

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAMA

By

Jen Ponton

FADE IN:

EXT. - BRAD'S PLACE - DAY

The first beats of Drake's "Started From the Bottom" sound.

Quick cuts of sunlight glistening on the surface of a rippling pool, the flash of sunglasses, the clink of poolside cocktails, a rounded backside in hot pink spandex, a thrumming speaker, a flamingo float, an iPhone blowing up.

As we get closer to BRAD (late 20s/early 30s, gangly ex-emo kid type) and his best friend FREDDIE (late 20s/early 30s, female, potentially a vet/amputee, thick and bossy and crass) floating on their backs, it's the good life, luxurious and relaxed. The water is crystal blue behind their heads.

BRAD

Good call for today, Fred.

FREDDIE

Hell yeah. Cheers.

They clink glasses of some overcolored cocktail mix.

BRAD

You know, you were right, man. Ever since I broke things off with Lauren, it's like...I'm a new man. An ocean of possibilities ahead of me.

(a snide chuckle)

I'd like to see her face, watching me poolside, catching some rays, White Russian in--

A bird caws overhead and we see (and hear) a massive splat on Brad's face.

What was a close shot now zooms out to the disaster zone that is the pool--taken over with leaves and algae and dead bugs, a broken bot shattered over the side, a diving board with caution tape, and the 'cocktails': a '70s plastic pitcher of Kool-Aid and rubbing alcohol.

In a wide, Brad screams and flails as Freddie looks on.

FREDDIE

I hear that's good luck.

In this wide, Brad flails, falls in, splashing his face, now covered in the pool detritus. He keeps screaming.

Intercut with deadpan shots of Freddie drinking her Kool-Aid.

Now cupping water from the pool to throw into his face, he's throwing leaves, dirty water, and detritus all over himself.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 (calling after him)
 A faucet, dude. Less likely to get
 MRSA.

CUT TO:

INT - BRAD'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - DAY

Brad is doubled over the sink now, not screaming but panting, soaking his eye with a white cloth. Pressed into the creases of the mirror frame are selfies of Brad and LAUREN, a put-together gal. They are sweet. Freddie moseys in.

BRAD
 What's MRSA?

FREDDIE
 Methicillin-resistant
 Staphylococcus aureus.

BRAD
 How do you know this shit?

FREDDIE
 Four years face-down in Iraqi ass,
 my friend. I know a world of shit
 that would make your head explode.
 (beat)
 I used to do this tourniquet
 striptease that drove the Searg
 WILD.

Freddie examines the pictures. Looking at them closely, we see that Brad is WAY more enthusiastic than Lauren in these shots.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 I thought you said you got rid of
 these, dude?

BRAD
 What?

Brad turns back to the mirror, wiping his face with the cloth. He looks down, now recognizing his uniform in his hand, covered with birdshit.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Oh come ON! FREDDIE! This is the only work shirt I have left! Why didn't you warn me?!

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FREDDIE

Dude! Don't blame me! You're the one with your head so far up your ass that--

We begin a follow-shot as Brad walks into his bedroom, Freddie following behind.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. - BRAD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brad buttons up his catering shirt, still smeared with green and brown remains. Throughout, he continues to get dressed.

His room is an atrocity, full of canvases and sketchbooks everywhere. He passes a discarded pile of canvases that grab our attention for just a beat.

FREDDIE

--you were so busy hating on your ex that you ate a beetle. You've gotta get over it and move on, man.

BRAD

Freds, I've MOVED ON, okay?

(beat)

Look, I got on Tinder, I turned that tattoo of her initials into a fake Chinese character that no one will question--

(beat, a moment of mouthfeel)

I ate a beetle.

FREDDIE

Protein in a pinch, hermano.

Freddie opens a desk drawer and pulls out the old engagement ring. She gives him a look.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You had 30 days to return this sucker. Tinder my ass.

BRAD
Hey! How did you know--

FREDDIE
Closed-circuit hookup. Now it's
only worth 20 bucks at a pawn shop.

