

Comedy is Cruel

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OVER BLACK

Voices speak over applause.

PAUL

Have a good night fellas. Thank you! Thank you!

M.C.

You tore it up bud. Rob Shriver, ladies and gentlemen. Give him some love!

The applause crescendos.

M.C. (CONT'D)

Who's ready for more?

Hoots and hollers.

M.C. (CONT'D)

Yes, it's time. It's time for the man you've all come here to see.

FADE IN:

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

DONNIE PHILLIPS (40s) droops in his chair, playing with a SMALL BLACK BOX. We hear the M.C. speaking from the stage.

M.C. (O.S.)

He just finished his world tour and now he's finally back in his hometown.

Donnie slips the box inside his pocket and grabs his jacket, rubbing his face in an attempt to loosen it.

M.C. (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Give it up for Donnie Phillips!

Thunderous applause. Donnie stands.

INT. NIGHTCLUB STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Donnie struts on to stage. He now has a charming smile and meets the deafening applause with a raise of his hand.

The M.C. shakes Donnie's hand and leaves.

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CONTINUED:

DONNIE

Thank you. Thank you. How is everybody doing?

More yells. The audience begins to simmer down.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Good to hear. Good to hear. And me? Well I'm doing fabulous. Just got a divorce.

A mix of sympathy and applause.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

No sarcasm. No sarcasm at all. It's great. You hear all these terrible things about divorce, but the real secret is... divorce is wonderful!

Laughter.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I love chasing women... but the only danger with chasing women is the possibility of catching one.

EXT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Donnie stands outside a bustling restaurant. BECCA (30s), a beautiful woman, approaches him.

DONNIE

Where's your lawyer?

BECCA

I thought it would be just the two of us tonight.

DONNIE

For old time's sake?

Becca smiles and pulls on Donnie's jacket.

BECCA

You look handsome tonight.

Donnie rearranges his jacket, managing to crack a smirk.

BECCA (CONT'D)

How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNIE

Thirsty.

INT. NIGHTCLUB STAGE -- NIGHT

The audience laughs heartily.

DONNIE

Yeah, you guys are feeling me. Why the hell do you think divorce is so expensive?

He cracks a smile.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Because it's worth it.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Donnie drinks his coffee. Across from him, Becca sits and watches.

BECCA

Today was Shawn's first day at school.

DONNIE

Wish I heard about it.

BECCA

He wanted you there. I should've called you earlier.

DONNIE

What time is it?

Becca sighs and looks at her watch.

BECCA

You got a gig?

Donnie nods. Becca checks her watch. \*

BECCA (CONT'D)

Quarter to nine.

Donnie shuffles through his pockets to grab his wallet.

DONNIE

I hate to rush this.

Becca tightens her face.

INT. NIGHTCLUB STAGE -- NIGHT

Donnie addresses the audience.

DONNIE

I mean I remember the day she asked me for a divorce. So vivid. I was watching Monday Night Football. Chargers, Packers. She comes in and says, "Honey we gotta talk." I'm like, "Oh no." Then she says "You are irresponsible, selfish, and emotionally unavailable. I can't do this. I want a divorce." I can't tell you how it felt. I was so relieved. I thought she was going to ask me to switch off the game.

Laughter.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Donnie puts some cash down. Becca leans forward.

BECCA

Divorce isn't easy... for either of us.

DONNIE

Yeah... it's an endless hassle of papers and hearings. Why can't we nix all the formalities.

Becca forces a smile. Donnie rises from his chair.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

How's your new man handling it?

Donnie's putting on his jacket. Becca's grin sobers up.

BECCA

Donnie, he asked me to marry him.

Donnie freezes.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Sit down. Please.

INT. NIGHTCLUB STAGE -- NIGHT

Donnie stops the laughter.

