

HEAVEN OR LAS VEGAS

Written by

Jeff Hare

Bad Bunny Pictures/Roxy Pictures Inc

FADE IN:

EXT LAS VEGAS STRIP DECEMBER 23RD

HAIL pelts the bustling LAS VEGAS STRIP. A TINSEL-COVERED SIGN on a CAB'S roof reads --"Cheetahs, Half-price Lap Dances, Christmas Day". A VOICE begins.

VOICE

You know, no town says Christmas like Vegas. In fact, I'm surprised no one's opened a Christmas-themed Casino yet...

DARK STORM CLOUDS pass over the top of the STRATOSPHERE TOWER HOTEL. Then, we see the MAN. He begins as a pinpoint on the sky, then gets bigger and bigger as he falls head first towards the sidewalk, forty-five stories below.

VOICE (CONT'D)

I can see it now, (in announcer voice) "Celebrate Yuletide year round with our Silent Night Slots, enjoy world class cuisine at the Baby Jesus Buffet, and of course, don't miss the rocking rhythms of the King of the Jews Revue".

(beat) Well, if anyone wants to make a buck off of it, go ahead, I won't sue. Got more important business now. That's me.

JON CHAFNEY, 31, slams to a stop in mid-air, right in front of us, eyes closed, mouth shaped in a serene, wind blown smile.

JON (V.O.)

Jon Chafey. 31. Wannabe writer of children's books. Husband of Dena. Pretty calm for a guy just seconds from being sidewalk lasagna. You're probably wondering, why the happy, almost peaceful look? Well, to explain that, we gotta go back a few days. This whole thing started amidst the snarled freeways and concrete rivers of beautiful Orange County, California, just south of LA. Gotta go...

Jon falls again, diving headfirst towards plastic Christmas trees, fiberglass snow drifts and the cold, hard sidewalk...

FADE TO BLACK.

In the blackness, a large CRASH is heard! Then, a WOMAN...

WOMAN'S VOICE
What was that!?

FADE IN:

INT BACKSTAGE "GREEN ROOM" AT TUSTIN CIVIC CENTER DAY

Jon stares through the grated, basement-level window.

JON'S POV

Across the street, an OLD MAN drunkenly bobs his head behind the wheel of an early 60's Cadillac, one that, just seconds before, slammed into the rear of a CHP CRUISER. TWO COPS, one male, one female, slowly emerge.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Jon, what was that!?

BACK TO SCENE

Jon turns. Sitting in front of a candy machine draped with Christmas decorations, is DENA, 29.

JON
Nothing. Accident. Why'd they pick us?

DENA
I don't know. (concerned) Anyone hurt?

JON
Nah, some old drunk hit a cop car.

Jon pulls a box of MILK DUDS from his pocket, walks over to the table and sits down.

JON (CONT'D)
At least now I feel I got *my* six hundred dollars worth. (beat) Why'd they pick us?

DENA
Jon...

JON
Dena...

Jon tips the box into his mouth, filling his cheeks with chocolate flavored chemical balls.

DENA

What are you nervous about?

JON

(mouth full)

I'm not nervous...

DENA

You eat chocolate when you're nervous. After six years of marriage, that's one thing I *do* know about you.

JON

Okay...

Jon reaches across the table and pulls a LONG, THIN PIECE OF FABRIC from Dena's hand.

JON (CONT'D)

What's this?

DENA

Jon, we decided we were gonna trust and roll with whatever happens, remember?

JON

Could be a tie for my hands. Or a blindfold. What don't they want us to see? And, why'd they only give us one?

DENA

Jon...

JON

I'm serious. Who pays \$600.00 for a "couples" weekend anyway?

DENA

We did. So did all those other people.

JON

Well, even if we had the money, which we don't, I think it's crazy. You do know how much we...

DENA

We owe \$33,179.00. (beat) I live
with that everyday.

JON

What's that supposed to mean?

DENA

It's not supposed to mean anything.

JON

Yes it does. It definitely means
something.

DENA

What does it mean, Jon?

