

Queen E

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A puff of smoke floats in the room, which appears to be uninhabited. The cloud dissipates. Another stream of smoke, this one definitely moving upward.

Follow it down to:

EMMA, a middle-aged woman wearing a smart dress suit lies flat on her back on the living room floor, holds her breath and holds a burning roach.

She lets out a massive breath, sending yet another cloud of smoke into the room. She lifts up the roach, gauging whether or not she can drag on it one more time without singeing her fingers.

RUBY, her energetic 17-year-old daughter in a pretty dress, rushes into the room fanning smoke out of her face and just about trips over her mother.

Ruby swoops down, snatches the roach away -- burning her fingers -- and drops it into the ashtray on the floor beside her mother.

RUBY

Come on, mom. We're gonna be late.

She grabs Emma's arm, but Emma brushes her off.

EMMA

Ruby, I'm sure they'll wait.

RUBY

Wait? Ohmigod, mom, it's Saphira's wedding. You can't make her wait on her wedding.

Ruby helps her to her feet.

Emma whirls on Ruby.

EMMA

Was this my decision? Did they even ask me? Your sister is buying into a patriarchal mode of property transference that is so antiquated...

GEMMA, late twenties, severely but stylishly dressed, stands in the kitchen doorway.iiii

GEMMA

Right. That's the problem. The patriarchy.

EMMA

(to Gemma)

Where's that husband of yours?



GEMMA

Working. Like I should be. He'll meet us at the park.

RUBY

It's so romantic.

Gemma throws her a look.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I meant Saphy and Danny.

She avoids her sister by tugging at her mother.

EMMA

Romantic. That's what they want you to think.

GEMMA

They're at it again, aren't they, Emma.

EMMA

Gemma, dear. Must you call me by my first name? It's so seventies. It makes me feel absolutely ancient.

RUBY

Saphira and Danny love each other so much. You can see it when you look at them.

She takes her mother's arm, rubs her back, which infuriates Emma, who tries to disengage.

Ruby is oblivious.

She walks her mother to a side table with a mirror over it.

In a prominent place on the wall beside the mirror is a framed family snapshot: Emma looking pleased, her daughters lined up beside her according to age -- Gemma, Saphira and Ruby. They're all smiling, also in order of age -- Gemma with a small smile, Saphira's bigger and warmer, and Ruby with a huge grin.

Ruby puts a picture hat on Emma's head.

Emma takes it off, rearranges her hair and puts it back on again, making minuscule adjustments in the mirror.

GEMMA

Gee, Emma.

EMMA

Mom, mother...



GEMMA

For someone who disapproves, you sure know how to look the part.
Emma cuts her a look in the mirror, at the same time admiring her own reflection.

EMMA

Disapprove? Me? Really, Gemma, you could lighten up for once in your life.

GEMMA

Knock knock.

EMMA

Who's there?

GEMMA

Cleo.

EMMA

Cleo who?

GEMMA

Cleopatra, queen of de Nile.
Ruby brings her mother her shoes.
The three of them whip out their lipsticks and touch up.
Emma and Gemma turn away.
Ruby draws a happy face on the mirror.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

Emma, Gemma and Ruby come out of the house and down the stairs together.

EMMA

You're just trying to make me the bad guy. I don't know why you can't just relax and be the bad guy, Gemma.

GEMMA

You're just as opposed to this marriage as I am.

EMMA

I am not opposed to this marriage. I am opposed to marriage.



RUBY

But it's so great, you guys. How can you be opposed to great?

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Ruby gets in the back seat of the car parked at the curb.

Emma and Gemma both go for the driver's door.

GEMMA

I'll drive.

She holds her hand out for the keys.

EMMA

Perhaps you could control your desire for control.

GEMMA

Sure thing, Sigmund.

RUBY

Gemma, you know mom's more of a Jungian. Let's go!

GEMMA

Come on, Emma. You're a wreck.

[Still the hand out for the keys.] Gimme gimme.

Emma gets in the driver's seat.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Emma steers the car out of the parking spot, Gemma beside her and Ruby in the back.

They drive along the street.

EMMA

You see. Driving helps me focus.

GEMMA

That'll be the day.

EMMA

Are you calling me flaky?

...as she yanks her head and the steering wheel toward Gemma, narrowly missing a parked car.



RUBY

This is so great. Saphira's wedding. I never thought she'd get married.

GEMMA

She's not that old, Ruby.

EMMA

Gemma. Let's not mention the age difference.

GEMMA

I think you just did. And you know that's not the problem.

EMMA

It's a legitimate concern. A ten-year age difference. They won't share a cultural commonality.

The girls roll their eyes at each other.

GEMMA

Knock, knock.

EMMA

I'm as open-minded as the next person.

Ruby pipes up from the backseat.

