

Stages

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. BACKSTAGE ROOM - EVENING

1

GWEN ELKIN, a casually dressed woman in her late 20s, sits in a cramped room poised over a set list. She looks up at the sound of a laughing crowd beyond a door and notices a sign hung up on it.

INSERT - SIGN BACKSTAGE IS FOR PERFORMERS ONLY. NO GIRLFRIENDS BEYOND THIS POINT.

She frowns before going back to her piece of paper. She picks up a nearby pen and scribbles out a line.

A STAGE HAND appears through the door, and the sound of applause suddenly fills the room.

The stage hand beckons Gwen to go through.

As Gwen walks to the door -

COMPERE (O.S)
Please welcome to the stage, the lovely Gwen Elkin!

2 EXT. STREET - EVENING.

2

Gwen, in smart dress, waits outside an upscale restaurant. She looks up and down the street, and then at her phone.

The sound of a car beeping. Two men in a white van parked on the other side of the road wave, leer and wink at her. Gwen sighs, before waving and smiling back, escalating her actions until they screech away, unnerved.

She stops abruptly when she spies RICHARD rounding the corner, a sharply dressed man in his early 30s.

RICHARD
Making new friends?

GWEN
Richie Rich!

RICHARD
Sorry I'm late.

They hug and she gives his bottom a tender squeeze.

RICHARD
You look fantastic by the way.

GWEN

Why thank you. I showered.

RICHARD

I can tell. Okay, my turn.

He strikes a faux sexy pose in his smart attire.

GWEN

You look like a rent boy. But a really classy one.

Richard holds the door of the restaurant open for her.

RICHARD

You're funny.

Gwen enters the restaurant, followed by Richard, who quickly checks his watch.

3 INT. COMEDY CLUB - EVENING

3

The audience applaud as Gwen walks onto the stage. She shakes hands with THE COMPERE, and starts to reposition the microphone for her height.

It squeals awkwardly.

GWEN

Feedback. The international sound of someone about to go out on a limb.

Nervous laughter from the crowd. Gwen takes a deep breath.

GWEN

Hello! My name is Gwen, I enjoy short walks, instructional articles in women's magazines on how to wear the outdoor hat indoors, and I have a boyfriend. That's right, I have taken a lover. We have been together for about a year now, and we function just like

(gesturing to couple in front row)

any other normal couple. In so much as we use each other as an excuse to drink mid week and project all our failings onto each other.

Gentle laughter from the audience.

GWEN (CONT'D)

But I do worry that maybe we aren't that well suited. That maybe he needs someone a little more wholesome than me. Someone who doesn't pick their nose and wipe it on passing children, wear the same underwear three days in a row or eat leftover food out of the bin.

4 INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - EVENING

4

A platter of small but elegant looking food, carried by an IMMACULATELY DRESSED WAITER, drifts past Richard and Gwen as they queue for their table in the elegant restaurant.

Gwen makes a low whistling noise as the food passes, to indicate she thinks this is a very fancy joint.

RICHARD

Don't worry, I've got it.

GWEN

Are you sure?

RICHARD

Yes, it's dinner with my boss.

Gwen shifts her legs ever so slightly, resisting a sudden urge to itch her lower half. Richard doesn't catch it. He is checking his watch. Again.

GWEN

Everything okay? I thought we were early?

RICHARD

We are, I'm just a little nervous. David is about to appoint a new project manager and I really don't want that wanker Toby to get it. I think I - we - are going to have to impress the hell out of him tonight.

GWEN

Ok.

They move forward in the queue. Gwen tries to subtly scratch her crotch again. This time she is unsuccessful, and Richard clocks it.

RICHARD

Everything alright?

GWEN

No. I have a fungal infection in my groin crease.

RICHARD

That's not funny.

GWEN

I know, it's very serious. Who knew you could get athletes foot in your crotch? It's really itchy as well.

Gwen starts to itch herself, but Richard takes her hand.

GWEN

You're stopping me itching! It's making it itchier!

(exasperated at the
itchiness)

For fucks sake!

RICHARD

I know what I am about to say will make me sound like a knob, and I'm sure you would, but when you meet David and his wife, can you be aware of your audience?

