

SUNSETTING
(PREVIEW)

Written by

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An extreme close up on wavy silver hair. A hand runs through it, slicking it up and to the side. Beneath the hair's swoops and curls, follicles are planted in liver spotted skin. Footsteps approach.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

A nurse stands in profile. She stares skeptically at the silver-haired man (off-screen).

NURSE

Tell me one more time how you want me to say it?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

A cramped, dimly lit room. TYLER (13) lies in a hospital bed. His head is shaved. An IV drip is in his arm. He stares out the window. A NURSE enters.

NURSE

(As if rehearsed)

Tyler, there's somebody here to see you! It's your lucky day!

Tyler perks up. The nurse turns to the doorway and nods excitedly.

NURSE (CONT'D)

(To the door)

What? You want me to... OK.

The Nurse clears her throat and turns back to Tyler.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Tyler, it's your lucky day! Today there's someone very special to see you!

The Nurse turns back to the door.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Do you want to just tell him yourself?

EZEKIEL (O.S.)

Sure.

EZEKIEL KEELER (65), tall, suave, in a royal blue suit, silver hair swooped aggressively to the side, and a pair of obnoxious shades struts into the room.

He removes the shades and hands them to GEORGIA JONES (40s), a woman walking behind him, who then places them into a tote bag on her shoulder. She has long black hair that's starting to grey. She wears a button down with a jacket tied around her waist. She holds a clipboard in her other hand at all times.

Ezekiel unbuttons his struts and walks over to Tyler.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

It's your lucky day kid. I'm going to be taping my show in an hour, and I heard it was your dying wish to meet me.

Tyler's eyes light up.

TYLER

Oh my god! I watch your show every night! You're... you're...

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel Keeler. And you must be...

GEORGIA

(whispers to Ezekiel)
Johnny.

EZEKIEL

Johnny!

Tyler's face scrunches up, confused.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

Johnny?

TYLER

I'm Tyler.

Ezekiel turns to Georgia. Georgia flips through her clipboard.

EZEKIEL

Oh. Are we in the right... I think we must have...

GEORGIA

Is this room 5C?

Georgia walks out of the room to check the number in the hallway. Tyler's expression drops.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)

We got the wrong room.

EZEKIEL

(Under his breath)

Fuck.

(to Tyler)

I wish you a very speedy recovery.

Ezekiel extends his hand to Georgia and she gives him back his shades. He creeps backwards toward the exit, re-donning his shades and re-buttoning his suit, preparing for his next entrance. Georgia takes a neatly-folded tee shirt out of her tote bag and hands it to Tyler.

GEORGIA

Sorry.

Georgia fumbles out the door.

Tyler unfolds the tee shirt. A decades younger Ezekiel with two thumbs up is plastered across the front.

INT. LIMOUSINE - SAME

Ezekiel and Georgia ride in the back with JOHNNY (13), a boy with a blond bowl cut. Ezekiel has his sunglasses on the top of his head.

EZEKIEL

Are you excited?

JOHNNY

I guess.

EZEKIEL

Well you've been cooped up in that hospital all week right?

Johnny shakes his head.

JOHNNY

No, actually this is my fourth outing since Monday.

EZEKIEL

What?

JOHNNY

Yesterday I went paint-balling with Rodney Apex. The day before that Antonio Va-selli-

EZEKIEL

Vaccelli.

JOHNNY

Yeah, he cooked me pasta in his restaurant. And the day before that I met Dragons To Ashes and they let me sing backup vocals on one of their new songs.

Ezekiel is flustered. The limo goes over a bump and Ezekiel's sunglasses fall to the floor. He bends to pick them up.

GEORGIA

Neptune is running late.

Ezekiel snorts.

EZEKIEL

That's a shocker.

JOHNNY

Who?

EZEKIEL

Exactly. Neptune is my right hand man. My incomparable compadre. He's my sidekick.

EXT. STREET - SAME

NEPTUNE HAWKRIDGE, chubby man (40s) with bright red hair, hails a cab impatiently. Soon, one pulls over, but before Neptune can climb in, a young couple (30s) beats him to it.

NEPTUNE

Hey, That's mine!

The young couple scoffs at him. They start to close the door. Neptune puts his hand on it.

NEPTUNE (CONT'D)

(to the driver)

Sir, weren't you pulling over for me?

DRIVER

First come first serve, my friend.

Neptune submissively backs away. The cab pulls away and the couple flips him off.

EXT. STUDIO ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The limousine pulls up in front of the studio. An enormous marquee with Ezekiel's face towers above them. A group of paparazzi swarms the car.

Ezekiel, Georgia, and Johnny climb out of the limousine. The PAPARAZZI point Cameras and Microphones at their faces.

PAPARAZZI 1

Ezekiel, pose for a photo!

Ezekiel smiles and waves.

EZEKIEL

This is my "in a hurry" pose!

PAPARAZZI 2

Ezekiel, are the rumors true you're back together with Katya Apricot?

EZEKIEL

Why don't you ask her?

