

PLAYING KETCHUP

Written by

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Based on Ozark

TEASER

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Two people sit with burlap sacks on their heads. An unknown MAN circles them, his hand hovering over his hip, presumably over a gun.

MARTY (V.O.)

And so the story goes the couple had one son, and they were very poor. They spent most of their days comparing the size of their vegetables to their neighbors, afraid they would never be able to support their child.

We now see the man is SNELL. He rips off one burlap sack, his victim not revealed.

He pulls up a chair and sits on it backwards, drawing his gun.

MARTY (V.O.)

They rationed their food and never let anyone into their home. Until one day a mysterious man showed up. He told them in exchange for a meal and a nap, he'd grant them three wishes.

Snell throws a duffel bag down, large BLOCKS of what look like HEROIN spill out.

SNELL

Did you steal from me?

MARTY (V.O.)

The wife wished for their vegetables to be the largest in the land.

SNELL

Answer me.

MARTY (V.O.)

The husband wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. Then his son began to cry. His father rushed to his side but stopped himself, realizing he'd never be able to hold his son again.

SNELL

You better find your voice before I
blow it out.

MARTY (V.O.)

After realizing this, they used
their last wish to reverse the
first two.

Snell chuckles. He puts the burlap sack back over his
victim's head.

MARTY

They realized the best gift they
could give their child was
generosity and kindness. Not
possessions.

Snell has his gun flush to the burlap sack on his victim's
head. The click of the safety being removed is heard.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - DAY

RUTH LANGMORE (19) sits across from MARTY BYRDE (40's). She pretends to jolt awake from a nap.

RUTH
Oh you're done now?

MARTY
Yup, that's the end.

RUTH
What does some fairytale got to do with me gettin' my raise?

MARTY
You're not getting a raise Ruth.

RUTH
I didn't like that story. Everyone knows on your third wish you ask for infinite wishes. I don't think these are the kind of people to be takin' life advice from.

MARTY
If that was the end there'd be no lesson.

RUTH
Who needs a lesson when they could have had anything they damn well pleased?

Marty's growing bored of this conversation.

MARTY
It's about greed Ruth. Something I'm teaching you to stay away from.

Ruth SLAMS both her hands down on his desk.

RUTH
I'm not bein' greedy! I deserve this raise. I earned it! I'm workin' twelve hours a day over at garbage tits and sag ass, that's sixty hours a week.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

I should be gettin' paid overtime--
double overtime!

Marty pretends to become engrossed in paperwork, no longer looking up to converse with her.

RUTH (CONT'D)

You don't know what the hell you're
even doin'. Probably couldn't
figure out how to pay me more even
if you wanted to!

MARTY

Possibly. But not likely.

Ruth is fuming, but then mischievous smirk creeps across her features.

RUTH

Guess you won't mind if I reduce my
hours a bit. Might get a second
job.

MARTY

You mean a third?

RUTH

You're right Marty. I don't need
that raise. Silly greedy me.

Ruth slips out of his office looking up to no good. Marty looks up, processing how odd the last moments of their interaction have been, but she's already gone.

EXT. SNELL HOUSE - DAY

Ruth takes in the old decaying house. She collects herself before making her way to the front door. Mustering all her courage, she knocks.

Loud clicking noises come from behind the door as a series of locks are undone. The door cracks open to reveal a singular eyeball. It belongs to Snell's wife DARLENE (40's).

DARLENE

Langmore?

She opens the door fully.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

What the hell do you want?

RUTH
Snell here? I got a proposition.

DARLENE
Last I heard you're workin' for the enemy.

RUTH
I don't see it like that. I don't think Snell will either.

DARLENE
(dubious)
What are you up to Ruth?

RUTH
Let me in and you'll find out.

Darlene hesitates before stepping aside.

INT. SNELL HOUSE - DAY

Ruth takes a look around their nice farm home.

DARLENE
He's in there.

She nods her head in the direction of their kitchen, where a violent chopping sound can be heard.

INT. SNELL HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth enters to find Snell aggressively chopping off fish heads.

SNELL
Hello Ruth. How's business?

RUTH
Look I know Marty's been a real pain in the ass, but I can sell for you. He won't have anything to do with it.

SNELL
The Blue Cat dishwasher becoming a dealer? Not sure how that would work.

RUTH
I heard you like sellin' from boats.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

Last I checked the Blue Cat's got a pier, a pier where rich tourists get the cheapest gas. I'm sure they wouldn't mind killin' two birds with one stone and buy some drugs while they're at it.

He begins to filet the fish. Ruth eyes the process, annoyed.

SNELL

So you'd be in charge of this? A fifteen year old pushing heroin? I don't think so. I asked you to get *him* on board--

RUTH

I'm nineteen, and you've seen my record.

