

SCENE 2

(Chris' apartment.)

(Mackenzie is inside CHRIS' apartment. A few days later. The apartment is in a building that's new construction and bills itself as luxury living because there's a desk attendant and a package room. Its bones are fairly bare--what is luxury if not a great empty expanse?--but Chris is slowly making attempts to personalize it. The predominant theme, however, is "various stages of unpacking." There are opened boxes everywhere, as if he moved in maybe two days ago. He moved in nine months ago. This is just how he lives, I guess. It could use a couch; it does not have a couch. There are a couple of chairs, none of which match. Some of which have definitely been stolen from the prop closet of a small regional theater. There's also a fair number of plants, many of them a little worse for the wear.)

MACKENZIE

Figured it out.

(Chris emerges from the bedroom in sweatpants and a hoodie with the size sticker still on the hood. He holds his wallet in his hand.)

Came to me last night. Where I know her from.

CHRIS

Cool.

(He digs around in his wallet and pulls out a \$20.)

MACKENZIE

Do you want to know?

CHRIS

Do I know her?

MACKENZIE

She lives in your building.

CHRIS

So I definitely don't know her.

Um. So, listen. I know I said \$50 but I'm a little cash light right now so I can give you 20 and then the rest in two weeks, if that's okay?

MACKENZIE

Chris, get out of here. I don't want your money.
I didn't even do anything.

CHRIS

You watered my plants.

MACKENZIE

I frequently forgot, to be honest.

CHRIS

You fed my cat.

MACKENZIE

I literally never saw it the entire time I was housesitting. I am not certain you have a cat, actually. I poured kibbles into a bowl and spritzed a succulent and haunted your apartment for three weeks. It was not a burden. This is a nice building! You have a front desk attendant. And a gym!

CHRIS

You used the gym?

MACKENZIE

Excuse you! Yes. I did.
It's always empty so I would go down there to watch TV.

CHRIS

While you worked out?

MACKENZIE

No. Why?

CHRIS

Why didn't you watch here?

(Beat.)

MACKENZIE

I can't just lay up in your new bed, Chris.
I mean
One time I tried watching the TV while sitting on the bedroom floor but it felt like when you have to sit on the front row of the movie theater.

CHRIS

It didn't occur to me that it would be weird for you to watch TV in my bed. You used to?

MACKENZIE

That was different. I was taking liberties with my brother and his boyfriend. This is a new situation. I just wasn't about to go rolling around in your sheets just so I could watch the 40" sex IMAX mounted to your bedroom wall.

CHRIS

It is *not* a sex IMAX!

MACKENZIE

I mean, it's not not a sex IMAX.

CHRIS

Stop!

MACKENZIE

What I'm saying is you can do... Whatever you want. Sexually.

CHRIS

Mackenzie. You honestly must stop.

(He's gotten so worked up that he's crying a little.)

It's a celibate TV!

MACKENZIE

Are you okay?

CHRIS

You're yelling at me about my sex IMAX.

MACKENZIE

Are you crying?

CHRIS

No. It's just this thing where my eyes well up sometimes.

MACKENZIE

Oh! I see. Like when you're sad. Or when you hear a sad song? Or when Sarah McLachlan is singing to a puppy?

CHRIS

It's a sinus issue.

(Pause. Chris gives up and goes to get a tissue.)

I'm also touched that you agreed to housesit with so little notice, if you must know.

I didn't really have anyone else.

MACKENZIE

That's me, a last resort.
Honestly, it was like staying at a nice Airbnb for free.

CHRIS

An Airbnb full of half unpacked boxes.
I don't even have a couch.

MACKENZIE

Yeah, I did have a note about that.
No offense.
I'm always afraid of
Buying the wrong furniture.
Like, what if the thing I need right now isn't the thing for my real life?
The one where I'm happy. And have
Company.
Then I just have a random sofa that was fine for eating pizza and watching TV
alone but not great for
You know.
Somebody else.
Some mystery person.
Who has an opinion about my sofa.
That's too much stress.

CHRIS

Are you saying you don't have a sofa either?

MACKENZIE

That is the point of the story, yes.

CHRIS

Glad you made yourself at home anyway.
And I'm sorry you didn't get to watch the television.

MACKENZIE

It's fine.

CHRIS

I didn't even really want it.
I watch one program a week.

MACKENZIE

Me too.

CHRIS

I'm like those old ladies who drive the huge cars just to go the church on Sunday
and then come home.
It's literally just an hour of TV and that's it.

MACKENZIE

My one program is 12 episodes of *Sex and the City* in a row.

CHRIS

Oh.

MACKENZIE

Usually the same ones.

I have a box set.

From season 4.

So.

(Pause.)

Or *Insecure*. Or *Buffy*. Or *Different World*. Or--

I had just watched the end of *Six Feet Under* when I met Ellison, actually.