GWEN

My audience?

RICHARD

They're sort of old fashioned, so swearing might be off the table.

GWEN

Oh wow. I guess talking about my smear test is also not appropriate.

RICHARD

As appropriate as me telling *your* boss about my prostate exam.

Gwen removes her hand from his.

5

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

5

Gwen and Richard sit at their table in loaded silence.

RICHARD

So...I think I'm getting that eczema back on my ball sack. Want to look?

GWEN

You're funny. No really.

(beat)

Are you ashamed of me?

RICHARD

I once superglued my sisters
barbie to my GI Joe in the 69
position. That I am ashamed of.
You? No, you're fine.

A YOUNG WAITER walks over and puts down some bread. Richard switches to business.

RICHARD

Hi, can I get a bottle of Pinot
Grigio, and two Morettis.

WAITER

Of course sir.

RICHARD

And can I pay for this bread now?
And can you make sure it is taken
off the bill at the end?

WAITER

Sure. No problem.

Richard spots ANDREA and DAVID, a respectable looking couple in their early 50s, weaving through the tables towards them.

RICHARD

(warmly)

David! Andrea!

He leans down to whisper to Gwen.

RICHARD

I'm sorry. You're my favourite and
my best.

6 INT. COMEDY CLUB - EVENING

6

Gwen is pacing the stage excitedly as she talks.

GWEN

Of course I'm his fucking
favourite! I'm adorable. Right
guys?

Gwen peers out into the audience.

GWEN

I'm not seeing a lot of nodding
out there.

Gwen begins to point at different members of the audience, taking a quick survey. Most nod, taken by surprise.

GWEN

You sir, do you think I'm adorable?
How about you? Would you give me your last rolo? How about your last kidney? Okay, how about if I was stung by a jellyfish, would you wee on me? Yes? And in general, say that was my thing? No? So emergency urine expulsion only. What if I pretended I had got stung by a jellyfish?

Gwen feigns a jellyfish injury.

GWEN

(in a sultry voice)

Oh no, it got me. Guess you'll have to wee on me now. How would you even know.

(beat)

I think the problem is that there's no mystery left in me and my boyfriends relationship. We are at the stage where I can put my knickers out to dry with the crotch side facing upwards. I don't care about him seeing those weird bleach stains my vagina emits. He's like a free gynaecologist.

Gwen puts down the mic and pretends to examine her crotch.

GWEN

"Come and tell me if this seems normal to you! What do you mean you don't know what a normal labia looks like? Like a spongy Woody Allen?! I don't know either!"

Gwen picks up the mic.

GWEN

I actually decided to follow the advice of all women's magazines recently and take a good hard look at mine. Close up. I got a hand mirror out and squatted over it. Now, if you haven't done this before then I highly recommend you don't. Live in ignorance. It's like Predators face after Arnold Schwarzenegger took his fist to it.
I can't believe Judy Dench has one of these.

(MORE)

GWEN (CONT'D)

I used to think, if my vagina was on the vagina monologues, it would do a speech from Richard the 3rd. But now I think it would just ask to die.

Outrageous laughter from the crowd. Gwen picks up her on-stage beer, and takes a sip.

GWEN

(to a male member of the audience)

I know what your thinking sir - your thinking is she one of those beer drinking Kung fu fighting tyre changing modern women The Daily Mail have warned us about. Hulk smashing her way through glass ceilings with a baby in one arm, and a recently acquired doctorate in a STEM subject in the other.

(beat)

No? You just wish you could drink at work too.

(beat)

Alcohol is by far my favourite coping mechanism.

Gwen sips from her beer again.

MATCH CUT TO:

7 INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

7

Gwen attempting to subtly down her wine in a 'I'm trying to be inconspicuous manner.'

Meanwhile Andrea is showing Richard a hideous bracelet on her wrist, whilst David looks on proudly.

ANDREA

And this one has both a bicone and a fire polished crystal, with a nylon string, so it took four hours longer to make but when I turn my wrist..

She moves her wrist.

ANDREA

Hear that?

Richard puts his ear closer to her wrist as she moves it.

RICHARD

No?

ANDREA
Exactly. That's the nylon string.

RICHARD
Wow.