SNELL

Only people who get caught have records.

RUTH

Marty Byrde is an idiot. I'll move your money so fast you won't even know what to do with it. How come it's been a month and Marty hasn't moved shit?

She sees Snell struggling with the fish.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Goddamn gimme that.

She takes it from him.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Always cut behind the pectoral fin, then slice diagonally.

She chops the head off in one swift movement.

RUTH (CONT'D)

And skin the damn thing right, if you hold the tail like this it slips right off. You're peelin' it like a freakin' potato.

She continues to filet the fish perfectly.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I'll move 30k for you the first two weeks. If not, we'll call it off.

She pops the fish's eye out of it's socket and into her mouth.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Mmm don't ya love it how the eye just bursts when you bite it?

Snell watches her, intrigued.

RUTH (CONT'D)

So we got a deal?

INT. BLUE CAT - DAY

CHARLOTTE BYRDE (15) storms into the Blue Cat on a mission, slamming the door behind her.

A jumpy looking WYATT LANGMORE (17) slips out of the kitchen, wiping his KETCHUP COVERED hands on his pants. He stops dead in his tracks when he sees Charlotte, hiding his hands behind his back.

CHARLOTTE

My dad here?

WYATT

Uh--

CHARLOTTE

Does he have you working the fourth of July too?

WYATT

Um--

CHARLOTTE

Well I get if you are. But really? His own daughter? He seriously thinks I'm going to spend my night stuck in this shit hole?

Wyatt begins to slowly make his way back towards the kitchen.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I should be out partying. It's a sick joke.

Wyatt is halfway out the door.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

So you haven't seen him?

WYATT

He's definitely not here. Maybe
check back there!

He points behind her. When she turns to look he bolts into
the kitchen.

Charlotte looks back in his direction, but he's gone. Weird.

She continues to scour the Blue Cat. Behind the bar, nothing.
The porch. Nothing.

CHARLOTTE

(yelling)
Dad? Daaaaad.

Determined, she heads straight to the kitchen.

INT. BLUE CAT - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

It's completely empty with no sign of Wyatt. EMPTY KETCHUP
PACKETS litter a nearby counter. Charlotte begins to examine
one. Like the others it appears to be TAPED SHUT.

She raises it to her nose, about to sniff it when she hears
something--

--A low THUMP THUMP THUMP noise. It begins to grow
louder...Now followed by indecipherable whispers.

CHARLOTTE

Wyatt..?

She approaches the pantry door. The noise now louder and
faster. She opens the door to reveal MARTY MID INTERCORSE
WITH RACHEL (40's).

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

DAD?!

Marty looks over his shoulder, sees his daughter.

MARTY

Oh, oh god.

Marty scrambles to pull his pants up but Charlotte has
already escaped through the back door.

EXT. BLUE CAT - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte is running so fast she knocks Wyatt over. The same
KETCHUP PACKETS spill from his arms.

This stops Charlotte in her tracks. She looks at them intrigued before scooping up a HANDFUL.

WYATT

Hey stop! Gimme those!

Charlotte doesn't listen. Instead she RIPS one open. Brown powder spills out of it. She doesn't understand what it is but she knows it can't be good.

CHARLOTTE

Did he put you up to this?

Marty is running now too, about to catch up with Charlotte.

MARTY

Charlotte please--

CHARLOTTE

You disgust me.

She takes off again, ketchup packets in hand.

MARTY

Wait!

Wyatt salvages all the packets he can before getting out of the way. Marty runs right past him after Charlotte, not noticing the sketchy ketchup situation.

Charlotte's almost at the pier with Marty hot on her tail, but she's still too fast for him.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Charlotte please stop!

She's already at the end of the dock. Marty rests his hands on his knees gasping for breath. When he looks back he sees Charlotte hop into an expensive boat with ZACK (18) at the wheel. She waves to Marty as they pull out of the dock.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Fuck.

INT. BYRDE HOUSE - LIVINGROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Marty is staring at the clock. It reads 1:37 am. His wife WENDY BYRDE (40's) is pacing in front of him.

WENDY

Where is she?

MARTY

I told her she could go out.

WENDY

She should be home by now.

MARTY

She's mad I'm making her work the fourth. She's just rebelling. It's healthy.

Wendy shoots him laser beams.

WENDY

Healthy? That's the word you're using?

MARTY

I'll stay up. Go to bed.

WENDY

If she's not home by three call the cops.

Marty keeps his eyes glued to the clock.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Marty?

MARTY

Go to bed Wendy.

She leaves. Marty continues his face off with the clock. Its electric numbers illuminate his face. We can't tell what he's thinking.