DONNIE

My friends warned me before I got hitched. They said, Donnie, be careful. Marriage is a marathon, not a sprint. Well I've run a marathon and I was happy when it was over. I mean they gave me bagels and a cool shirt. Why don't they have that at divorces? "I Finished My Marriage." Bagels would be nice too. Then when my friends ask, "Donnie, what happened to your marriage?" I could just say, well I completed it. You're just pissed because you're not done yet.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Donnie sips his drink.

DONNIE

Surprise surprise.

He sips again.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Don't you think it's a bit early to marry again.

BECCA

Where's the time? I mean he's pushing sixty.

Donnie laughs.

DONNIE

Jesus. Sounds like gramps is going to be teaching Shawn how to use a walker.

BECCA

Donnie, why can't you just for once...

Donnie ceases his laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECCA (CONT'D)

He's taking me to pick out my  
dress tomorrow morning.

DONNIE

Wait till he takes you to pick out  
your maternity gown.

Becca picks up her coffee to look at it and puts it down.

BECCA

Do you really think I'll look  
silly?

Donnie is taken aback.

DONNIE

No Becca, I don't think you're  
going to look silly.

BECCA

I don't want it to be some joke.

DONNIE

Everyone could use a joke  
sometimes.

Becca smiles as she pulls out a small black box from her  
pocket.

BECCA

Everyone could use a joke  
sometimes.

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Donnie finishes styling his hair in the mirror. Laughter  
echoes in the background. He reaches into his pocket and  
pulls out his small black box.

Slowly peeling it open, he peers inside. We hear voices  
off stage.

PAUL (O.S.)

Have a good night fellas! Thank  
you! Thank you!

A flower... but wait, there's something underneath it.

M.C.

You tore it up bud. Rob Shriver,  
ladies and gentlemen. Give him  
some love!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He laughs. Tears well up in his eyes.

Inside the box... A WEDDING INVITATION.

M.C. (CONT'D)  
And now, the man you've all come  
here to see.

Donnie loosens his face with his hands and smiles.

M.C. (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Give it up for Donnie Phillips!

Thunderous applause. Donnie stands.

INT. NIGHTCLUB STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Donnie struts on to stage. He now has a charming smile and acknowledges the deafening applause with a raise of his hand.

The M.C. shakes Donnie's hand and leaves the stage.

Donnie takes the microphone and looks at the audience. Hesitating to speak, he looks off stage. He glances back at the audience. The MC crawls back on stage.

M.C.  
Donnie?

Donnie looks at the M.C. and hands him the microphone. He rushes off stage, which seamlessly turns into...

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Donnie walks through the courthouse to his seat with his lawyer. His wife sits on the other side with her LAWYER and sixty year old BOYFRIEND. The JUDGE (who is played by the same character as the M.C.) pounds a gavel.

JUDGE  
Donnie Phillips. You may stand.

Donnie and his lawyer stand.

JUDGE (CONT'D)  
We will now contend the  
arrangements on the house. You may  
begin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAWYER

As my client has already stated in his previous testimony, he bought the house before the couple conceived their child Shawn, meaning that his wife was unemployed during the period in which the house was acquired...

His words turn into babble as Donnie's face clenches. Donnie impulsively stands.

DONNIE

Fuck it!

The audience turns, surprised.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Women... I'll never understand them.

He turns to Becca.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Despite all this bullshit, Becca, all this fucking bullshit you've put me through, I love you. I don't think I've ever stopped loving you. Fuck it, take the house, take the car, the fucking butler, take it all. At least I have my comedy. And that's the one thing, Becca, the one fucking thing, that you can never take away from me.

Donnie starts to storm out of the courtroom. All the men in the room stand to applaud, even the judge. The women in the room are disgusted.

With style and SLOW-MOTION, Donnie walks out of the courtroom, seamlessly into...

INT. STAGE -- NIGHT

Donnie walks in.

M.C.

Give it up for Donnie Phillips!

Thunderous applause. Donnie smiles.

THE END