RUBY

Um. Mom. The next person is Gemma.

Emma and Gemma unite in a sharp glance at Ruby.

EXT. QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK -- DAY

At the top of the hill, Emma's car pulls into the lot.

Emma, Gemma and Ruby cross the parking lot. They're still in animated conversation.

Emma drops back, distracted by the Henry Moore sculpture, Knife Edge.

Gemma and Ruby don't notice that their mother has actually veered off course.

Emma reaches the sculpture, traces its voluptuous curves with her hands.

Gemma and Ruby turn to speak to their mother. She's nowhere in sight.

They locate her and walk purposefully toward her, calling to her.

Emma pretends not to see or hear them.

They reach her and gesture for her to quit stalling and come with them.



Emma drags one hand along the harsh straight edge of the sculpture, makes hacking motions with her other hand.

Gemma and Ruby pull her away bodily, pointing to a group of people across the lawn.

They cross the lawn, walking north toward the mountains. The park is lusciously green and flowery.

Now they're closer to the small group of people standing at the edge of the plateau.

It's the wedding party. We see them from behind as they're all taking in the stupendous view.

SAPHIRA turns around. She's in her mid-twenties, radiant in a simple white dress. She walks toward them.

Ruby runs to meet her.

EMMA

And she's determined to wear white. Is that appropriate?

GEMMA

Why, Emma, don't you think she's a virgin?

Gemma thinks this is very clever.

In a few more steps they catch up to Saphira and Ruby. Huge hugs and many kisses all around.

Saphira is nervous.

SAPHIRA

Mom, you look stunning.

EMMA

(to Gemma)

You see, your sister can manage to call me mom.

GEMMA

She's younger than I am.

SAPHIRA

Mom, Gemma. Thanks so much for coming. You don't know how much it means to me.

Ruby clears her throat.

SAPHIRA (CONT'D)

Ruby, honey. I can always count on you. Look, there's something I need to say...

RUBY

Saphy, you're so beautiful.

Saphira is relieved at the distraction.



SAPHIRA

Thanks, sweetie. Doesn't Danny look great?

They all look at Danny, who's still facing away, looking out at the view, in close conversation with MICHELLE, mid-thirties.

Danny, hair slicked back, is wearing a white suit.

EMMA

Danny looks great. For a bus driver.

GEMMA

Danny's looks are not the real issue.

Ruby, delighted, runs over and gives Danny a big hug.

SAPHIRA

Look. I hope this isn't going to turn into some huge scene, because this is really important...

EMMA

What on earth is Michelle doing here?

SAPHIRA

Mother. Please. She and Danny split up years ago. You know that.

EMMA

Coming to your ex's wedding. What next.

GEMMA

She's the minister.

Saphira shoots her sister a grateful look.

EMMA

They're not having a minister! This is not a church wedding. For God's sake, that's one thing they got straight.

GEMMA

Maybe the only thing.

SAPHIRA

Mom, did you see the great sculpture on the way in? The Henry Moore?

Her changing-the-subject ploy pays off.



EMMA

Isn't it fabulous?

GEMMA

See it. I think she wants to marry it.

Michelle has what looks like a black coat draped over her arm.

Danny and Ruby help her shake this garment out and put it on. It's a judge's robe, complete with a red silk scarf draped over her shoulders.

Gemma looks around anxiously.

Emma pats her shoulder.

EMMA

He's not here.

SAPHIRA

He's not gonna make it, is he?

GEMMA

He's just late. As usual.

EMMA

Perhaps when you have children, he'll feel more of a family commitment.

GEMMA

Give it up.

SAPHIRA

Really, mom. It's not the end of the world if Gemma doesn't want to have kids...

EMMA

Come on, sweetheart, you don't want to leave Danny standing at the altar--Do you?

EXT. QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK -- LATER

Saphira and Danny stand side-by-side facing Michelle in her judge's robes.

Emma, Gemma and Ruby stand on either side of them.

Michelle is solemn, speaking.

Saphira turns to Danny, speaks sincerely and with great emotion.



Emma mouths the word Baby. She rummages in her purse.

Gemma hands her a kleenex.

Gemma looks away from the wedding couple, bites her lip, determined not to cry.

Emma dabs her eyes.

Ruby is so excited she's bouncing up and down.

Danny turns to Saphira.

We see for the first time that Danny, early thirties, is unmistakably a woman.

It's her turn to say her vows. She holds an index card and refers to it, at the same time brushing a tear from her eye.

Now the two of them hold both hands, facing each other.

They gaze into each other's eyes.

Michelle says a few words, repeated by Saphira. Then Saphira mouths, "I do."

It's Danny's turn to repeat the vows and mouth "I do."

Danny takes Saphira's hand, puts the wedding ring on her finger.

