

THE GRIFTERS

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INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Roy's room. He has one of the clown pictures face down on the coffee table. He takes money from his jacket pockets, crams it into the space, which is now just about full. As he's tightening the wing nuts closing the back, doorbell RINGS. He hurries, finishing the job, hanging the picture on the wall, then crossing to open the door. Myra enters, ebullient.

MYRA:

Darling, guess what? I had to tell you right away.

She gives him an enthusiastic kiss, then marches into the living room.

ROY:

(grinning)

And hello to you, too.

MYRA:

I called a fellow I know in Tulsa, the one who plays my chauffeur. There's a sucker there he says is made for us. And a broker that just shut down, we can use their office, not change a thing! Now, I can scrape up ten grand without much trouble. That leaves fifteen or twenty for your end. We could start this weekend, get the sucker into position --

ROY:

Wait a minute! When did this happen, that we're partners?

MYRA:

(bewildered)

What?

ROY:

The last I looked, we were just talking things over.

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MYRA:
But the setup's there. It's there
now.

ROY:
I don't think I need it.

MYRA:
You're too good for the small-time,
Roy. Move up to where there's big
dough to be made, and you don't
have to stick your neck out every
day.

ROY:
Maybe I like it where I am.

Myra's need breaks through her good sense.

MYRA:
Well, maybe I don't! I had ten good
years with Cole, and I want them
back! I gotta have a partner! I
looked and I looked and believe me,
brother, I kissed a lot of fucking
frogs, and you're my prince!

Roy tries to treat this lightly.

ROY:
Don't I get any say in this?

MYRA:
No! Because I --

ROY:
(pointing at her)
That's what I say.

MYRA:
(thrown off course)
What?

ROY:

What I say is, no. We don't do partners.

MYRA:

(raging)

For Christ's sake, why not?

ROY:

Mostly, because you scare the shit out of me. I've seen people like you before, baby. Double-tough and sharp as they come, and you get what you want or else. But you don't make it work forever.

MYRA:

Bullshit!

ROY:

No; history. Sooner or later, the lightning hits. I don't want to be around when it hits you.

She stares at him, trying to find a chink in the armor, trying to find a reason, trying to find something.

MYRA:

What is it? What's going on?

ROY:

I'm happy the way I am.

MYRA:

By God, it's your mother. It's Lilly.

ROY:

(doesn't get it)

What?

MYRA:

Sure it is. That's why you act so funny around each other.

He frowns at her, not believing he understands her right.

ROY:
What's that?

MYRA:
Don't act so goddamned innocent!
You and your own mother, gah! You
like to go back where you been,
huh?

He takes a step toward her, rising toward fury.

ROY:
You watch that mouth.

MYRA:
I'm wise to you, I should have seen
it before, you rotten son of a
bitch. How is it, huh? How do you
like --

He slaps her openhanded but hard, and she staggers back. He pursues her.

ROY:
How do you like this?

He slaps her as hard with the other hand. Astonished, frightened, befuddled, she backpedals, bringing her forearms up to protect her face. He grabs her two wrists in one hand, holds them out of the way, slaps her forehand and backhand, forehand and backhand.

MYRA:
STOP!!

He suddenly gets control of himself, releases her, steps back into the middle of the room. He's angry, but also remorseful, sorry he lost control but still enraged at the enormity of her suggestion.

ROY:

That's not like me. I don't do violence.

She cowers against the wall, peering in terror at him through her raised arms. He settles down, becomes heavily calm.

ROY:

That's why we wouldn't work together. You're disgusting. Your mind's so filthy, it's hard even to look at you.

He crosses to the apartment door, pulls it open. Sunlight pours in.

ROY:

Goodbye, Myra.

She lowers her arms slowly, as though her whole body aches. She's still scared, but angry now, too. She'd like to tell him off, but discretion tells her not to. She moves across the room toward the open door, but stops, not wanting to be that close to him -- Understanding, he backs away from the doorway, gestures with cold irony for her to proceed. She moves to the threshold, looks back at him.

MYRA:

And you don't even know it.

Angry again, Roy steps forward. She hastily steps outside, and he slams the door.