She drops it into the drawer, clinking. Brad hangs his head.

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BRAD
What do you want me to say, Freds?
I--I dream about her every night.
I--visualize every day, figuring
what I could ever say to get her
back. I can't help it.

Freddie sits next to him.

FREDDIE
Look, no one ever said it was easy.
But you start small. Take the
pictures down, get her out of your
phone. You take the triggers away.
(beat)
Are you listening?

Brad is on his phone.

BRAD
She just checked into Il Caforne.
That was our place.

Freddie impatiently grabs at it.

FREDDIE
This is what I'm talking about! How
much of your time is spent looking
at her feed?

BRAD
It's only the stuff that's public.
(beat)
It just...helps me feel close to
her.

FREDDIE
This is a felony waiting to happen.
Social Media is not a reflection of
life. You can--I dunno--follow,
subscribe, whatever--but at the end
of the day, you don't really know
her anymore.

BRAD
 (beat)
 Do tweets count?

FREDDIE
 Christ.

Freddie heads out the door. Brad scrambles to keep up.

CUT TO:

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EXT. BRAD'S PLACE- AFTERNOON

As Freddie walks towards the car, Brad struggles to close and lock the door. We hear a distressed cry from next door. Brad looks over with concern, heading to the fence that separates his bungalow from his neighbor.

BRAD
 Mrs. Cocuzzo?

VERNA COCUZZO, a disheveled cat lady (50s/60s), struggles to keep her cats inside as she opens her door to bring groceries in.

VERNA
 Oh, Christ-on-a-cracker, Mittens!
 Rumpleteazer, get in there! Noooo,
 Chester--

Brad comes through the gate.

BRAD
 Here, Mrs. Cocuzzo, let me help you
 with these--

VERNA
 Oh, I'm sorry dearie, it's just
 these kitties get so excited when I
 come home--

BRAD
 Here, let me take these for you.

He relieves her of the grocery bags and she sighs with relief as she's able to move the cats. As they enter:

INT. VERNA'S HOUSE- DAY

Verna picks cats up as she goes, as though they are dirty laundry. A follow-shot on them as they make their way to the kitchen.

VERNA

Thank you so much, Bradley. You're always so good to me.

BRAD

It's no problem at all, Ms. Cocuzzo. You want me to put these away for you?

VERNA

Oh, you don't have to--

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BRAD

I got it.

He smiles and puts things away in her pantry. He opens the new milk and pours it in the cat bowls, scratching them as their collars jingle their arrival.

VERNA

You're always such a nice boy. I'm always telling my niece what a nice boy you are, my neighbor Brad is such a nice boy. Are you, uh, do you have a girl that you're seeing, Bradley?

Freddie beeps the horn impatiently.

BRAD

I'm so sorry Mrs. C, I've gotta go to work. My friend is my ride. Let me know if you need anything, okay?

VERNA

Thank you, dearie. Have a nice day!

She gives him a kiss on the cheek and he dashes off, waving behind him.

INT. - FREDDIE'S CAR, DRIVING - DAY

Freddie and Brad are both in their white tux shirts.

Freddie's is army-neat, Brad's is still smeared with the bird poop. A close of Brad on his phone.

INSERT: On Lauren's Facebook page, a post with: 'BIG DAY! <3' and a bunch of likes. Maybe a picture of a couple (Lauren and Troy) kissing. Brad stares at it morosely. They ride in silence for a beat. Brad sighs, makes a face--he looks down at the stain, sniffing and grimacing. He cracks a window.

FREDDIE
I appreciate that.

BRAD
Yup.

A beat.

FREDDIE
So what's visualization, anyway?

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BRAD
My mom told me about this book, The Secret?

FREDDIE
Never heard of it.

BRAD
It's--wait. How is that possible?

FREDDIE
Not ringing any bells.

BRAD
Dude, it's like literally part of the collective unconscious. One of the biggest cultural movements in, like, the last 15 years.

