

THE MATCHMAKER

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TEASER

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- DAY

Valentine's Day. Pink and red everywhere, heart-shaped candy boxes, and bears with "I Love You" written on their chests.

LYLE THATCHER (37) enters and removes his sunglasses, regarding a row of cherub statues in disgust.

Lyle walks down an aisle and grabs a 6-pack of energy drinks.

ROBBER (O.S.)
Hurry up! Put it in the bag!

AT THE FRONT OF THE STORE:

An armed ROBBER (35) holds up the terrified NAVEED (29).

IN THE AISLE:

Lyle peers around the corner. Reaches for his gun --

INSERT: No gun, just an empty space at Lyle's hip.

LYLE
Crap.

AT THE FRONT OF THE STORE:

Bag of cash in hand, the Robber hesitates midway to the door.

ROBBER
And the bear!

A gigantic polar bear sits on the shelf behind Naveed.

NAVEED
You... you want the *bear*?

ROBBER
Hey, it's for my girlfriend! You
wanna make something of it?

The Robber heads for Naveed, raising his weapon --

SMASH!! A CHERUB STATUE knocks the Robber out for the count.

Lyle looks down at the unconscious man, shaking his head.

LYLE
Valentine's Day. Schmuck.

TWO UNIFORMED COPS burst in and aim their weapons at Lyle.

COP #1
Put the cherub down!

LYLE

Hey, I just -

COP #1

Put it down!

COP #2

Put your hands up!

Lyle lowers the Cherub to the ground and raises his hands.

COP #1

On the ground now!

With a SIGH, Lyle kneels and links his hands behind his head -

- Before being shoved face-first into the floor.

INT. SQUAD CAR -- DAY

Lyle watches from the back seat, hands cuffed behind his back, as Naveed talks and gestures eagerly to Cop #1 -

- While Cop #2 supervises a PARAMEDIC treating the Robber.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- MOMENTS LATER

Cop #1 pulls Lyle out, unlocking the cuffs.

COP #1

Okay, sir, you're free to go.

Lyle rubs his wrists. The Cop eyes him curiously.

COP #1 (CONT'D)

My sarge said you were on the job?

LYLE

Yeah, well that was a while ago now.

The beaming Naveed interrupts them, pressing a HUGE, RED, HEART-SHAPED CANDY BOX into Lyle's reluctant hands.

NAVEED

Thank you! You saved my life!

(at Lyle's reluctance)

Please! It's wonderful chocolate,
like nothing you ever tasted before.

COP ONE

Give it to your wife.

LYLE

I'm not married.

NAVEED

Girlfriend, then: trust me, you give
her this, she will love you tonight!

EXT. THATCHER INVESTIGATIONS -- DAY

Lyle walks up to a dingy building in a run-down part of Hollywood. "THATCHER INVESTIGATIONS" is on the street door.

On the door next to it, a sign reads "AARDVARK BAIL BONDS."

INT. THATCHER INVESTIGATIONS -- MOMENTS LATER

Aside from a modern computer, clutter covers a huge desk. Bills; an old LAPD coffee mug; a framed PI's licence.

Lyle tosses the heart-shaped candy box onto the mess, then opens it - to find the chocolates are all HEART-SHAPED too.

LYLE

Great.

Lyle eats one - then stares at the rows of chocolate hearts. Nauseated, he tips the entire box into the trash, as -

- A KNOCK sounds at the door. With barely a pause -

JIMMY MORRISON (45) waddles in. One donut away from a heart attack, Jimmy has an eye for the ladies and a nose for gossip.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Come in, I guess.

JIMMY

Hey, I got a job for you.

Jimmy nosily glances around the office as Lyle slumps into his chair and starts going through his mail. More bills.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Bail jumper, name of Leroy Baldwin.
Missed a sentencing hearing today.

Jimmy's gaze falls on a CALENDAR propped up against the wall. An entry for February 14th reads: **7PM - DON'T BE LATE!!!**

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I'm betting the kid's hiding out at his girlfriend's place, I just need you to go bring him in. Easy.

LYLE

So why can't your guys handle it?

JIMMY

They're out of town on another skip.
Vegas, on my dime.

(growling)

They better be out lookin' for the guy, not seeing Celine again.

LYLE
I don't know...

JIMMY
Got some other way to pay the rent?

Lyle eyes the bills in his hands and on his desk.

LYLE
Fine. What's the address?

JIMMY
I'll send it to you.
(smirking)
So... you got a big date?

LYLE
You're kidding, right?

JIMMY
What? It's Valentine's Day.

LYLE
Exactly! Jimmy, you take a woman
out tonight, she thinks you're getting
engaged. No way.

Looking sly, Jimmy taps his finger on the calendar entry.

JIMMY
Then what's this: 7pm, don't be late?

Lyle jerks to his feet, eyes practically bugging out.

LYLE
Ah, crap - that's *today*?