PAPARAZZI 3

Ezekiel, with nobody to take over your desk, is the show going to end when you retire?

EZEKIEL

I hope you don't talk to your mother that way!

The Paparazzi are confused by that answer.

INT. STUDIO LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Ezekiel, Georgia, and Johnny are waved through security.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Georgia pushes the button for the 30th floor.

EZEKIEL

There are five requirements for hosting my show...

The elevator doors open. The three of them get out.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ezekiel and Johnny walk through the office hallway. Georgia trails them. The walls are lined with monitors displaying clips of Ezekiel (current age) doing monologues from past shows. As they walk, the hallway slowly gets busier, as more staff shuffle around.

EZEKIEL

First, you have to be sharp. On your toes. Deliver jokes with precision timing. You have to hook the audience early; catch them by surprise. Give them something familiar that they've been reading about all day, and then put a twist on it. It's a craft that takes years to perfect.

JOHNNY

OK.

As they keep walking, the monitors change to clips of Ezekiel (50s) sitting at a white desk, talking to the camera

EZEKIEL

Second, you have to be witty. You've hooked the audience, but now what do you do to keep them enticed? You give them an skillfully written piece that shows you have more than zingers, *you have content.*

JOHNNY

Sure.

As they keep walking, the monitors change to clips of Ezekiel (in his 30s) on the street, doing field pieces. Crazy things occur in the videos, including Ezekiel getting egged by a group of chefs, slapped in the face by a dolphin, yelled at by a rabbi, and more.

EZEKIEL

Third, you have to be brave. What makes you different than the audience? They could sit at a desk and tell jokes, but would they let New York's top chefs egg them? Would they have the balls to tell a rabbi you're Josh Hitler? Adolf Hitler's great, great grandson? That's what separates us. By the way, I'm a Jew so I wasn't being that offensive.

JOHNNY

Right.

As they keep walking, the monitors change to clips of Ezekiel (in his 20s) back at the desk, interviewing various celebrities.

EZEKIEL

Fourth: you have to be empathetic. Can you get your guest to pull out that one juicy anecdote? That piece of gossip that the world has been dying to know? It can't be done unless you are an interview-*fiend*. Remember when Katya Apricot revealed she had a pregnancy scare?

JOHNNY

Who?

EZEKIEL

Oh. I guess you're too young for that. Point is, everything happens on my show. And while you could be all four of those things, there's still a very slim chance you would be able to sit behind my desk, because the fifth trait is the hardest to come by.

JOHNNY

Being funny?

EZEKIEL

God, certainly not. You should see some of my predecessors. No, you have to be a direct familial descendent! My family has been hosting this show since they invented putting a guy behind a desk and surrounding him with cameras.

INT. BACKSTAGE, SUNSETTING LIVE - LATER

Ezekiel and Johnny stand behind a tall silver curtain. There is a blue "X" taped off on the floor in front of them.

JOHNNY

What's that?

EZEKIEL

This is my mark. I stand on it every night when they announce my name and open the curtain, revealing me to the world. Stand on it! See how it feels.

Johnny steps forward to the X. Ezekiel puts his hand on the small of his back to guide him. Johnny turns around smiles at Ezekiel.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE, SUNSETTING LIVE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A TEN-YEAR-OLD EZEKIEL stands on the same mark. His father, VANCE KEELER, with jet black hair swooping across his head, stands behind him with his hand on the small of Ezekiel's back.

VANCE

This is my mark. I stand on it every night when they announce my name and open the curtain, revealing me to the world.

EZEKIEL

Wow.

Ezekiel and Vance walk through the curtains and onto a deserted set. The audience section is completely empty. Ezekiel walks over to Vance's desk and sits down. He spins around in it. Vance walks over and puts his hand on the chair, bringing to a stop.

VANCE

One day Ezekiel, this chair will be yours. You'll sit here as the new face of the show. You will read the Teleprompter and hit all the cues.

EZEKIEL

But then what will you do?

VANCE

I'll be somewhere else, so proud that you're keeping my legacy alive every evening.

Ezekiel turns around smiles at him.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A TEN-YEAR-OLD VANCE sits at the desk, which is now made of wood. His father, XAVIER KEELER, stands behind him.

XAVIER

...I sit in it every night when I read the Teleprompter and hit all the cues.

VANCE

Wow.

Vance and Xavier leave the desk and walk up to one of the cameras.

XAVIER

One day this camera will broadcast your personality all across America.

Vance smiles at Xavier.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An older camera. A TEN-YEAR-OLD XAVIER examines it. His father, ULYSSES stands behind him.

ULYSSES

It broadcasts my personality all across America.

XAVIER

Wow.

Xavier and Ulysses leave the camera and walk across the set, to the booth.

INT. TECH BOOTH, SUNSETTING LIVE - CONTINUOUS

ULYSSES

...directors, producers, technicians, all working together for you.

Xavier smiles at Ulysses.

CUT TO:

INT. TECH BOOTH, SUNSETTING LIVE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A TEN-YEAR-OLD ULYSSES examines the booth. His father, FERDINAND stands behind him, smoking a cigarette.

