

BLOOD RELATIONS

by

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INT. LAUREL CANYON HOUSE - NIGHT

The party's reaching its peak in the rented mansion overlooking the lights of the San Fernando Valley. French disco music blares through the under-furnished rooms.

SUNNY MILLER kicks open the kitchen door, carrying a tray of hors d'ouvres. She's a beautiful woman of 35, but with her heavy makeup, deep tan, and streaked hair she looks disconcertingly like a Malibu Barbie.

RANDI, pushing 40 but dressing 20, bestows an air kiss on Sunny and snags a snack from the tray, barely distracted from the bored STUD she's hitting on.

Smiling and nodding, her eyes slightly out of focus, Sunny weaves her way through a living room swarming with OLDER MEN and YOUNGER WOMEN toward:

EDOUARD, the host, holding court on a white leather sofa, stroking the thigh of a stoned 20-year-old SWEDISH AU PAIR. He's 40-something Eurotrash with a two-day beard and last year's Armani jacket.

He chats with his shady-looking ASSOCIATES across a white marble coffee table littered with drug paraphernalia and wine glasses.

Sunny sets her tray down with a flourish in front of Edouard and waits expectantly for his approval. But he neither acknowledges her presence nor removes his hand from the au pair's thigh.

Sunny's smile wavers and she steps back toward the kitchen, but Edouard beckons and she stops, her face hopeful.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a roll of bills. He indicates the empty baggies on the table.

EDOUARD
(French accent)
You remember where to go?

She nods, and he hands her the money, then turns back to his associates, dismissing her.

EXT. BAD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Sunny stands before the heavily-reinforced door of a run-down house. She raps a signal: tap-tap-tap, tap-tap, tap.

A peephole opens and a bloodshot eye considers her briefly. A slot at knee level opens, and she places the money inside.

She waits, nervously, and startles at a rustle in the garbage-strewn dirt yard. She sees a rat foraging in the debris and shudders.

The slot opens again, and a rubber-band-bound bundle of coke-filled baggies falls at her feet. She stoops to pick it up and shoves it into her purse, turning with relief back toward her parked car --

Only to be caught in the glare of a spotlight.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)
Hands up. L.A.P.D.

She slowly raises her hands into the air, squinting into the light.

Behind her, the door to the house creaks open and out come two uniformed POLICEWOMEN in flak jackets.

One takes Sunny's purse and checks her wallet for I.D., while the other pats her down, then cuffs her.

POLICEWOMAN
(reading her license)
Sunny Miller?

Sunny nods.

POLICEWOMAN
Sorry, hon. This ain't your lucky night. You have the right to remain silent. If you choose to give up that right --

INT. JAIL MEETING ROOM - DAY

Bright light pours through the small barred window.

Sunny's still in the same bedraggled clothes, her makeup smeared.

The door opens to admit JANET, an attorney, about 30, in a suited skirt and sensible shoes.

She briskly sets down her briefcase on the scarred table and pulls up a metal chair.

JANET
Since it's a first offense they're willing to go with probation and three months residential treatment. Take it -- it doesn't get any better than that.

Sunny looks lost.

SUNNY
When can I see --?

JANET

You'll be in the best rehab in L.A.
County -- all the stars go there.

SUNNY

But Edouard --

JANET

He's picking up the tab. And he'll
make sure you've got some money in
your account when you get out.

It's not clear that any of this has registered with Sunny.

JANET

You won't see him again, Sunny.
You understand?

SUNNY

But... what will I do... without -
- ?

Janet picks up her briefcase.

JANET

You might consider getting a life.

INT. REHAB CLINIC OFFICE - DAY

The softly-lit room is decorated in soothing designer-Zen style.

Sunny, now clean and neat, sits across from LEON, a social worker, who reviews her file. He wears his long hair in a tidy pony-tail and displays the patient skepticism of someone accustomed to dealing with overwrought starlets.

LEON

I see you've been relying on the
kindness of strangers for quite a
few years now.

Sunny looks away, embarrassed. He smiles, apologizing for the joke.

LEON

Do you have any job skills? What
are you good at?

SUNNY

People say... I'm a good listener.
And I can type a little. I used to
do Edouard's emails...

Leon marks this down in her file.

LEON

OK. How 'bout hobbies? Interests?

She looks around the room for inspiration, then focuses on a Chinese brush painting.

SUNNY

Art... I like art.

INT. REHAB CLINIC ART STUDIO - DAY

Vivaldi plays softly from the stereo.

Sunny is among the half-dozen patients at easels arranged around a table with a single apple on a plate.

MARGARET, the comfortably-plump grey-haired art therapist, strolls among them, stopping to admire Sunny's canvas.

MARGARET

You're really quite good at this,
you know.

Sunny looks up at her, surprised and pleased.

SUPER: "Three Months Later"

EXT. REHAB CLINIC - DAY

Sunny paints at an easel set up in front of an artificial stream that runs through a Japanese garden.

Her face is healthy and glowing without the heavy makeup and fake tan; her eyes are alert and focused on her work.

Her painting style has moved well past her initial attempts with the apple, and is now quite accomplished.

