what I mean. You took advantage of that man and his girlfriend because they think' you are wiser. But, you're not Mr. Lawyer. Now come here and rub my feet. I stand on them all day long and I'm tired and their killing me.

Otis reaches down and slowly rubs one foot.

JO ANNE

Oh, that's good. That's very good.

OTIS

I don't want you to get the idea that I...

JO ANNE

...and a great story. Oh. So good.

OTIS

I don't do this for anyone.

JO ANNE

All night - I just kept thinking.

OTIS

I don't like the sound of that.

JO ANNE

And then - it struck me. Suddenly, it all made sense.

OTIS

Nothing makes sense anymore.

JO ANNE

We make such a good team. Look
at last night. Give. Take.
Understanding and in the end
- team work.

OTIS

I've always been a loner myself.

JO ANNE

Not - anymore!!

OTIS

What?!!

JO ANNE

Not anymore. You and I are
joining up forces. I've been
cleaning houses too long. I'm
tired and I want to do some
thing for someone else. You
are going to help me get these
people's land back and the
houses. The one's you took a
long time ago.

OTIS

That's impossible.

JO ANNE

That's what I said last night,
remember?

OTIS

That's different.

JO ANNE

And - we will hire an employee
to do my clients so you and I
can concentrate on the bigger
problem.

He stands and paces the room.

OTIS

This is crazy. That deal is over with. It would take a miracle to get that decision reversed.

JO ANNE

It took a miracle to do what you did to me in the first place. That's what the newspaper said. My mother saved all those articles. I dug them out. Do you want to read them?

OTIS

(angry)

Woman!! I don't know what got into you, but - I have no intention of...

JO ANNE

...you got into me!! And you're going to help me out or I'll tell Sandy you tried to spawn with his minnow - and that was how you hurt your back in the first place. Now. Come with me and help me get my things together. We have a lot to do.

Jo Anne gets up and disappears down the hallway. Otis is waiting for something but, it doesn't come so he slowly and awkwardly disappears down the dark hall.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON.

Sandy's head pops out of the kitchen door and looks around. The television is not on and he sees nothing.

He scampers down the hall.

A moment later, Otis pops around the corner of the hall and enters the kitchen.

Sandy comes back into the entry way and looks. He goes for the front door.

Otis dives out of the kitchen and grabs Sandy and pulls him into the living room.

Suddenly Otis is struck in the back by severe pain which forces him down in the stuffed chair.

OTIS

Wait a minute. Hold on. You have been avoiding me for days. What is it? Now I hurt my back again - chasing you.

SANDY

That's what it is. Your lawyer calls me every day. Sign this. Come here. We want this amount. Be there...

OTIS

...it's over.

SANDY

...negotiate this -reduce this to - What?!!

OTIS

Isn't that what you wanted?

SANDY

I don't know what I wanted. I don't know what I want anymore. I'm very irritated that - I mean that my life is - when did you...?

OTIS

Yesterday. It's official. Trust me. I know about these things.

SANDY

I quit my job.

OTIS

You what!!!

SANDY

I quit. So you couldn't garnish my wages.

OTIS

Oh no. It can't be.

SANDY

I couldn't go back anyway. I hated every minute in that place. I had no life. I have never had any life until - you - came here.

OTIS

Something is not right about this.

SANDY

No - it's true. All of this hysteria and intrigue and energy. It's like television. It's like were in a soap opera but it's for real so there's even more energy. And Sylvia - Sylvia stayed here because it was easy. It was closer than her own apartment. So - we didn't really have anything. Except television. We watched television so we didn't have to talk and she had sex with me because she felt it made her more powerful. So, she could stay here longer and watch more television. I mean - my life is...

OTIS

...accelerated.

SANDY

Yes. It's definitely not dull anymore. I'm alive after all. I don't know what to do. What are you going to do?

OTIS

I have to leave for a while.
To collect some information.
From some very bad people and
- it's a project.

SANDY

In disguise?

OTIS

Like you saw me kind of - in
the beginning.

SANDY

You're going back to the
street. A...

OTIS

...street person I believe is
politically correct. But not
for long you understand. A
week, maybe two. A month at
the most.

SANDY

Take me.

OTIS

What? What are you talking
about? This isn't a costume
party. You wouldn't last
out there ten seconds' partner.
It's real out there. You
have to pee on a wall sometimes.
Live in a cardboard box that
someone bought a new refrigerator
in for their nagging wife.
Wear the same clothes for days,
wash in a public restroom. I
gained fifteen pounds the first
three weeks out because I ate
pizza and hamburgers.