JON

It means you think I'm a fool for
taking a year off to write my book,
don't you?

DENA

Could we not do this now?

JON

Don't you?

Jon stares angrily. A beat passes.

DENA

Okay, if you're going to push,
yeah, I find two things foolish.

JON

And they are?

DENA

First, I find it foolish you
borrowed money from a creep like
Sidney Brice to keep us afloat this
past year.

JON

We've been over this. In
retrospect, very bad move. Next?

Dena turns away.

DENA

(quietly)

I find it foolish you haven't put
out your book yet.

JON
Here we go.

DENA
It's perfect.

JON
It's not finished.

DENA
Jon, if you just have a little
faith...

JON
It's not finished.

Dena stares at Jon. A beat passes...

DENA
Look Jon, I love you. And, I love
your book.

JON
There's a "but" coming.

DENA
"But". We didn't come here to talk
about the book or how much money we
owe. We came here to try to save
our marriage. We both thought it
was worth it, remember?

JON
(quietly)
I remember.

DENA
Good. So let's not fight, and just
have faith in whatever happens.
Okay?

JON
Okay.

A knock comes to the door, followed by a BALDING MAN's head.

BALDING MAN
Chafeys, it's time. (beat) Mr.
Chafey, put on the blindfold
please...

JON
Told you. Why'd they pick us?

INT TUNNEL LEADING TO C.C. FLOOR MOMENTS LATER

Dena guides the blindfolded Jon down the tunnel. In the distance, a CROWD chants...

JON
What is that?

DENA
I don't know.

JON
Well, what are they saying?

DENA
I don't know...

Jon pops another Milk Dud. The crowd gets louder...

CROWD
Chafey,...Chafey,...CHAFETY...

INT MAIN FLOOR OF TUSTIN CIVIC CENTER CONTINUOUS

All the "Couples Weekend" participants chant. The balding man leads Dena and Jon over to Relationship Guru ARMEN BAGGA, 55, a chubby ringer for Ghandi. He stands in a HOT AIR BALLOON BASKET that hangs from a large CRANE.

CROWD
Chafey,...Chafey,...Chafey,...

ARMEN
Dena, bring him in here, please.

Jon's hand digs into Dena's shoulder.

DENA
Take it easy, I'm with you...

JON
I'm fine.

ARMEN
Right in here. That's it.

Dena leads Jon into the basket and Armen pulls the door closed. Immediately, the basket lifts off the ground.

JON
Dena, what the hell?

DENA
I have no idea.

ARMEN
Relax, kids. Enjoy the ride...

CROWD
Chafey,...Chafey,...Chafey,...

The basket travels up, some 25 feet in the air. A CRANE OPERATOR maneuvers the basket over to the STAGE CURTAIN. The curtain opens and the basket lurches to a stop.

JON
Dena!?

DENA
I'm here, Jon. I'm here.

Armen takes Jon's hand and put it in Dena's. Then, he turns to the crowd and holds up a hand. They quiet. He speaks.

ARMEN
One of the underlying tenets of marriage is that the couple must be faithful to each other. You hear it all the time, 'infidelity ruined our marriage'. She was bonking the Sparklets guy. Or he was doing the horizontal hula with his summer intern. Being faithful keeps a marriage together, being unfaithful wrecks it. Pretty easy stuff, right?

Jon leans in to Dena.

JON
Can you nudge me when this becomes worth six hundred dollars?

DENA
Shhhh...

ARMEN
But, what no one tells us, is there's no way you can be faithful until you first know what faith is. So what is it? Webster's defines faith as 'unquestioned trust or confidence'.
(MORE)

ARMEN (CONT'D)
So, there's no way to truly be
faithful in your marriage until you
have first have unquestioned trust
or confidence in your partner.
Dena, come here.

Dena leans into Armen and he whispers in her ear. She turns and looks over the edge of the basket.

ARMEN (CONT'D)
Lights, please.

DENA'S POV

The stage lights flash on. EIGHT MEN stand on a LARGE, PADDED PLATFORM, less than 2 feet below the basket. They hold their arms outstretched towards the basket.