INT. RUTH'S TRAILER - SAME TIME

Ruth KICKS her trailer door open. She's fuming.

RUTH

WYATT.

Wyatt almost jumps ten feet off the couch at her tone.

RUTH (CONT'D)

You're packin' the ketchup packets...at the Blue Cat?

Wyatt's eyes only grow wider with fear. He knows he's about to have it.

RUTH (CONT'D)
HOW STUPID ARE YOU?

WYATT
He didn't see anything I swear!

RUTH
Yeah? And what if he did?

WYATT
He didn't!

RUTH
I'm takin' your cut of the week.

WYATT
No way in hell--

They're interrupted by the phone ringing. They both eye it, concerned. After a few rings Ruth answers.

RUTH
Yeah?

SNELL (O.S.)
I see you put your idiot cousin in charge of things. Since then I've noticed less is being sold than I've been givin' to you.

Ruth walks further away from Wyatt, lowering her voice.

RUTH
Well that's just not true--

SNELL (O.S.)
You see that knife on the counter just to the left of you?

Ruth can't believe what she's hearing. She looks at the knife.

RUTH
(barley audible)
Yes.

SNELL (O.S.)
Pick it up.

She picks up the knife.

SNELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now I want you to walk over to Wyatt.

RUTH
Snell please--

SNELL (O.S.)
Now Ruth.

Ruth slowly makes her way over to Wyatt, holding the knife by her side and out of his view.

SNELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ask if he's been stealin' from me.

RUTH
W-Wyatt? You wouldn't happen to be takin' some heroin for yourself?

WYATT
(scoffing)
I'm not *that* retarded.

SNELL (O.S.)
He's lying.

RUTH
You sure?

WYATT
Pretty damn sure!

SNELL (O.S.)
Ask him again. This time with the blade to his neck.

RUTH
Please--

SNELL (O.S.)
He'll be dead in five minutes if you don't.

Ruth thinks she can make out a silhouette shifting outside, but she can't be sure. It's enough for her to do as she's told.

She whips the knife around to Wyatt, the blade grazing his neck.

WYATT
What the fuck?

RUTH
I'm not gonna ask you again. Did you, or did you not, steal from Snell?

Wyatt's stunned. Tears begin to leak out the corners of Ruth's eyes. She mouths *I'm sorry*.

WYATT

No. I didn't. I just lost a few packets when Charlotte ran into me.

SNELL (O.S.)

There it is. You're gonna pay for this kid Ruth, whether it's with the ten grand he owes me, or his life.

He hangs up. Ruth drops the knife and bursts into tears. Wyatt runs out of the trailer.

INT. BYRDE HOUSE - DAY

Marty's passed out in the same chair he was sitting in the night before. The sound of the front door SLAMMING snaps him awake. He checks the clock. I reads 8:30 am.

INT. BYRDE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marty peeks in to find Charlotte eating a pop tart.

MARTY

Good morning.

Charlotte just stares at him. Wendy runs in and tackles Charlotte with a hug.

WENDY

Charlotte! Where have you been? You're never to stay out that late again.

CHARLOTTE

Why not? Seems like everyone else in this family gets to do whatever they want.

MARTY

Charlotte we need to talk. Alone.

Wendy looks between the two of them confused.

CHARLOTTE

About which secret Dad? Because honestly I can't keep up!

WENDY

Marty--

MARTY

Charlotte--

CHARLOTTE

No seriously mom which do you want to know about? Or are you fine with Dad fucking that Blue Cat hick?

WENDY

What?

A sleepy JONAH (13) enters rubbing his eyes lazily. No one seems to notice.

MARTY

Charlotte that is enough.

CHARLOTTE

How about him being a drug dealer?

MARTY

Drug dealer?

JONAH

Drug dealer?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah pretend like you don't know. That's just great.

MARTY

I *don't* know.

CHARLOTTE

So you've actually been putting ketchup on your burgers then?

MARTY

Is that some sort of slang I should know?

Charlotte takes one of Wyatt's ketchup packets out of her pocket and chucks it at Marty.

CHARLOTTE

Here. Open it.

Marty does. The same brown powder spills out of it. His demeanor hardens.

MARTY

Where did you get this?

Charlotte just rolls her eyes, done with the act.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Charlotte I don't know anything
about this. Tell me--

CHARLOTTE

It was Wyatt okay? He was packing
them in the Blue Cat yesterday.

WENDY

You're fucking Rachel?

MARTY

Oh please Wendy. We're trying to
deal with something serious right
now.

He pockets the packet and goes to leave.

CHARLOTTE

Well if you're not selling it, who
is?

MARTY

I've got a pretty good idea.

***** TO READ FULL SCRIPT PLEASE EMAIL skm461@nyu.edu *****