SANDY

Were - they stale?

OTIS

(laughing)

Stale? They were fresh.
 People would see me - buy me
 food and leave me money.
 Because I dressed up to look
 like I was blind and I had a
 good act. How could you
 survive, you wouldn't have
 television.

SANDY

I've seen those guys hang out
 outside the furniture store on
 Spring Street. They had a remote
 that changed the stations on
 the television inside the
 store. Try me. I'll be fine.
 Please, I need it. It will be
 my only adventure in life and
 I have to take the chance.

Otis stares at Sandy.

OTIS

Okay. Come up to my room and
 let's see if we can fix you up
 so you look like a brother.
 Street brother. Then we'll go
 down to some of the places and
 see what the action is. Then -
 we have to work on the project.
 Come on.

Sandy follows Otis down the dark hallway.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATE DAY

The television is on with more bad news about the world.
 The vacuum goes on in the hallway and Jo Anne pushes
 the machine into the entry way - she looks like a
 million dollars.

The front door opens and Sylvia rushes in crying.

The two women stand, looking at each other.

SYLVIA

I stand it.

JO ANNE

Calm down. Calm down. What happened?

Sylvia comes into the living room and plops on the couch.

SYLVIA

I lost my job.

JO ANNE

What?

SYLVIA

I lost my job because my life is so - unstable that they thought it was better that I - leave!! Do you know what that means?

JO ANNE

No paycheck.

Sylvia shakes her head yes.

SYLVIA

Where is Sandy and - and...

JO ANNE

...they're gone, for a while., They contacted me a couple of days ago so I'm house sitting.

Sylvia

Now - you live here?!!!

JO ANNE

For the moment.

SYLVIA

It's getting really hard to keep it all together.

JO ANNE

I know, but it's not the end.
You're not out in the street
with no address.

SYLVIA

Maybe that would be better.

JO ANNE

A huh. Sounds exiting? But
not for you. Sylvia, you're
young, bright and beautiful.
You would be eaten up in the
street like a ripe peach.
And no one would ever hear
from you again. Nobody throws
away fine porcelain. Now let's
figure out what your strong
suit is and then we'll go
from there.

SYLVIA

I can type and answer the phone
and file letters and...

JO ANNE

A huh.

SYLVIA

...I'm a very good receptionist
and host. I did some modeling
but they just wanted me to do
panty and bra pictures for
catalogues.

JO ANNE

What a shame.

SYLVIA

I - did some - artist photos
once and it paid really well
and I was a waitress a long
time ago and...

JO ANNE

...ever clean a house?

SYLVIA

My own and my room when I lived
with my parents.

JO ANNE

Do you want a job?

SYLVIA

Yes!! What are you saying?
I told you I am out of work.

JO ANNE

Okay. You are going to follow
me around this house and watch
everything I do today.
Everything, because this is
going to be one of the houses
you are going to clean.

SYLVIA

Clean? House clean? But, but
I'm...

JO ANNE

...white, beautiful and jobless.

SYLVIA

But, what are you going to do?

JO ANNE

Something for someone else for
once in my life.

SYLVIA

How much money will I make?

JO ANNE

More than you're making now.

SYLVIA

Really? Wow. But - what about
Sandy, what will he think
about me cleaning his house?

JO ANNE

I don't really think he will care. And, it might make your life with him better. I mean, he might see you in another light.

SYLVIA

Do you think I can do it?

JO ANNE

Your perfect.

SYLVIA

I guess. I guess you're right.

Both women disappear down the hallway. Jo Anne returns and turns on the television - which is more bad news for the economy.

She starts dancing with herself, laughing and she dances back down the hallway.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The television is on as someone slips a key in the front door and Sandy enters looking like a veteran street person.

He walks to the T.V. set and turns it off and then walks to the back of the house.

Otis comes down the hall in boxer shorts and looks around the empty living room.

He steps into the kitchen. The refrigerator door opens and closes, the sink water goes on and off.

Jo Anne comes out of the hallway wearing one of Sylvia's night gowns. She turns on the television and sits in the dark on the couch watching.

She turns it off and disappears down the hallway.

Otis comes out of the kitchen, looks down the hall and then steps into the living room and sits in the stuffed chair.

Sandy comes out carrying a handful of clothes and tries to quietly sneak out the front door.

OTIS

Where are you going?

SANDY

Oh God, I thought you were asleep.

OTIS

A huh. Where have you been?

