

QUEENS OF DAYTIME

Pilot

written by

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FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

A close on "Emily Anderson" --40s, lovely, wholesome, and motherly--gently weeping and consoling her daughter "Amy."

EMILY

Now, now, darling, don't you fret.
We have to be strong for each
other, Amy. We have been through
this before, don't you remember?
Those halcyon days of swinging on
the porch with Daddy--

We pull back to see that we're actually on a multi-camera set in a 1950s TV studio... watching soap star CAROLYN LAKE masterfully play her role. She is joined by PATTI MALONE, aged 10, playing Amy.

CAROLYN

...family dinner at Christmas. The
way he used to tuck you into bed at
night... the way he used to...

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Director SID MYERS, 60s, sits at the helm of the control board. The scene plays in front of him on three monitors. Sid is charming, dramatic, New York since the dawn of time.

Sitting next to him is NANCY, the producer's assistant, timing the show with a stopwatch.

And standing behind them is their boss: producer ADDY, early thirties, cheerful, plump, and charismatic, dressed in a shirtwaist and pearls.

Addy is edged with anxiety as she watches the scene on the monitors. She clutches a well-worn script binder--which never leaves her hands. She takes notes on a pad.

CAROLYN

...read your favorite bedtime
stories to you...

SID

(snapping his fingers)
Camera Two on bust of Mommy.

CAMERA 2'S POV ON THE MONITOR.

SID (CONT'D)
Now she's moving...

CAROLYN STANDS. CAMERA TRACKS WITH HER.

<p>SID (CONT'D) She's walking and she's talking... Blah blah blah...</p>	<p>CAROLYN Amy, Amy, my darling, I want you to remember this always...</p>
--	--

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
We may be losing your stepfather
Charles, so soon after your dear
daddy Leonardo...

Addy rolls her eyes, scribbling on her notepad.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
...and I know your heart must feel
so fragile, like it would break
into a million pieces...

SID
(snapping)
Take it Camera Three, as she goes
down...

CAMERA 3 TAKES OVER ON THE MONITOR AS CAROLYN KNEELS.

CAROLYN
--But that sun is going to come up
another day. Now let mother wipe
away your tears...

SID
Camera Three go tight on the kid..

CAMERA 3 DOES--BUT PATTI IS DRY-EYED.

SID (CONT'D)
And we've got *bupkes* from the kid--

ADDY
No tears for rehearsal means no
tears for air. Go for the two.

SID

Camera Three--eighty-six the kid's face. Camera Two, go wide for a two shot.

CAMERA 2 ON THE TWO-SHOT.

SID (CONT'D)

And Camera One in position for a close up of Mommy's face.

CAMERA ONE IS CLOSE ON CAROLYN--EFFORTLESS TEARS.

SID (CONT'D)

Bee-u-ti-ful, Harold. Count on Carolyn Lake to find her light.

WIDE ON THE SET, LIVE.

CAROLYN

I'll still have you for tomorrow.
And all the tomorrows, Amy. For all of them.

Expertly, Carolyn turns Patti's dry face away from camera, pulls her tight to her bosom, and looks up at the lights. She freezes until we hear Sid's voice over the control booth loudspeaker.

SID

Okay ladies, and gentlemen, that's dress rehearsal. We will be on air in forty-five minutes, final notes from your director--moi--in fifteen.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Addy looks at the monitors, clearly not happy. She makes a final note on her pad, ripping off the sheet of paper. Sid takes off his headset and rubs his eyes.

SID

Oh Captain, my Captain--are we displeased?

ADDY

'Halcyon days?' I'm from the South, and even I think that's heavy-handed. Who talks like that?

SID
 Fortunately, no one turns a heavy-handed phrase like Carolyn Lake.

They begin to close up the booth.

SID (CONT'D)
 And when the lady turns on the waterworks... it doesn't matter what she's saying. Thank God.

ADDY
 We may as well put her in a swimsuit and bathing cap. She hasn't had a dry day since I started here.

SID
 Whatever keeps us on the air, boss.

ADDY
 It's boring. Aren't you bored, Sid?

Sid gathers his script and heads for the door.

SID
 Our employers like boring. They feel it sells soap.

ADDY
 We can do better.

SID
 (bowing her out the door)
 If you say so, O Captain, My Captain.

ADDY
 Must you call me that?

SID
 I could go with Great Leader.

They exit the booth to the studio.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

ADDY
 How about just 'Addy,' like old times?

SID
Well, 'just Addy' was just fine
when you worked for me. But now I
work for you.

Addy gives him a look.

SID (CONT'D)
The fun will cease immediately, my
Queen.
(beat)
Addy.

ADDY
My queen--has a nice ring to it.

Addy hands him the paper from her notebook.

ADDY (CONT'D)
Here are my notes for the cast.
Tell Carolyn to cut 'Halcyon.'

Sid slows, stops. Stares at Addy.

SID
You're serious, aren't you? About
doing better.

ADDY
You betchum, Red Ryder.

SID
A little bird said you're planning
to fire our head writers.
(off her look)
You sure work fast. Who did you get
to replace them? Say it isn't the
Harrisons. Or Maggie Harley, that
woman nearly tanked *Love of Light*.

ADDY
No--

SID
Then who...
(realizing)
You don't have anyone. You fired
the head writers--

ADDY
--Now Sid, Their contract was
up--

SID (CONT'D)
-- without a replacement...