ARMEN
Dena. Go ahead...

BACK

Dena turns Jon so his back faces the basket door, pulls him close and whispers in his ear.

DENA
(tenderly)
Have faith in me. I love you. I'd never let anything hurt you.

JON
Easy for you, you're not wearing the blindfold. Wanna trade?

DENA
Please, Jon. Have faith in me.

JON
I do. (beat) I love you too.

DENA
Good.

Armen unlatches the basket door and flings it open.

JON
Wait a minute. Was that the door?

Jon's heels hang off the edge of the basket.

ARMEN

Jon! Cross your arms in front of you. When you're ready, yell, "I have faith in my wife", and fall backwards!

JON

What!?

ARMEN

Do it!

The crowd begins again...

CROWD

Chafey,...Chafey,...Chafey,...

JON

That's insane! I gotta be 30 feet up!

ARMEN

Jon, have faith. Do it!

JON

This has nothing to do with faith, it's about self-preservation!

CROWD

Chafey...,Chafey...,Chafey...!

Dena leans in close to Jon. She whispers lovingly.

DENA

Jon. Have faith in me. Please...

JON

I do...

ARMEN

Fall back!

JON

Wait a minute, wait a minute!

Jon reaches into his pocket, pulls out another Milk Dud, and pops it in his mouth. A few seconds later, he starts to COUGH.

DENA

Jon?

The crowd goes wild! They don't hear Jon as he wheezes and hacks! His face turns fire engine red...

CROWD
Chafey..., Chafey..., Chafey...!

DENA
Jon, are you okay?

ARMEN
Do it! Do it!

Jon grabs his throat!

DENA
Wait a minute! Jon? Jon?...

CLOSE UP ON JON

Suddenly, his coughing stops. A look of FEAR crosses his face. ALL SOUND STOPS. A long beat passes. Jon slowly raises a hand to his blindfold...

DENA
Jon, no!

Dena grabs for Jon's hand but he pushes her's away. Slowly, Jon pushes the blindfold up. Higher. Higher... It slides off the top of his head...

DENA (CONT'D)
No!

JON'S POV

Dena stares back. Crushed. A tear falls down her cheek.

DENA
Jon, no...

BACK

The crowd is silent. Hundreds of eyes, some red with tears, stare. Jon turns to the platform below. He sees the men waiting to catch him. Slowly, he turns back to Dena...

JON
I'm sorry...

Dena rushes past him, jumps onto the platform, bolts down the stairs and off the stage...

JON (CONT'D)
Dena, wait! I'm sorry...

Jon takes off after her.

EXT TUSTIN CIVIC CENTER PARKING LOT LATER

Dena pulls her HONDA out of its parking spot. Jon dashes from the door and vaults the handicap ramp.

JON
Dena, wait...

Jon runs over to the HONDA. Dena stops the car and cracks the window, slightly.

JON (CONT'D)
Dena, I'm sorry. I'll do better, I promise. I'll go back to work, I'll pay the money back, I'll do whatever you...

DENA
(yells)
Jon, STOP!

Jon leans away, taken aback by her anger. Dena calms...

DENA (CONT'D)
Just stop...

JON
OK.

DENA
It's not about the money. I need someone who can have faith. In me. In everything.

JON
Dena, I thought we were thirty feet off the ground!

DENA
(quietly, turning away)
Well, things aren't always what they seem, are they?

JON
Come on, Dena. How was I supposed to...

DENA
You were supposed to because I asked you to have faith in me. I told you I'd never hurt you. Me!

Jon takes a deep breath. A long beat passes...

JON

It's not enough. You know, if you
we're the one hanging off the...

DENA

It's not enough, that's the
problem.

JON

That's not what I meant.

Dena pushes her hand through the window. Her WEDDING BAND falls to the ground.

DENA

It's not enough for me either.
(Choking back tears) I'll see you
around...

The Civic shoots out of the parking lot and down the street.

JON

Dena, wait! Wait!