

Transactions.

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Characters: A prostitute and her client

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A MOTEL ROOM. A PROSTITUTE AND HER CLIENT ENTER. THERE IS A BED AND A SCREEN AND A BEDSIDE TABLE. SHE SETS AN EGG TIMER.

HER

Only ten minutes tonight?

HIM

It's all I can afford. Is that ok?

HER

I normally wouldn't, but for a regular like you... ok. I don't want you spending money on me if you can't afford it

HIM

I'm not. I'm saving. That's why I can only afford ten minutes.

HER

Oh. Ok. Good. Do you still want me to wear the outfit you like?

HIM

Of course! The costume's critical!

HER

Ok, fine.

SHE GOES BEHIND A SCREEN TO CHANGE

HER

I know this is we've done this like a dozen times, but it still feels weird. Don't you think it's a little weird?

HIM

Just put the damn outfit on!

HER

Ok.

HIM

And don't ask questions like that! It won't work if you ask questions like that! Don't break character.

HE TAKES OFF HIS TROUSERS AND GETS INTO THE BED.

HIM

Are you nearly ready?

HER

You keen to get started?

HIM

Yes.

HER

Hang on... Ready.

SHE ENTERS WEARING DAGGY PAJAMAS.

HER

Well?

HIM

It's perfect. Let's do it.

THEY GET INTO THE BED AND SIT THERE. HE BRINGS OUT A BOOK AND STARTS READING.

HER

Wouldn't you rather have sex or something?

HIM

You're breaking character again.

HER

Ok. It's just that...

HIM

Shh. Stop breaking the illusion. We've been married for 15 years, we don't need to have sex; we have the comfort of a stable, contented relationship. That's what I'm paying you for.

HE GOES BACK TO READING. SHE SIGHS.

HIM

Illusion.

HER

Fine, illusion. I can act like we've been married for 15 years. I want a divorce.

HIM

What?

HER

This pretend relationship is over.

HIM

Why?

HER

You don't pretend to find me attractive anymore. I'm tired of the pretend lies. I can't pretend to pretend I love you anymore.

HIM

You can't just end it; we're barely three minutes through. Let's talk about this.

HER

Ok. This whole fantasy of yours-

HIM

Um. Can we talk about it without breaking the illusion?

HER

Fine. You start. Why should I stay in this relationship?

HIM

Well, I'm a good provider.

HER

What is it that you do again?

HIM

I'm CEO and lead driver of a racing car company.

HER

And in real life?

HIM

I clean toilets. But this isn't about real life, remember?

HER

Fine, what else is good about this fantasy relationship?

HIM

Well, we're in love, of course.

HER

Obviously, that's why I want out.

HIM

Remember when we first met?

HER

Um... At a shop or something?

HIM

Remember our first date? You do remember, don't you?

HER

I... No I don't. I just remember that it was boring.

HIM

First date; Devonshire tea and a long drive. Second date, Casablanca at the Astor; you cried, I held your hand. Third date, long walk in the park, our first kiss.

HER

Ah yes. Good times.

HIM

I've given you everything a woman could want; we live in a beautiful mansion, with two cars in the garage.

HER

Yes, yes fine. That's great, but I'm still not content. I think this isn't working. I know we've been together now for... 10 years

HIM

(Under his breath) 15 years

HER

15 years. That's the problem. We need to spice things up.

HIM

How?

HER

Maybe we can spice things up with a fantasy. You could pretend I'm not your wife, that I'm a prostitute or something. Get sexy.

HIM

No!

HER

Fine, it's over. I want out. This is weird. You're not paying enough for this.

HIM

What about our children?

HER

Our pretend children?

HIM

Do I have to re-explain all of it to you? We have two wonderful children, Bevan and Melanie. Think of what this will do to them.

HER

Oh yeah, by the way. Bevan's been expelled for cheating and Melanie's joined a cult.

HIM

What cult?

HER

Some thing where she shaves her head.

HIM

Bevan cheated? On what?