Saphira takes Danny's hand, slides a gold band onto her finger.

It's a powerful moment.

Saphira and Danny close in for a kiss.

As their lips are about to meet, we cut to the next scene.

EXT. QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK -- LATER

Saphira and Danny have just kissed and are pulling back from it, to cheers and applause, half-hearted on the part of Emma and Gemma.

A table is set up. A cake with two brides on top, plate and forks beside an ice bucket with a bottle of champagne in it.

Ruby raises her glass for a drink, only to be stopped mid-lift by her mother's hand on her arm.

EMMA

What are we, barbarians?

Ruby has no idea what she's talking about.

DANNY

The toast, honey.

Ruby raises her glass again, this time to toast.

RUBY

To Saphy...

Saphira has lost most but not all of her pre-ceremony jitters.



SAPHIRA

Sweetie, mom does the first one.

All eyes are on Emma.

She holds her glass up.

EMMA

To Saphira.

Gemma elbows her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

And Danny.

All the guests lift their glasses, Saphira grabs Danny and gives her quick and happy smooch.

GUESTS

To the brides.

As they clink glasses, Emma mutters:

EMMA

Must they use that word?

Gemma hears her.

GEMMA

That's the least of our worries.

EMMA

My worries are not the same as yours.

GEMMA

Of course they are.

EMMA

I am not opposed to same sex marriage.

GEMMA

Theoretically.

Oops. Danny has stepped up behind them and heard all this.

DANNY

You know, I would love to sit down with the two of you and discuss your views.



GEMMA

Danny, you know I think you're okay, but you're not going to convert me.

EMMA

The two of us? What two of us?

Ruby gulps her champagne, takes advantage of her mother's argument to pour herself another one.

DANNY

Later.

Danny lifts her glass.

DANNY (CONT'D)

To Emma, without whom I would never have had Saphy.

Emma desperately tries to smile, but she's coming unraveled.

After the toast, Danny approaches her.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Emma, what? I know how difficult this is for you, but really.

(Emma steps on this line so they say 'really' simultaneously.)

EMMA

Really. How would you know that, exactly?

DANNY

You know I'd never do anything to hurt Saphira.

EMMA

I don't know that. I think maybe you already have.

Emma gestures, indicating the wedding.

EXT. QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK -- LATER

Danny and Saphira and just about everyone else party down dancing.

The remains of the wedding cake, plates, forks and glasses litter the table.

Several empty champagne bottles are under the table, with a fresh bottle stuck in the ice bucket.

Emma stands off to the side in the shade of the trees, hat askew, nursing her drink. She's miffed, looking at the happy couple.

She inhales deeply off of a joint, passes it to one of the young hipsters beside her. Her expression becomes more pleasant.



Ruby quaffs the rest of her wine, reaches for the bottle and refills her glass. She turns and bumps into her mother.

RUBY

You don't fool me.

EMMA

Ruby, what on earth are you talking about?

Danny spots them and starts toward them. Emma sees her, grabs the joint and takes a huge toke.

RUBY

Yeah. You're all mad at Saphy now, but she'll always be your favorite. Second favorite. Emma doesn't answer. Her eyes are on the rapidly approaching Danny.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Miss I-love-all-my-daughters-the- same.

Emma still isn't paying much attention to Ruby; she's looking at Danny, gradually stepping backwards, hoping to hide behind the tree.

Danny is undeterred.

EMMA

(to Ruby)

Honey. Perhaps you've had enough to drink.

Danny's at Emma's side.

DANNY

Emma. Enough is enough. You've been ducking us all night.

RUBY

(to Emma)

Oh yeah? Yeah? Who's named Gemma? 'G' Emma? Why didn't you just call her Junior, you like her so much.

EMMA

She is a jewel. You're all jewels.

DANNY

Jewels in your crown, Emma. You know, they can shine on their own.

Ruby shoves her away.

Now Emma is listening to Ruby in order to avoid Danny.



RUBY

(to Emma)

But she's the only gem! I don't even have an 'a' on the end of my name like all the rest of you.

DANNY

Slow down, Ruby.

RUBY

Emma, Gemma, Saphira. I get a lousy 'y'. Why mom, why?

EMMA

But -- we call her Saphy.

Ruby lurches against the table, sending dishes and glasses sliding. She doesn't notice. Danny holds her upright.

DANNY

Ruby, can we maybe shift the spotlight for a second?

RUBY

A fucking 'y'!

She screams it at Danny, who drops her arm and turns to look for Saphira, who's still having fun dancing.

RUBY (CONT'D)

'Y' stands for why did I ever have her!

EMMA

Oh, no. Darling, you're name is different because you're...

RUBY

A freak! Say it!

She's crying and yelling so loudly everyone else stops talking and stares.