Leon approaches across the lawn with an opened envelope bearing the logo of a business college.

LEON

(handing it to her)
You got in.

She smiles and takes it from him.

SUNNY

Thank you.

She takes it all in -- the landscaped grounds, the serene garden, the water flowing over the stones...

INT. LAW FIRM CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (TWO YEARS LATER)

A blur of light sparkles over the surface of flowing water. River stones, worn round and smooth... The sound of the flowing stream a gentle babble...

The image comes into focus:

It's a large photo-realistic painting of a creek bed.

The babble of the stream resolves into voices -- still indistinct -- and the soft, rhythmic tapping of keys.

Hands type on a stenotype machine, connected by a cable to a laptop computer on a conference table.

Words appear on the laptop screen: "Ms. Miller?"

MR. CREW's voice breaks through the babble.

MR. CREW(O.S.)

Ms. Miller?

Sunny's startled out of her reverie. She's about 37 now, dressed in business attire but with a certain artistic flair.

She looks away from the river rock painting, which hangs on the wall of a 40th-floor conference room overlooking downtown Los Angeles.

SUNNY

Yes?

Mr. Crew, the silver-haired deposing attorney, is seated across the table from MS. BLANCHARD, the defending attorney.

The witness next to Ms. Blanchard is HEATHER SCOTT, gorgeous, sullen, overdressed, and 24. She plays with a Mont Blanc pen as she visibly dismisses Sunny as inconsequential and returns her attention to the view.

MR. CREW

We'll take a short break now. I'd like to have Mr. Scott here for the rest of his ex-wife's deposition. Could you pre-mark these exhibits for me, please?

Sunny nods and takes her hands off the keyboard. She rubs her fingers and stretches her wrists, wincing at the pain.

Ms. Blanchard looks at her, sympathetically.

MS. BLANCHARD

Carpal tunnel?

Sunny nods, embarrassed that her disability has been noticed.

MS. BLANCHARD

That must be tough, in your line of work.

Sunny smiles ruefully, then gets up to collect the pile of exhibits.

Topping the heap is a copy of the National Enquirer with a "torn" picture of David and Heather Scott and the headline: "Divorce #6 for Box Office Champ" and the subhead "Ex-Mrs. Sues to Break \$100K Pre-Nup."

Sunny studies David's photo for a moment, then gathers up the papers, turns, and comes face to face with:

DAVID SCOTT himself. He's in his late 40's, brimming with confident good humor.

He smiles at her. His eyes have friendly crinkles in the corners. She inhales his scent and feels her knees go weak.

His gaze briefly lingers on her face before he turns to his attorney. He speaks with a BBC-quality British accent.

DAVID

Sorry I'm late. Traffic, you know.

He smiles at his ex-wife.

DAVID

Hello, Heather.

She pointedly ignores him and continues staring out the window.

DAVID

Charming, as always.

David turns back to Sunny, who still stands frozen by the table, and offers his hand.

DAVID

David Scott.

She offers hers in return, tentatively.

SUNNY

I know. Sunny Miller.

MR. CREW

Our court reporter.

He gestures to Sunny and she takes her place at the keyboard.

MR. CREW

Let's go back on the record.

Sunny types a few characters. David sits next to his attorney, relaxed but wary.

HOURS LATER

The sun's low in the western sky. Sunny's typing is increasingly painful and everyone looks stressed.

HEATHER

...and I went with him on location,
being supportive and --

DAVID

Sleeping with my leading man. That
was certainly supportive. Kept him
in a good mood, anyhow. Not that
it showed in his performance.

Heather hurls her pen at him. He ducks and the pen clatters
against the wall. His attorney stands.

MR. CREW

(to Ms. Blanchard)

That's it. We're adjourned for
today. Could you please get your
client under control by tomorrow
morning?

HEATHER

You mean I have to come back here
AGAIN?

David picks up the Mont Blanc pen and scribbles a number on a
piece of paper, then hands the paper to his attorney. He
pockets the pen.

DAVID

Your choice, my dear. You could
also take the more-than-generous
offer my attorney is about to give
yours and spare us all another day
of misery.

Heather confers in whispers with Ms. Blanchard.

DAVID

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have
dinner plans.

Sunny packs up her equipment.

INT. LAW FIRM HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

David's waiting for Sunny by the elevator.

DAVID

Would you like to have dinner with
me?

SUNNY

I thought you had plans.

DAVID

My plans included asking you to
join me.

She smiles, charmed in spite of herself, and pushes the down button.

EXT. RESTAURANT PATIO - NIGHT

The WAITER at the chic West L.A. restaurant hovers obsequiously at David's elbow as he peruses the menu.

DAVID
(to Sunny)
Do you trust me?

SUNNY
Should I?

DAVID
In matters of food, yes.

SUNNY
Then I will.

DAVID
Good.
(to the waiter)
My usual, then.

He glances at the wine list.

DAVID
(to Sunny)
Champagne?

SUNNY
I don't drink.

He hands back the wine list.

DAVID
I hope you don't mind if I do.
(to the waiter)
Just a Bellini, then, to start, and
the Rutherford Cabernet with
dinner.