CHRIS

Who?

MACKENZIE

The woman from elevator.

How do you not know her?

Black?

Woman?

Black?

(Chris shrugs.)

You vex me.

You'll never guess where I know her from.

CHRIS

From the black meetings?

MACKENZIE

Are you funny now?

CHRIS

No.

MACKENZIE

Are you going to ask me where?

CHRIS

Oh, God, Mackenzie.

(He starts examining some plants.)

Fine. Where?

MACKENZIE

Television!
Can I
Can I sit down?

CHRIS

I feel like you're going to break some terrible news to me.

MACKENZIE

No, it's just we've been standing in the middle of your apartment for like 10 minutes and there's a random \$20 bill sitting on the table and I'm starting to feel a little like Judith Light on *One Life to Live*, which is so amazing but also perhaps secretly an escort.

Is it against the rules of your breakup if I sit down

Now that you're back?

I'm

I'm going to sit down.

I'm going to sit down on... This chair.

(She does so, gingerly.)

So, about a decade ago there was this dating show called *Fairy Tale Ending*. I didn't watch it then but I was making a compilation video of reality show breakdowns for work and I was scanning through some episodes.

And this woman from your building, Ellison, she was one of the contestants.

CHRIS

She told you?

MACKENZIE

No.

I haven't said anything to her about it.

CHRIS

Ohhh. Hijinks.

MACKENZIE

Low jinks!

No jinks whatsoever.

It's just a random thing.

But the minute I realized it was the same person, I remembered the episode so well.

She's hysterical through the whole thing.

CHRIS

Funny?

MACKENZIE

No. Sobbing. Full meltdown.

But!
There's this moment when she gets eliminated--

CHRIS

Oh no!

MACKENZIE

When's the last time a black girl got past episode three on a dating show?
This is not a shocking development.
So, she's doing the post-dumping interview and--
You know, I thought about it later and I started to suspect that they edited her
super weird. I can't say.
And--
Actually, do you want to watch it?
You have to watch it. I have it on my phone.

(She hands him her phone; he puts the earbuds in and starts to watch. He's half watching and half tending to his plants.)

(Mackenzie goes from staring eagerly at him, to watching the screen again with a sort of reverence, to mouthing the words along with Ellison on the screen, whom we cannot currently hear. The video ends and Mackenzie is a little gutted by it, even now. Chris takes out the earbuds and gives all of his attention to his plant. After a moment Mackenzie realizes he's crying.)

MACKENZIE

It's an amazing video, isn't it?

CHRIS

I guess.

MACKENZIE

You're weeping!

CHRIS

This plant is dead! I'm experiencing a stage of grief.

MACKENZIE

Can you focus please? No offense.

CHRIS

More like can I ficus, right?

MACKENZIE

I still have questions about whether you're funny.

CHRIS

You and me both, girl. So what happened after the video?

MACKENZIE

Uh. Nothing.

CHRIS

Oh. There's not
More?

MACKENZIE

No. That's
She's off the show. That's the whole thing.

CHRIS

Oh.

MACKENZIE

Yeah. To be continued!
So, the question is
How do we make this happen?

CHRIS

Okay so the words "we" "make" this" and "happen" are confusing to me.

MACKENZIE

How can I meet your neighbor? Is there like a building happy hour or something?
A resident meeting? How do you all hang out?

CHRIS

I do not know and if I did, I would not bring you.
Are you crushing on her?

MACKENZIE

No! She's straight anyway.
She went on TV to chase after some dude.
I'm not about that unrequited life anymore.
But just because I don't want to date her doesn't mean that she's not the one.

CHRIS

It sort of does.

MACKENZIE

The friend one!

CHRIS

That's not a thing.

MACKENZIE

Don't you have a best friend?

CHRIS

No.

MACKENZIE

Well.

Some people do.

And every time you ask them how they met they tell you some meet-cute story out of *How I Met Your Mother*.

"We were dancing near each other at a club, we were studying abroad in Italy, we were exes of the same person."

CHRIS

Most people meet at work.

MACKENZIE

False.

CHRIS

You should make friends at work.

MACKENZIE

All of my coworkers are in New York City.

CHRIS

Yeah, but don't you remote in from some sort of millennial commune?

MACKENZIE

One, it's called a co-working space, grandpa. And two, I'll take a hard pass on befriending those people.

Everyone there is weird and always wearing headphones and doesn't like when I laugh out loud at the video I'm watching and they all smell like burnt popcorn.

CHRIS

I don't know what to tell you.

(He throws the dead plant away.)

MACKENZIE

Tell me how to meet her so we can dish about her show and you, our prickly mutual friend.

(Beat.)

She's a real person and she's so close. In that moment, at the end, God Suddenly everything she's feeling is so vivid. The hurt and the disappointment and the loneliness but also the hope, the brightness.