SANDY

Oh - you know. Out there. Where you took me.

OTIS

I talked to all the boys and no one's seen you!!

SANDY

I had to try it on my own.

Sandy drops the clothes, comes in the living room and pours himself a drink.

SANDY

See. When you were with me it was like I really wasn't doing it. It was fake. Like television. But I wanted something more. That's why I wanted you to take me in the first place. I needed it to be real but with you and those guys, it was more like a gathering of friends.

OTIS

So?

SYLVIA

So - I went my own way, found a corner where nobody like - us hung out. I built a little house out of cardboard and found a place where people gave me food - like you showed me and I did it.

OTIS

Did what?

SANDY

I - lived on my own. I became a street person, I peed on walls, washed in the Penny's Store, men's room, ate pizza and hamburgers and all for free. No worries. I found myself.

OTIS

So you're a bum.

SANDY

How can you say that? I did what you did and you never called yourself a bum. I even met - someone. Real. A real person.

OTIS

Your mail is over there on the table if you want to see it.

SANDY

I don't care. It's not me anymore. I'm not here. I'm out.

OTIS

For life? Forever?

SANDY

Maybe. I don't know. I never had anything before. I had a house and bills and a woman who slept with me and a car and more bills and bad news all the time on the television and in the newspaper. What kind of life is that? Where is life under the shell of all the bad news? Where?

OTIS

She's worried about you.

SANDY

Sylvia? Sylvia only worries about missing her period or favorite T.V. show. She's just a doll in human clothing. She's like the rest of the world. She's caught up in the nightmare of nothing. Out there nobody reads the damn newspaper. Nobody. Because they don't care what is going on because it doesn't affect them. Where we get our next meal or is there rain coming, those are things that are important.

OTIS

A huh. I know. I've been there. You don't have to tell me. Your mom called. Wants you to call her.

SANDY

You - didn't tell her, did you?

OTIS

No. I didn't.

SANDY

Did she want to know where I was?
I mean...

OTIS

Sandy, do you really like it out there because it's not like television.

SANDY

Sort of. It's a little scary.

OTIS

What do you want me to tell
your mom next time she calls?
And what about the bills
stacking up on the table.
And what about Sylvia, who
lost her job.

SANDY

What? Sylvia lost her job?!!

JO ANNE

Fortunately, Jo Anne found
work for her. Around the
hood.

SANDY

Jo Anne found work for Sylvia?
But - but...

OTIS

I don't want you to go back out
there tonight. Stay here, I
have some work for you that is
very real, dangerous and is just
like television only better. Are
you interested?

SANDY

Ah - yeah? - sort of. What is
it?

OTIS

You take those clothes back to
your room and come back out and
we'll talk about it. I'll tell
you the whole plan and, if you
like it, you might help some
people out that I put in a
world of hurt - a long time
ago. Okay?

SANDY

It's dangerous? Like cops and
robbers or Star Trek?

OTIS

Better, because you will be the
winner in the end. Go on now
and put those clothes away.

Sandy crosses into the entry way and picks up his clothes and
disappears down the hallway. Otis stands up and lumbers
into the kitchen.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Birds chirp outside the kitchen window. Sandy is asleep
on the couch in his street clothes.

A key opens the front door and Sylvia, dressed in house-
cleaning clothes, comes in. She does not see Sandy.

She crosses to the television set and turns it on.

Sandy wakes up and sits up and Sylvia turns and screams.

Otis and Jo Anne come running down the hallway in their
night clothes.

SYLVIA

Oh God. Oh God.

JO ANNE

What is it? What happened?

OTIS

What the hell is going on here?

SANDY

Easy. Easy. It's just me.
Sandy. I'm Sandy. Don't you
recognize me?

SYLVIA

Oh. Oh my God. It's you.
Where have you been? Why are
you dressed like - that? What's
going on Sandy?

JO ANNE

Somebody better tell the truth
here.

OTIS

They're both adults, why don't
we let them take care of it?

Jo Anne and Otis walk together, back to the hallway and
disappear.

SYLVIA

What happened to you?

SANDY

Why are you dressed like that?

SYLVIA

I asked you first.

SANDY

Can't tell.

SYLVIA

Why?

SANDY

It's a secret. I'm on a mission.

SYLVIA

What mission?

SANDY

It's for Otis. I work for Otis
now. What are you doing?

SYLVIA

I'm on a mission too. I work
for Jo Anne now.

SANDY

Doing what?

SYLVIA

I clean houses. Including this
one since you don't seem to live
here anymore.