The waiter nods and leaves them.

David rests his chin on his hand and studies Sunny's face closely, making her blush.

DAVID
Am I embarrassing you? It's just
that you remind me of someone. My
mother, actually. I suppose that
doesn't sound like much of a
compliment, but she died this past
year and I miss her rather a lot.

SUNNY

I'm sorry...

DAVID

Can't be helped. Now then, let's get the requisite chit-chat out of the way. Where did you grow up?

SUNNY

New Mexico -- in the Sangre de Christo Mountains, north of Santa Fe.

DAVID

Really? I have a ranch near there, in Tesuque. It's a lovely place. How marvelous for you.

SUNNY

It wasn't, actually.

He looks at her, questioning.

SUNNY

I had an... unconventional childhood.

DAVID

Had one of those myself, you know. Father in the diplomatic corps, dragged all over the world, then off to Eton when I was eight.

SUNNY

I can't imagine sending a child away so young.

DAVID

Builds character, they say. And encourages buggery, I might add. Not quite Harry Potter, you know.

SUNNY

How could your mother stand being apart from you for so long?

DAVID

Oh, stiff upper-lip, I suppose. And plenty of gin. But I could never do that with my own child. Assuming I ever manage to produce one. Despite all of my marriages it's the one thing I haven't accomplished yet.

He grins, to let her know that he isn't taking himself too seriously, and she smiles back, warming to him.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As David and Sunny wait for the valet to bring his car, Randi's voice rings out from down the street.

RANDI (O.S.)

Sunny! How you doin', girlfriend?

Sunny turns, cringing, to see her old pal Randi tottering down the sidewalk in a mini skirt and high-heeled sandals.

Randi rushes up and throws her arms around Sunny, air-kissing her cheek.

RANDI

It's been ages! How's Edouard?

SUNNY

We're not --

She notices David waiting for an introduction.

SUNNY

Randi -- this is David Scott.
David, Randi...

She's forgotten her last name, but Randi cuts her off in any case.

RANDI

Oh, hi! You're that director guy, aren't you? I love your movies -- except for that last one.

She makes a little face and turns back to Sunny.

RANDI

So don't be such a hermit. Gimme a call. We'll go out sometime.

She simpers at David.

RANDI

Nice to meet you, Dave.

She wiggles her fingers goodbye as she turns to go, and bumps into a HANDSOME STRANGER, a man in his 20's, under-dressed for the setting, just coming out of the restaurant. Randi grabs his bulging bicep to steady herself.

RANDI

Ooh, aren't you the healthy one?

She turns to Sunny.

RANDI

Another friend of yours?

Sunny shakes her head. The stranger looks at her, a little too boldly, then returns his attention to Randi.

Randi sticks out her hand to him.

RANDI

Hi, there! I'm Randi!

Sunny, mortified, realizes that David, stony-faced and averting his eyes from the scene, is holding the car door open for her. Gratefully, she gets in.

INT. JAGUAR - NIGHT

They pull away from the restaurant. There's a long uncomfortable silence.

DAVID

Your friend seems --

SUNNY

I know.

She's beyond embarrassed. David looks at her with sympathy.

DAVID

"May God defend me from my friends;
I can defend myself from my
enemies."

Sunny looks at him, quizzically.

DAVID

Voltaire. Sorry -- I've a tendency
to blurt out things like that.
Eton, you know.

His blather has put her at ease again. She smiles, and looks out the window at the passing gallery windows.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. STREET - NIGHT

The Jaguar pulls up outside an old brick building in the heart of the business district. The streets are deserted. Metal shutters cover the storefronts.

David pops the trunk and gets out to open the door for Sunny, then looks around, apprehensively.

DAVID

I didn't know anyone actually lived
in this neighborhood.

SUNNY

It's cheap. And convenient for
work.

He takes the case with Sunny's stenotype equipment out of the trunk and escorts her to the entrance to her building. A security gate encloses a dark passageway strewn with garbage.

She unlocks the gate.

DAVID

Will you be all right?

SUNNY

Of course.

DAVID

(indicating the case)

Can I carry this up for you?

SUNNY

(reaching for it)

Thank you. I can manage.

David's eyes crinkle as he smiles.

DAVID

That was a hint, you know. You wouldn't like to invite me in?

SUNNY

I'd like to. But... Thank you for dinner.

She slips in through the gate and vanishes into the tunnel-like darkness.

He watches her go, with admiration, then stiffens as somewhere, not far away, a motorcycle revs its engine.

Abruptly, he turns and gets back into his car.

INT. ART THERAPY STUDIO - DAY

The large sunny room is decorated with children's artwork and rings with the clamor of children's voices.

Sunny, wearing a photo-ID badge marked "Shelter Arts Center - Volunteer," works with a LITTLE GIRL with her arm in a cast and a nasty bruise on her cheek, showing her how to mix colors on her palette.

Margaret, the art therapist from the rehab center, circulates among the other CHILDREN. Many show signs of physical abuse; some appear withdrawn, traumatized.

She stops next to Sunny and considers her face.

MARGARET

You're looking rather radiant
today.