HER

His exams. He was under too much pressure. And he wants to quit finance to open a comic book shop. And if you took even a fake interest in our fake son you'd know all this.

HE LOOKS AT HER.

HER

What?

HIM

Bevan's only seven years old.

HER

Um... He's very mature for his age.

HIM

Don't you remember any of it?

HER

Of course I do. Our lovely mansion; oh by the way, they're demolishing it tomorrow.

HIM

They aren't.

HER

Yep, because of the infestation.

HIM

What infestation?

HER

Cockroaches, millions of cockroaches. Cockroaches with bird flu. Oh and I crashed both the cars. Crashed one of them into the other one. While drunk, so insurance won't cover it.

HIM

You're ruining everything. It's not realistic!

HER

Fine. You show me how it's done. You be the wife. I'll be the husband: "No sex thanks, I'm tired and have too many important responsibilities. Cup of tea, love?"

HIM

Stop it.

HER

"No? How 'bout some Bovril then? Bovril, temazepam and a nice lie down. Perfect for a quiet night in".

HIM

Stop it now.

HER

"I'm popping down the shops for some mediocrity, do you want any?"

HIM

Stop it you...

HE STOPS HIMSELF

HER

What? Whore?

HIM

No!

HER

What then? What were you going to say?

HIM

I was going to say, you don't know how important this is to me. Can you just act as though we had a real relationship?

HER

This is real. This is what happens in real families. Real families have problems.

HIM

Then I don't want a real family I just want what I paid for. I can't handle a real relationship; that's why I come here. This is meant to just be a game.

HER

Fine. Yeah. I forgot. I'm not real. I'm just a game. Do you have a real relationship out there? Out there in the real

world is there a real wife with real pajamas. Are these her pajamas?

HIM

No, there's nothing like that. There's just you. I just want to feel normal for ten minutes.

HER

You can't just buy a life. Real life is difficult. Families are difficult. Children do things like shave their heads and get expelled.

HIM

Do you- do you already have children?

HER

No. Not anymore.

PAUSE

HIM

I-

HER

Let's just go back the game, ok? I'm sorry I tried to spoil it.

THEY GET BACK IN BED, HE TRIES TO GO BACK TO HIS BOOK BUT IS DISTRACTED BY HOW SAD SHE SEEMS.

HIM

We could... We could try talking, like a couple.

HER

Ok.

HIM

Let's talk about something mundane. Like a real couple would.

HER
Politics?

HIM
Not mundane enough.

HER
Toast is good.

HIM
Too mundane

HER
Shopping?

HIM
Perfect. Did you do the shopping today?

HER
No, I spent all our money on shoes.

HIM
You've never been very good with money.

HER
Wouldn't be doing this if I was.

HIM
I'll go to the supermarket tomorrow. The supermarket
always reminds me of how we met. Remember how we
first met?

HER
At ninja school?

HIM
Hey...

HER

Sorry. *(As though remembering something by rote)* In the supermarket. Both reaching for the same milk.

HIM

Yes. Remember our first date?

HER

Remember when we fought super-intelligent cactuses from mars?

HIM

That's not right.

HER

Oh?

HIM

They were cacti not cactuses. And anyway, they were from Venus.

SHE LAUGHS. IT'S NICE LAUGH.

HER

Do you remember our first anniversary?

HIM

Of course, who could forget dinner on the moon?

HER

And remember when you first met my mother?

HIM

Yes, I didn't expect her to be a pirate. How's her parrot?

HER

He's fine. Do you remember the first time you told me you loved me? I don't think I know that one.

HIM

Of course, It was back when you were still working as a prostitute, and we were playing that game. When we pretended. I spent the last of my money so I could see you for ten minutes. That was the night we stopped playing games. Remember? I turned to you and I said: "I love you, I really love you, and I don't want to pretend any more."

HER

You said that to me?

HIM

I did, and I meant every word. Do you remember what you said then?

HER

I-

THE EGG TIMER GOES OFF.

HER

Time's up.

PAUSE.

HER

Same time next week?

HIM

Ok.

END