FERDINAND

This is my booth. Every night, the executive producers, directors, technical assistants, and sound mixer work together to refine my show.

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE NETWORK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

FERDINAND

And executives from the network with gather here to watch the show and give you unnecessary notes.

EZEKIEL (O.S.)

We've held onto this show for generation after generation.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE NETWORK OFFICE - NIGHT

Ezekiel and Johnny sit on a couch.

EZEKIEL

I don't even know all the details. Legend has it that it all began with a desk piece. A joke where my great, great- 4 *greats*... grandfather Michael had the network contractually agree to let his family maintain ownership of the show as long as there was an heir to pass it on to. I guess everyone committed very hard to the joke. Maybe out of fear. Maybe out of hope. They committed so hard that they accidentally built a dynasty.

Georgia sticks her head into the office.

GEORGIA

Ezekiel, 1 minute!

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - SAME

The present-day set. The same white desk beside bright blue modern-looking chairs and couches. A backdrop of the New York City skyline serves as the backdrop.

Neptune stands at a podium off to the side.

An audience of 200 people sit eagerly in their seats, waiting for the show to start.

NEPTUNE

Ladies and Gentlemen, live from studio 25G: it's Sunsetting Live! Tonight: Actress Renee Yukon! With music from Portaits! And here he is... your 7th generation host, Ezekiel Keeler!

The silver curtain opens, revealing Ezekiel. He jogs forward, jumps three times, and throws his arms up. Applause signs in the audience light up, and the audience roars.

EZEKIEL

(Immediately out of breath)

Thank you! Thank you! Oh my god, it's great to be here. How's everybody doing tonight? Good? There's been a lot in the news today. First of all, did you hear this? Martin Vasquez has already filed for divorce from his 6th wife, Gina Sanders. I know. It's really sad. Apparently they just got back from their honeymoon... *at the Los Angeles Superior Court Building!*

Laughter signs light up and the audience bursts into laughter.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

This is exciting: Cerulean Technologies is coming out with a new phone called the One Thousand Plus. It's supposed to be able to do over one thousand different things. The only thing it can't do? *Last a month without breaking.*

Laughter signs light up and the audience bursts into laughter.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

I'm sure you heard about this. The disaster relief benefit concert for Hurricane Matilda was last night. The line to get inside wrapped around the venue five times and it took some people over two hours just to get to their seats. Apparently now they're going to have a disaster relief concert *for the disaster relief concert!*

Laughter signs light up and the audience bursts into laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - LATER

Ezekiel sits at his desk. Neptune sits on the end of the couch right beside him.

EZEKIEL

What did you do today, Neptune?

NEPTUNE

Oh you know, the usual. Rolled out of bed-

EZEKIEL

You tend to do that a lot don't you.

NEPTUNE

What?

EZEKIEL

Roll...

Neptune rolls his eyes.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

We should really just get one of those things they have at bowling alleys to return the balls. We could install it in your apartment and you could roll out of bed and right into our studio!

NEPTUNE

It'd definitely help me beat that rush-hour traffic.

The audience laughs. Neptune drops his expression.

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - LATER

Ezekiel sits at his desk. A woman with long grey hair sits on a couch to his right. She is RENEE YUKON. Neptune sits further down the couch.

EZEKIEL

Welcome back to the show everyone.
I'm here with Renee Yukon. Renee,
how do you keep yourself busy when
you're not acting? What do you like
to do?

RENEE

One of my favorite things to do is
go sailing. Do you remember that
one time when I took you?

Ezekiel has already rehearsed this conversation earlier. He subtly feigns surprise.

EZEKIEL

Oh my god.... Was that when I...
wow! I almost forgot about this.
Why don't you tell it.

RENEE

(Excitedly, to the
audience)

OK so about 2 years ago I called
Ezekiel and asked if he wanted to
go for a ride in my new vessel. At
the time I had just purchased this
lovely medium-sized sailboat. This
majesty that I had my eye on for
months and finally decided to
purchase. Anyway, Ezekiel shows up
to the marina with a box of old
silverware, CD's, and magazines. I
asked him what on earth he was
doing. Ezekiel, do you remember
what you said?

EZEKIEL

I said "Renee, I thought you were-

Ezekiel starts spasming.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
Having a yaaaahhhhhh... I thought
you were have a yaaaahhhhhh...you
were...you...you...you

Ezekiel falls out of his chair. The laughter sign lights up.
The audience laughs.

INT. BOOTH - SAME

Two producers, JUAN and SANDRA, sit at a control panel that
just has two large buttons: "Laugh" and "Clap".

SANDRA
Was this in the breakdown?

Juan frantically flips through a packet.

INT. SUNSETTING LIVE SET - SAME

RENEE
Ezekiel? Are you alright?

Renee gets up and starts slapping his face lightly. Neptune
is frozen in disbelief.

RENEE (CONT'D)
Ezekiel?!

CONTACT ME IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ MORE!

-Danny