JIMMY
Ha! So you *do* got a date!

LYLE
No, I...
(distractedly)
Look, Jimmy, I'm not gonna have time -

JIMMY
All you gotta do is I D the kid and
grab him. How long could it take?

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD -- LATE AFTERNOON

Lyle's BEAT-UP OLD CAR sits parked down and across the street
from a large, pleasant looking house.

INT. LYLE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Lyle frowns out the windshield then checks the time. 5:33pm.

LYLE

Come on, Leroy, show your damn face...

A car pulls up. Lyle raises a set of binoculars.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

A well-dressed MAN and WOMAN head for the front of the house.

LYLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You having a party, Leroy?

ED WHITE (67) - beaming and tuxedoed - lets his guests inside.

THE MAGNIFIED VIEW SHIFTS UPWARD

Then halts abruptly - ON A FIGURE IN A WHITE WEDDING DRESS.

Lyle drops the binoculars to his lap, stupefied.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Ho-ly crap.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD -- EARLY EVENING

A CATERING TRUCK pulls up with "Epic Events" on its side.

EXT. BACK GARDEN -- CONTINUOUS

Well-dressed MEN and WOMEN stand around chatting.

The tuxedoed groom - LEROY BALDWIN (25) - stands nervously by a rose-bedecked arch, while his smartly dressed mother - GLORIA BALDWIN (52) - fusses around him, adjusting his tie.

LEROY

Momma, it's fine -

GLORIA

Stand still while I fix it!

OFF TO ONE SIDE:

DOLORES PREJEEN (90) watches the scene with evident pleasure. Despite being thin and frail, her eyes glow with joy.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

There! That's better.

She steps back. Leroy fiddles with the tie, uncomfortable.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

You're not getting cold feet, Leroy?

Leroy's frown disappears as he beams with joy.

LEROY

No way. I'm the luckiest man alive.

ED

(calling to them)

Son, there's a man at the front door.
Someone's sent you and Tania a cake!

GLORIA

Must be my cousins. I told you that
waffle-maker wasn't all they'd send.

ED

He says you need to sign for it.

GLORIA

Well go on! You got time.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD -- MOMENTS LATER

Leroy and Ed emerge through the front door.

A DELIVERY GUY has a gorgeous, 3-tiered wedding cake half
out of the back of the "Epic Events" catering truck -

- But he's about to drop it onto the sidewalk below.

DELIVERY GUY

A little help here!

Leroy and Ed hurry to help him.

DELIVERY GUY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I just need someone to...

The Delivery Guy staggers under the weight of the cake.
Hair slicked over to one side, in thick-rimmed glasses -

- HE'S JUST BARELY RECOGNIZABLE AS **LYLE**.

LYLE

...take the other end!

(to Leroy)

Quick, before it falls!

Leroy climbs in the truck, taking the other end of the cake.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Okay... now, just... let's push it
back in and try again.

ED

But it's almost out...

Not hearing, Leroy dutifully backs up one step, then two --

Shoving the cake inside, Lyle SLAMS the door on Leroy.

LEROY (O.S.)

Hey!

ED

What the hell...?

Lyle runs around the side of the truck -

- And almost makes it inside before Ed grabs his arm.

ED (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

TANIA

Daddy! What's wrong?

The bride - TANIA WHITE (35) - runs up in a puffy wedding dress, veil back to reveal a plain face behind thick glasses.

BANGING comes from inside the truck.

LEROY (O.S.)

Tania! Baby, get me out!

TANIA

Leroy!?

Tania pulls at the truck's rear door.

TANIA (CONT'D)

I can't get it open! It's locked!!

AT THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK, Ed still hangs onto Lyle.

ED

Let him out!

LYLE

Sir, you may not be aware of it, but your future son-in-law skipped bail.

ED

What?

TANIA (O.S.)

Daddy! Do something!!

LYLE

Sir, I have a warrant...

ED

And I've waited 35 years for my baby to get married!

Ed SUCKER PUNCHES Lyle, who drops the truck keys to the ground. Ed and Lyle both dive for them, grappling still.

MEANWHILE, AT THE BACK OF THE TRUCK:

 LEROY (O.S.)
Tania, I'm sorry - !

 TANIA
I need you, Leroy!

 LEROY (O.S.)
I love you so much!!

AT THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK:

Lyle gets the keys and runs for the driver's door -

- But finds frail Dolores blocking his way.

 DOLORES
Why not let them get married first?

 LYLE
Yeah, wish I could.

Lyle tries to reach around Dolores for the door handle, but she grabs his wrist, her grip surprisingly strong.

 DOLORES
True love is rare.

 LYLE
True love is a *myth*. Lady, let go!

Lyle struggles to unpry her hand without breaking it.

 DOLORES
You've been hurt. Your heart was broken, many years ago.