FREDDIE
Oh, you know what? That's right. It must have come into pop culture while I was BELLY-DOWN IN URINE AND SHRAPNEL SAVING THE GODDAMN WORLD FROM TERRORISTS.

Brad is silent for a moment.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I'm just fucking with you, dude. I'm all about the Law of Attraction.

(MORE)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 Mama's visualizing herself some
 drunk and lonely D right now.

Freddie throws the car in park and starts to get out. Brad sits there, staring out the windshield. Freddie ducks back in.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 I know another secret to getting
 what you want.

Brad looks over.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
 HARD WORK. Now put on your big girl
 panties, do your damn job, and
 pretend to like it.

Brad drops his head and gets out. Freddie starts, then hits the glovebox to grab a tube of Astroglide. She pockets it.

CUT TO:

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INT. - WEDDING HALL - EVENING

Brad and Freddie stand in formation with the other caterer grunts. A panning shot of uniforms, pressed, clean, and white, until Brad's--a film of lime green bird shit. KEN, their boss (40s, stick-up-his-ass), goes down the line, indicating their duties. He grimaces at Brad's shirt.

KEN
 Ever heard of bleach, Feinsein?

BRAD
 It's--it happened today, Ken, I'm
 sorry.

KEN
 Where's your spare?

BRAD
 In the laundry.

KEN
 Go to the van and get another one.
 It'll be deducted from your
 paycheck.

Brad, livid, leaves the kitchen. Ken calls after him.

KEN (CONT'D)

The price has gone up since last year, FYI.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Brad buttons up a new, clean shirt in the bathroom. He rips the tag off the cuff, noting the price-- \$50?! He rolls his eyes. A stall behind him opens, Freddie emerging and wiping her mouth. She's surprised to see him.

FREDDIE

Oh--hey, bud.

BRAD

Whatcha doing in the men's room, Freds?

FREDDIE

Don't ask questions you don't want the answers to. New shirt? Oh man-- that's highway robbery. Sorry, bud.

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BRAD

Yeah, tell me about it. See you in the kitchen.

Brad swings out the door, Freddie reapplies her lipstick as a disheveled man emerges from the stall, dopey with pleasure.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Brad is in the kitchen, dishing out slop onto plates that a SEEDY COOK hawks a loogey into. Brad and the GRUNTS place Orchid blossoms onto the plates and file out the swing doors, delivering them to the guests. Brad brings plates to a table, and a GUEST turns to him, knocking into his elbow and sending the SLOP all over the brand new, crisp, white shirt. He holds in a scream. He goes back to the kitchen. Ken spins around to him.

KEN

I thought I told you to change?

BRAD

I did--this is a new--

KEN

This is absolutely unacceptable,
Feinstein. Christ, do you think
this job is a joke?

BRAD

No, I just--a guest--

KEN

Tonight's your last night with us.
And if you decide to 'stick it to
the man' and make some big scene,
I'll be withholding your final
paycheck. So make it count.

Ken places a bib over Brad's shirt, shoves him out the door with 2 more plates. As Brad emerges into the hall, next to Freddie, the excitement in the air is palpable. A WEDDING DJ has been announcing the wedding party and playing theme music as the guests cheer wildly.

WEDDING DJ

And now introducing your beautiful
bride and groom--Mr. And Mrs. Troy
and Lauren Greene!

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With a blare of 'White Wedding' by Billy Idol, TROY (late 20s, handsome and rugged, successful, GQ) and LAUREN (late 20s, Ivy League WASPY and lovely) burst into the room. They are incandescent, beaming and deeply in love. Brad blanches and starts to panic. He drops his plates with a crash.

BRAD

Oh God. Oh God. Ohgodohgodohgod--

FREDDIE

(sotto)

Keep it together, dude, keep it
together--

BRAD

Jesus, she's--she was--I didn't
even know she was engaged! How did
I miss that?!

FREDDIE

Brad, you gotta keep--

BRAD

(panicking)

She can't see me like this. Freds,
cover me!