Danny meets Saphira as she moves rapidly toward them.

Gemma gets there first.

EMMA

Special, honey. You're...



Special!!

RUBY

Break!

GEMMA

That's easy for you to say, 'A' girl.
Saphira and Danny have arrived.

RUBY

'A' girl?

SAPHIRA

Emma, Gemma, Saphira.

RUBY

What about it?

SAPHIRA

Gemma motions her to please drop it.

Have another drink, Ruby. You look tense.

GEMMA

Mom, come on, let's dance.

SAPHIRA

Emma's not going to let this one go.

Y! Y stands for -- Yes! Yes. And, uh..... Y stands for you! Put them together, what do you get? You! Yes!

EMMA

Ruby squints at her.
Gemma comforts her sister.
Danny puts her hand on Emma's shoulder.

You can't avoid us forever. We know where you live.

DANNY

I'm not avoiding anything.

EMMA



DANNY

No. Nothing. Except me. And Saphira. And the party--so unlike you.
Saphira, moving in time to the music, looks longingly at the dancers.

DANNY (CONT'D)

And the conversation we need to have -- so like you.

EMMA

It's nothing personal, Danny. I'm just concerned about Saphira. And how you're ruining her life. And mine.

Saphira stops dancing. She is hurt and stunned.

RUBY

God, mom. You promised you wouldn't wreck everything.

EMMA

I'm her mother. It's my job. And the patriarchal aspects of the whole marriage business...
She trails off, looking at Danny's face.

SAPHIRA

Mom. We know why you're really upset. You and Gemma. We all know it.

GEMMA

At least I'm honest about it.

SAPHIRA

You don't approve of me marrying a woman.

GEMMA

Hell, no.

EMMA

Nonsense. I am an open-minded person.

DANNY

You know it's true, Emma. You liked me fine before we got engaged.

EMMA

No! Stop ganging up on me.

They all look at her and say nothing. Emma bursts into tears.



EMMA (CONT'D)

It's true. I am opposed. Damn it! I don't like it. I am opposed!

She runs off.

The rest of them watch her flee.

Then Ruby lurches after her.

Gemma, Saphira and Danny are close behind.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma gets in the car, door hanging open, and collapses crying on the steering wheel.

Gemma, Saphira, Danny and Ruby converge on the car.

Ruby steps forward. Saphira stops her.

RUBY

(to Emma)

I knew it. You're ruining the wedding.

SAPHIRA

Wow. Mother. This is not all about you.

GEMMA

For god's sake, Emma. We may not like it, but we have to support her.

EMMA

I tried and tried, but, Saphy, really, marrying a woman...

SAPHIRA

It's done, mom. Listen...

Emma is not listening. She's wailing.

EMMA

I've given up on Gemma. I know she'll never have children, not in my lifetime.

Gemma applauds.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Yes, Gemma. Yes. I am resigned. Now you, Saphy, you go off...

DANNY

She's right here.



SAPHIRA

I'm right here.

EMMA

You go off and marry a woman.

RUBY

I'll have children.

Emma claps her hands over her ears.

EMMA

You're seventeen years old! Don't you even think of such a thing!

Saphira pulls Emma's hands off of her ears. Saphira leans in close to her mother's face.

SAPHIRA

Mom.

Emma is still wailing.

DANNY

(to Emma)

If you'd just listen for a change...

SAPHIRA

Mom. I'm pregnant.

Emma stops mid-wail.

Ruby's mouth falls open.

SAPHIRA (CONT'D)

That's right. You're going to be a grandmother.

Emma starts blubbering.

GEMMA

Good god.

She hands her mother a kleenex.

Ruby jumps up and down and almost falls over.

RUBY

A baby! A baby! I'm gonna be an auntie! Auntie Ruby! Yes! That sounds way better than Auntie Gemma! Auntie Ruby!



EMMA

But -- how? No. Don't tell me. I don't really need to know the details.

Danny and Saphira are beaming.

Emma gets slowly out of the car.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Well. Perhaps you can tell me all about it.

SAPHIRA

We just got...

EMMA

Later, sweetheart. Really.

She wraps her arms around her daughter and slowly gets a big grin on her face.

Then she takes Danny in her arms and gives her a big hug.

Even Gemma is smiling.

Ruby hiccups.

They link arms, in order of age, but now with Danny between Saphira and Ruby, and head back to the happy wedding party in the perfect setting.

FADE OUT



About Barb Daniel

Born in Wyoming, Barb Daniel has made Vancouver her home for the past three decades but she's not tied there. She frequents Mexico because the hot sun enervates her creative juices, has been seen in Moscow explaining art to students who would never otherwise darken the doorway of the Pushkin Museum, and in Los Angeles aiding and abetting with scripts, turning them from trash into gold.



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