 LYLE
No it wasn't! Look, lady, save the carnival act, okay -

 DOLORES
Still, I see kindness in your soul...

With growing joy, she stares into Lyle's eyes --

AND NEITHER OF THEM CAN SEEM TO TEAR THEIR GAZE AWAY.

 DOLORES (CONT'D)
It's you..... You're the one....!

Dolores reaches toward Lyle, putting a hand over his heart -

- And Lyle jerks as ELECTRICITY shoots through his chest.

LYLE
YEAOW!!!! You tasered me!?

Lyle shoves Dolores aside and yanks open the truck door -

INT. CATERING TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

- climbing in and hurrying to stick the key in the ignition, rubbing the sore place on his chest with his free hand.

The engine FIRES. Lyle looks outside, freaked to see Dolores gazing in at him with a transcendent expression on her face.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD -- CONTINUOUS

The catering truck ROARS away, pursued by a SCREAMING Tania, and leaving a growing crowd of GUESTS on the street behind.

EXT. AARDVARK BAIL BONDS OFFICE -- EVENING

Lyle drags a WAILING, cake-splattered Leroy from the truck.

LEROY
You ruined my life!

LYLE
I probably saved you a messy divorce.

LEROY
No!! We love each other!

LYLE
Then you shoulda got married yesterday instead of skipping bail!

LEROY
But Tania wanted it to be on Valentine's Day!

Shaking his head, Lyle handcuffs Leroy as Jimmy ambles out.

LYLE
Gotta run, Jimmy - pay me tomorrow!

Jimmy watches as Lyle drives off in a SCREECH of tires.

JIMMY
Oh yeah. He's *definitely* got a date.

EXT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM PARKING LOT -- EVENING

The catering truck sweeps around a jam-packed parking lot. From an AUDITORIUM ENTRANCE comes the FAINT SOUNDS of MUSIC.

INT. CATERING TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Lyle GROWLS in frustration, then makes a sharp left turn.

LYLE

Screw it.

EXT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

The catering truck drives up over the curb and onto the grass, flattening two rose bushes before coming to a stop.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- MOMENTS LATER

Lyle hurries down the aisle between a PACKED AUDIENCE glued to a big song and dance number from "Hello, Dolly."

UP ON STAGE: MUSIC SWELLS as --

KAYLEE THATCHER (15) - dressed in the height of 1900s fashion - is raised high in the air by SIX TEENAGERS dressed as waiters.

KAYLEE

Dolly'll never go away...!

Lyle's eyes are fixed on Kaylee in concerned awe.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)

Dolly'll never go away a-gain!!!

As the AUDIENCE madly APPLAUDS, Lyle takes a seat next to --

LEN THATCHER (65) - Lyle's father, a real ball-breaker of a retired cop. And right now, he's royally pissed at Lyle.

LEN

It's already the second act!

As the APPLAUSE dies down, Lyle stifles a sudden YAWN.

LEN (CONT'D)

You better not doze off!

LYLE

Dad, I've run stakeouts on less sleep.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- LATER

UP ON STAGE: Kaylee sits at an elegant table in a restaurant scene, across from a TEENAGE BOY made up to look much older.

KAYLEE

Mr Vandergelder, if you're thinking of marriage you might as well learn...

IN HIS SEAT: Lyle's eyelids flutter closed.

KAYLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

..that you have to let women be women.

THE CONVERSATION MERGES WITH MUSIC, AS WE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- LATER

Lyle SNORES in his seat as Len shoots him a furious look.

UP ON STAGE: it's the big finale featuring the ENTIRE CAST.

KAYLEE

Wow, wow, wow, fellas.

IN HIS SEAT: Lyle's face twitches... then twitches again.

KAYLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Look at the old girl now, fellas!

INSIDE LYLE'S HEAD: BRIGHT SILVERY LIGHTS whirl in front of his eyes, almost as if they're attacking him.

IN HIS SEAT: Lyle's arms come up to defend himself.

CAST (O.S.)

Dolly you'll never go away.

Len and his other Neighbors CRY OUT, ducking and jostling sideways as Lyle's arms flail toward them. Len shoves him.

LEN

Lyle, wake up!

UP ON STAGE: the CAST tries to ignore the COMMOTION below.

CAST

Dolly you'll never go away. Dolly
you'll never go away...

INSIDE LYLE'S HEAD: the SILVERY LIGHTS GATHER AT A DISTANCE -
- then RUSH AT LYLE, GROWING IN INTENSITY AS THEY COME.

CAST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...AGAIN!

Jumping out of his seat, Lyle throws himself onto the carpet in the middle of the aisle, arms protectively over his head.

LYLE

Yearghhhhhhh!!!!!!

STUNNED SILENCE reigns as THE ENTIRE AUDITORIUM stares.

Kaylee runs to the edge of the stage and looks down.

KAYLEE

Uncle Lyle!?

END OF TEASER