ADDY (CONT'D)

I want someone new, Sid. Someone who hasn't been writing the same stories since radio days.

SID

You're gonna have a mutiny on your hands.

ADDY

I have scripts for the next three weeks.

SID

Do you have a death wish I didn't know about? Maybe you like to jump out of airplanes or swim with hammerhead sharks? I'm just asking so I can start spiffing up my resume.

ADDY

I'll find someone, Sid.

SID

Godspeed, Your Grace.

INT. BAYER PRODUCTIONS - DAY

A '50s-style glittering building in Midtown. LAUREL KESSLER (40s, fiery and passionate and more than a little chaotic) struggles up to the door, loaded down with two heavy suitcases and her handbag. Juggling them, she opens the door, managing to swan casually into the waiting area. At the reception desk, JEANNIE (20s, sweet) is on the phone.

JEANIE

--Yes, I know Mr. Costello is very eager to talk to Mr. Sperry. I'll make sure his girl gets the message. Yes. Bye-bye.

LAUREL

Hi, Laurel Kessler for Mr. Costello. I have an eleven forty - five appointment.

JEANIE

Are you sure?

LAUREL

Yes. Please check your list.

Jeanie does so, finding it.

JEANIE

There it is. Sorry. It's just that he's real busy today, he's interviewing writers for the staff of *The Golden Hour*.

LAUREL

I know.

JEANIE

I didn't think he'd see freelancers today.

LAUREL

I'm not here as a freelancer. I'm here for the job.

Jeanie looks at her dubiously, and Laurel gets defensive.

LAUREL (CONT'D)

What.

JEANIE

Are you sure?

LAUREL

That is why I schlepped two suitcases full of scripts on three different subway trains and put on lipstick. Yes, I am sure.

JEANIE

Okey dokey.

Jeanie picks up the phone and dials.

JEANIE (CONT'D)

A Miss Kessler is here to see Mr. Costello.

(beat)

I'll tell her.

(to Laurel, shrugging)

You were right; take a seat. But you should know that--

LAUREL

--I'm a woman. Yeah, I got the memo when I was 13. You know what else? I am damn good at my job, and I can write circles around any one of the staff writers for *The Golden Hour*, and Mr. Costello knows it.

JEANIE

All right,/ but...

LAUREL

In the last five years, I've had ten plays produced off off Broadway, my Valentine's episode got a great write-up in Variety, and I was invited to *The Golden Hour* Christmas party as a member of the family,/ and--

JEANIE

You have lipstick on your / teeth--

LAUREL

... and I--I have lipstick on my teeth.

Laurel rubs at her teeth with her right hand, as ROBERT COSTELLO (50s, patriarchal) opens his inner office door.

COSTELLO

Laurel! Good to see you again.
Thank you for coming in.

Costello holds out his hand for Laurel to shake.

Laurel looks at her hand, wipes it hurriedly on her blouse, and shakes.

LAUREL

Anytime, Mr. Costello.

COSTELLO

(to Jeanie)

Laurel here is the talented girl who writes all those nice Valentine's Day shows for us.

LAUREL

Thank you. I am so, so grateful for this opportunity, Mr. Costello--

COSTELLO

Well, young lady, I think you're going to be very happy when you hear what I have in mind for you. Follow me.

Laurel, lighting up, picks up her suitcases.

INT. TOMORROW IS FOREVER PRODUCTION OFFICE - LATER

A small, claustrophobic workspace with four desks (Addy, Sid, the stage manager, and Nancy). The coffee machine is on a shelf above the copier, which Nancy is running.

Addy sits at her desk, glued to her folder.

Sid reaches over the copier to pour himself a cuppa coffee, watching Addy closely.

Addy finally yanks her handbag off a hook on the wall. She fishes for coins and piles them on her desk.

SID
What's in the folder?

ADDY
Something I'm reading.

SID
You've been clutching it to your person like a newborn child all morning.

ADDY
(beaming at him)
Have I?

Nancy turns off the copier, piling up a stack of papers.

NANCY
This is the last script we have, Addy.

SID
Oh God, don't remind me.
(starting out)
I'm off to inform our cast that dress rehearsal timed out long. We either pick up the pace or we will be playing our hospital scene during the mid-day news.

ADDY
(counting her change)
See you in the control booth for air.

SID
'Til then, my liege.

Sid goes. Nancy has been trying to lay out the script pages on the shrinking space next to the copier.

ADDY

Nancy, I think you'll have more space to collate that on the prop table.

Nancy grabs a stapler and heads for the door.

NANCY

This really is the last script-- isn't it? Miss Lake keeps asking me if I've seen the outline for the new long story and when I tell her I haven't she...well, you know.

ADDY

Don't worry. In a few days Miss Lake will be pleased as punch.

Nancy leaves.

ADDY (CONT'D)

I hope.

Scooping up the coins from her desk, Addy moves to a pay phone on the wall ('Personal Calls for Cast and Crew.')

INTERCUT:

INT. GRAN'S KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Addy's GRAN slides into frame. 70s, dressed in her signature outfit: a house dress, apron, and sensible oxfords. She's a country woman from Georgia, not well-educated (and would never pretend to be), but she's smart, strong, and marches to her own drummer.

GRAN

Hello.

Gran pulls the cord taut to reach her ironing board.

ADDY

Hey Gran.

GRAN

Doodlebug. Is everything okay?

ADDY

It's better than okay.

GRAN

Then--why are you calling so close to showtime?