

# American Beauty

LESTER

What?

CAROLYN

Ah, whose car is that out front?

LESTER

Mine. 1970 Pontiac Firebird. The car I always wanted and now I have it. I rule!

CAROLYN

Where's the Camry?

LESTER

I traded it in.

CAROLYN

Shouldn't you have consulted me first?

LESTER

Hmm, let me think... No. You never drove it.

(then)

Have you done something different? You look great.

CAROLYN

(brusque)

Where's Jane?

LESTER

Jane not home. We have the whole house to ourselves.

He smiles at her playfully. She stares back, annoyed. It's the same look she had at the beginning, when he dropped his briefcase, but whatever power that look had is gone. Lester just LAUGHS.

LESTER (cont'd)

Christ, Carolyn. When did you become so... joyless?

CAROLYN

(taken aback)

Joyless?! I am not joyless! There happens to be a lot about me that you don't know, mister smarty man. There is plenty of joy in my life.

LESTER

(leaning toward her)

Whatever happened to that girl who used to fake seizures at frat parties when she got bored? And who used to run up to the roof of our first apartment building to flash the traffic helicopters?

Have you totally forgotten about her? Because I haven't.

His face is close to hers, and suddenly the atmosphere is charged. She pulls back automatically, but it's clear she's drawn to him. He smiles, and moves even closer, holding his beer loosely balanced.

Then, just before their lips meet...

CAROLYN

(barely audible)

Lester. You're going to spill beer on the couch.

She's immediately sorry she said it, but it's too late. His smile fades, and the moment is gone.

LESTER

So what? It's just a couch.

CAROLYN

This is a four thousand dollar sofa upholstered in Italian silk. This is not "just a couch."

LESTER

It's just a couch!

He stands and gestures toward all the things in the room.

LESTER (cont'd)

This isn't life. This is just stuff. And it's become more important to you than living. Well, honey, that's just nuts.

Carolyn stares at him, on the verge of tears, then turns and walks out of the room before he can see her cry.

LESTER (cont'd)

(calls after her)

I'm only trying to help you.

INT. FITTS HOUSE - RICKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

**On VIDEO:** Jane lays in Ricky's bed, wearing a tank top. She glances at us.

JANE

(shy)

Don't.

We're watching the WIDE-SCREEN TV in Ricky's room.

A CORD leads from the TV to Ricky's DIGICAM. Ricky holds the camera, sitting naked in a chair.

It's been almost a month since his father beat him up, and there are still slight SCARS on his face.

He's aiming his camera at Jane.

RICKY

Why?

JANE

(re: image on TV)

It's weird, watching myself. I don't like how I look.

RICKY

I can't believe you don't know how beautiful you are.

JANE

I'm not going to sit here for that shit.

She gets out of bed, takes his Digicam and focuses it on him. We see his image on the TV as she videotapes.

JANE (cont'd)

Ha. How does it feel now?

RICKY

Fine.

JANE

You don't feel naked?

RICKY

I am naked.

JANE

You know what I mean.

Jane ZOOMS in on his face, which remains placid.

JANE (cont'd)

Tell me about being in the hospital.

Ricky smiles.

RICKY

When I was fifteen, my dad caught me smoking dope. He totally freaked and decided to send me to military school. I told you his whole thing about structure and discipline, right?

(laughs)

Well, of course, I got kicked out. Dad and I had this huge fight, and he hit me... and then the next day at school, some kid made a crack about my haircut, and... I just snapped. I wanted to kill him.

And I would have. Killed him. If they hadn't pulled me off.

(then)

That's when my dad put me in the hospital. Then they drugged me up and left me in there for two years.

JANE

Wow. You must really hate him.

RICKY

He's not a bad man.

He grabs a half-smoked JOINT from an ashtray and lights it.

JANE

Well... you better believe I'd hate my father if he did something like that to me.

(laughs)

Wait. I do hate my father.

RICKY

Why?

He passes her the joint, then takes the Digicam and focuses it on her. We see her image on the TV as he videotapes.

JANE

He's a total asshole and he's got this crush on my friend Angela and it's disgusting.

RICKY

You'd rather he had the crush on you?

JANE

Gross, no! But it'd be nice if I was anywhere near as important to him as she is.

(then)

I know you think my dad's harmless, but you're wrong. He's doing massive psychological damage to me.

RICKY

How?

Jane looks into the camera, a loopy, stoned grin on her face.

JANE

Well, now, I too need structure. A little fucking discipline.

They LAUGH. She lays back on the bed.

JANE (cont'd)

I'm serious, though. How could he not be damaging me? I need a father who's a role model, not some horny geek-boy who's gonna spray his shorts whenever I bring a girlfriend home from school.

(snorts)

What a lame-o. Somebody really should put him out of his misery.

Her mind wanders for a beat.

RICKY

Want me to kill him for you?

Jane looks at him and sits up.

JANE

Yeah, would you?

RICKY

(smiles)

It'll cost you.

JANE

Well, I've been baby-sitting since I was about ten. I've got almost three thousand dollars. 'Course, I was saving it up for a boob job.

She stands and sticks out her breasts, then falls back on the bed, LAUGHING.

JANE (cont'd)

But my tits can wait, huh?

RICKY

You know, that's not a very nice thing to do, hiring somebody to kill your dad.

JANE

Well, I guess I'm just not a very nice girl, then, am I?

She smiles dreamily at him. He turns the Digicam off and the TV screen goes BLUE. He lowers the camera and looks at her intently.

JANE (cont'd)

(suddenly nervous)

You know I'm not serious, right?

RICKY

Of course.

He puts the Digicam down and joins Jane on the bed. A long moment where neither of them speaks. He caresses her hair, gazing into her eyes.

RICKY (cont'd)

Do you know how lucky we are to have found each other?