SANDY

You're - a house cleaner??!!!

SYLVIA

That's right. And I make more than I did when I was a secretary and I don't have to put up with all of the crap because I work by myself. Alone. In other people's houses. Rich people.

SANDY

Does your mom know?

SYLVIA

Does your mom know?

SANDY

What?

SYLVIA

That you're a bum.

Sandy stands up fully angry.

SANDY

I am not a bum. These are my - undercover clothes. I wear these so I won't be discovered. So there.

SYLVIA

You look different.

SANDY

So do you.

SYLVIA

Better, happier.

SANDY

So do you. Better. Happier. Sexier.

SYLVIA

Well, that - coming from you is - are you all right? You look thinner. Are you eating okay?

SANDY

Kind of.

Otis and Jo Anne sneak just their heads around the corner of the hallway and watch.

SANDY

Actually - I could eat on of those great breakfasts you make - so well.

SYLVIA

I don't know, I'm supposed to be working, in your old house.

Jo Anne and Otis come out of hiding and enter.

JO ANNE

It's all right Sylvia. Maybe we should all eat and then we can get some things straight - between us, all.

OTIS

Yeah, let's have an old fashion breakfast, Southern style with all the fixings.

They all move instantly to prepare a meal.

SANDY

And this is still my house, even though I haven't been here for a while or paid the ...

OTIS

...we paid all the bills and the mortgage and I'm suing the Mortgage Company, in your name, for falsified records and payments. You may own this house for free by month's end.

SANDY

Really. I mean, I would?!!

JO ANNE

We all would. It would be a corporation. We would be a corporation.

SYLVIA

Really. All of us?

OTIS

That's right. The four of us. And Sandy here is our undercover man. I trained him myself.

SYLVIA

But, what will I do?

JO ANNE

Honey - you're going to do just what you're doing for a while but - were going to move you to a bigger house where...

OTIS

...you can gather some very important information. Information that will help some very poor people get back what belonged to them in the first place.

SYLVIA

We're going to do all that?
Us?

JO ANNE

That's right sister, this little army right here is going to do a big job, for America.

OTIS

Without television. You won't need it. We're all going to be too busy doing something good so we won't have to sit in front of that thing and watch all the crap that spews across that screen.

SANDY

We're a collective.

The front door bell rings and Otis goes to the door.

SYLVIA

Yu can say that again.

Otis comes back in carrying bags of prepared food from Mc Donald's.

OTIS

I called and ordered breakfast.
I thought we should celebrate
instead of cook so,

They all sit at the coffee table and take out orange juice, eggs, bacon, pancakes, coffee, hash-brown potatoes, coke and dessert.

SYLVIA

Orange juice anybody?

OTIS

Eggs anyone. They didn't have
any grits so we lose a little of
the Southern style.

They toast each other with orange juice and coffee.

Sandy is eating like he was starving.

SANDY

This is great stuff.

OTIS

Let's eat. Pass the toast.

JO ANNE

I'll take some of that bacon.

SYLVIA

Oh no.

SANDY

What is it?

SYLVIA'

The Morning Show. I'll miss the...

JO ANNE

No more television. From now on, it's us - for real. All of it. You two have to grow up with us if you're going to help us.

SYLVIA

Okay. All right. It's just...

OTIS

...over. It's just over. Tomorrow or later today, we take that stupid thing down to the flea market and...

SANDY

...no. I have a better idea. I know some guys just down the block who need...

Otis

...are you sure Sandy. You want to take the set to the street?

SANDY

They watch it anyway at the hardware store.

OTIS

But, they don't own it at the hardware store. They don't pay for the electricity and they can leave it any time they want.

SYLVIA

Pass the jam please.

SANDY

I guess you're right.

JO ANNE

They don't need it and it's too heavy anyway.

OTIS

A toast - to the end of the set.

EVERYONE

To the end of the television.

They raise their glasses and toast.

Everyone eats in silence except Sandy and Sylvia occasionally look at the television set longingly.

Otis sees this and gives a look to Jo Anne.

She smiles and goes back to her meal.

Otis looks at them all, one at a time and smiles.

He looks down and says a quick prayer.

OTIS

Make it work this time -
please. I'll help.

Jo Anne leans over and whispers in his ear.

OTIS

What? You nasty woman.

She laughs.

They all join in laughing.

Sylvia slides her hand into Sandy's who looks down and then looks at her and she whispers in his ear.

He turns red as an apple and they all freeze.

FADE OUT.

THE END