DAVID
I keep telling her to start up a
business. I think they would just
fly off the shelves.

David motions to Gwen, who is busy trying to get the waiter's
attention to get more wine. A lot more wine.

DAVID
Appeal to the younger female
market

Richard nudges her under the table to pay attention.

GWEN
(catching his last few words)
I'm a young female?

ANDREA
Oh, no. It's just a little hobby.
Keeps me out of trouble.

RICHARD
Hobbies are normally our real
passions dressed up in modesty.

Gwen splutters into her wine at this, but David and Andrea are
oblivious.

RICHARD
You'd buy one, wouldn't you Gwen?

GWEN
Oh yeah, definitely. I hate noisy
bracelets. Stops you sneaking up
on people. You could market them
to lady spies.

ANDREA
Lady spies. I like that.

She chuckles, then reacts to her own laughter.

ANDREA
Oh! You're a comedian aren't you?

GWEN
In between the day job. I work for
the council. I have the exciting
task of dealing with Redlands
parking schemes.
(beat)
So I guess it's more of a *hobby*.

Richard feigns a smile, struggling not to react to the dig.

ANDREA

Oh my god, how funny! That's so funny David. Isn't that funny?

DAVID

What?

ANDREA

David loves to park!

DAVID

Guilty as charged.

ANDREA

Oh, but he's so good at it! Tell them about the one the other day, with the Skoda Citigo, the white van and the cul-de-sac.

DAVID

Oh no, I don't want to show off...

RICHARD

Yes you do, come on captivated audience.

DAVID

No, I... okay so we needed to buy a new colander and... actually...
(shouting at the waiter)
WAITER!

WAITER

Yes sir.

DAVID

More salt and pepper shakers. Quickly!

The waiter brings over more salt and pepper shakers, and David arranges them around the table to represent the cars.

DAVID

So there I was, facing the smallest parking space in the South West...

Off Gwen's incredulous face.

MATCH CUT TO:

Gwen hitting the microphone against her forehead slowly and repeatedly.

GWEN

And then he talked about parking for twenty minutes. For Twenty minutes. I mean come on!

(beat)

If good dinner conversation is like a game of tennis, then this whole evening felt like a game of squash where my boyfriend served up the balls, but only to his boss, who happily hit them back, but only to himself, and no one noticed me, crying in the corner without a racquet. Or the bosses wife, who thought we were all swimming.

9

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

9

RICHARD

So, David tells me it's your wedding anniversary on Saturday?

ANDREA

Indeed. It will be 30 years.

DAVID

And currently we are at 29 years, 358 days, 16 hours and...

Checks watch.

DAVID

54 minutes.

GWEN

That's impressive. The marriage, and what you just did.

DAVID

I'm very lucky.

David grabs Andrea and they rub noses. It's a bit weird.

ANDREA

We're having a celebratory soiree on Saturday. You should come.

RICHARD

We would love to!

GWEN

I can't. I have a gig that night. It's the final of a competition so...

RICHARD

You never told me about that?

Gwen shrugs. Richard looks dejected.

ANDREA
Oh well, no matter.

RICHARD
You know she won't even let me see
her do stand up.

GWEN
He wouldn't enjoy it.

RICHARD
How do you even know that?

GWEN
I just know.

RICHARD
You just know. Great.

The table lapses into a beat of awkward silence. Richard picks at his food. Gwen downs her glass of wine, and gets up.

GWEN
Will you excuse me. I'm just going
to go and powder my nose. Andrea,
care for a cheeky line of coke?

Richard looks in horror at David and Andrea.

Then Andrea laughs hysterically, followed by David, before Richard nervously joins in.

ANDREA
How funny. Cocaine! Me? Imagine!

Gwen marches off, itching as she goes.

10 INT. RESTAURANT TOILET - EVENING 10

Gwen walks into the empty bathroom and immediately starts scratching her crotch and moaning in relief.

GWEN
OHHHHHHHHH!

CUT TO:

11 INT. COMEDY CLUB - EVENING 11

Gwen gleefully recreating the moment on stage, exaggerating her actions to the amusement of the crowd.

GWEN
AHHHHH! SCRATCHY SCRATCHY
SCRATCHY!

CUT TO:

12 INT. RESTAURANT TOILET - EVENING

12

Gwen rubbing her crotch on anything she can find that is crotch height, tapping it and making animalistic noises.

GWEN
AHHHHH, OHHHHH. YES. BEUGHHHH!

Close up of Gwen's blissful face, and then the sound of a gasp. Gwen turns around slowly and comes face to face with a shocked Andrea.

ANDREA
I was just er... getting a tissue.

Gwen hands her a tissue in horror. Andrea heads for the door.

GWEN
Wait. I have an infection down there. Because of jogging. It really itches.

ANDREA
Oh! You poor thing. I have had the thrush before.
(she leans in confidentially)
I won't tell a soul.

GWEN
Thank you and I'm sorry about the public bickering -

ANDREA
Don't worry, you're both passionate people. Like David and I. But can I offer you some advice?

GWEN
(softening)
Please.

ANDREA
There is nothing in this world, scarier than letting someone in. Other than sharks. But if you don't, then you risk losing them. And he's a good one. I suspect you already know that.

CLOSE UP of Gwen's face breaking into a slight smile.

MATCH CUT TO:

13 INT. COMEDY CLUB - EVENING

13

CLOSE UP of Gwen's face:

GWEN

Fucking fairy godmothers. Don't those righteous bitches pop up at the most inconvenient times.

(beat)

But she was right. He is a good one. Not the one, because there is 7 billion people in the world, and I haven't fucked them all, but he's pretty nice. He always cooks me breakfast, holds my hand in public and does up my shoes. Like a Disney Prince. Or a carer. In fact he is so fucking nice that sometimes I just want to bring home a puppy and skull fuck it in front of him whilst screaming

(loudly)

"Do you love me now?"

The audience roar with laughter

GWEN

They say the female equivalent of impeding on a man is to put tampons everywhere - in the cutlery drawer, the toaster, behind the curtains. Everywhere I looked in our flat there were these huge half eaten sandwiches. Like my boyfriend would sit down to eat them and then halfway through realise he was full, and just abandon them.

14 INT. EVENING - RESTAURANT

14

A CLOSE UP on half a roll on Gwen's plate.

Richard and David stop talking when Gwen and Andrea approach. David pretends to study the bill.

DAVID

Good. They didn't charge us for bread.

GWEN

(to Richard)

Can we talk?

Richard nods. They walk a little away from the table.

GWEN

I'm sorry, I've been such a dick -

RICHARD

No, I'm the dick. I'm not ashamed
of your.

(he gestures to her crotch)

Or that.

GWEN

I know. We know. We're working on
knowing.

They kiss. David and Andrea appear in the background, looking
on proudly. It's a bit weird.

DAVID

Well, we'd better be off.

RICHARD

Thanks for a lovely evening.

DAVID

You're welcome. Good luck on
Saturday Gwen, and Richard, come
and see me tomorrow. We'll discuss
the Phillips project.

Gwen places her hand on the small of Richards back in support.
And gives his bottom a little squeeze too, for good measure.

RICHARD

(genuinely happy)

Woah. I mean, sure. Great.

ANDREA

(to Gwen)

Bye Gwen. I'll make you a lady spy
bracelet.

GWEN

That would be great.

Gwen and Richard watch the pair leave.

GWEN

I wonder where they parked?

RICHARD

Lazy comedian

GWEN

Professional butt kisser.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Just as we were drifting off to sleep last night, and I was thinking about all the slightly annoying things he had done that day, and how best to passively aggressively punish him for them, whether to stick to tried and tested techniques like awkward silences, or a new method where I simply burn the last birthday card his dad ever gave him before he died, I realised I had never simply asked him. Why the huge sandwiches? Why not just, I don't know, make a smaller sandwich? DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THAT YOU BASTARD. You know what he said? He said he left the other half out for me.

Gwen stops in front of the mic stand, puts the mic back into the holder, and looks out into the crowd.

GWEN

Because he knew I liked sandwiches, but that I found it difficult to accept love in any form. What a cunt. Thank you.

The crowd laugh and applaud. The house lights go up. Richard is at the back, smiling proudly. He gives her a thumbs up.

The End