RUFUS BUGELBAUM IN THE WORKING WORLD

"Pilot"

A Half-Hour Sitcom

Written by

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EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - MALIBU BEACH - SUNSET

RUFUS (32), a grody surfer with head of dirty, golden dreads hugging his scruffy face, sits, steadfast, on his SURFBOARD as low, grumbling, almost-wave SWELLS pass beneath him.

It is a gray, drizzly day, but that does not deter Rufus. He stares at the horizon as the wind and rain bite his cheeks, assured that the next big wave is just about to come.

His two surfer friends, suave African-American D-WAYNE (29) and jittery druggy TWEESTER (30), turn their boards around.

D-WAYNE
That’s it, bros. I’m callin’ it.

TWEESTER
Man, this whole day’s been a wash. Mighty surf Gods, how have we offended you?

RUFUS
You all go, I’m a-wait a bit more.

D-WAYNE
Man, you trippin’. Come on, I’ll spot you a brewski.

RUFUS
Naw bro, I’m blue-ballin’ hard core. I can’t bail ‘till I carve at least one tasty nar-nar.

D-WAYNE
‘Aight man, have it your way. We’ll be chillin’ at the surf shack with our biddies while you out here in the dark waiting for the wave that never comes.

RUFUS
Sounds good, brah.

INT/EXT. SURF SHACK - MALIBU BEACH - TWO HOURS LATER

D-Wayne’s girlfriend, the hippie-chic, big afro’d MARINA (29) sits in his lap while green pixie-cut, piercing-covered BRITTANY (30) shares a MARGARITA with her boyfriend, Tweester.
They all lean on the bar, watching Rufus’ girlfriend, the bombshell beauty SAPPHIRE (30), a single strand of pink in her long blonde hair, stare out the window towards the ocean.

SAPPHIRE
Why won’t he come in? Doesn’t he know I’m waiting?

D-WAYNE
‘Cause that dude got dedication.

TWEESTER
Yeah man, I don’t know nobody who loves the surf more than Rufus.

SAPPHIRE
Does he love it more than me?

Tweester is about to answer when Brittany slaps his head.

BRITTANY
Don’t answer that, dim-wad.

MARINA
You got to lay down the law, Sapphire. Tell that man its either that board of his, or you.

SAPPHIRE
But, I don’t want to change what I love about Rufus. I just wish he tried as hard at the rest of his life as he does on those waves.

D-WAYNE
Man, then he’d really be riding the wave of success.

TWEESTER
Good one, D-Wayne!

D-WAYNE
Thanks, Tweester!

They high-five.

BRITTANY
You two make me embarrassed to be a human, sometimes.
EXT. SURF SHACK - MALIBU BEACH - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

Sapphire waits, tapping her foot, as Rufus walks up from the shore, board in hand. He takes off his WET-SUIT, changes into his SIGNATURE HAWAIIAN SHIRT from her bag, along with his CARGO SHORTS and SANDALS.

RUFUS
Man, what a rough day! Not one single shreddible wave.

SAPPHIRE
You had a rough day? You just bobbed on a surf-board while I worked both my jobs and found time to buy you a suit.

RUFUS
Hey, I didn’t ask you to do that.

SAPPHIRE
Babe, I got you a suit so you can start interviewing! You can’t just do nothing forever.

RUFUS
But, I’m not doing nothing. I’m, like, becoming one with the sea.

SAPPHIRE
That’s the same as nothing! Rufus, I love you, but things can’t go on like this anymore.

Rufus walks off down the beach, Sapphire jogs along side him.

RUFUS
Sure they can! Our life’s sweeter than honey-baked ham. Ain’t nothing ever gonna derail this pleasure train to chills-ville.

SAPPHIRE
Rufus, I’m pregnant.

Rufus trips, drops his board, looks at Sapphire like she just overturned his whole world. His mind struggles to craft the most deep, philosophical, response he can conjure.

RUFUS
Say wha?

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

EXT. MALIBU BEACH - RUFUS' BUNGALO - NIGHT

Rufus and Sapphire approach a peeling brown SHACK on the beach, a few dozen feet from the PARKING LOT that services a popular PIER. It resembles a STORAGE SHED and you would not think anyone lives there.

RUFUS
Man, I can't be a pop-pop. Can't you reverse this or something?

SAPPHIRE
You mean an abortion?

RUFUS
Whoa, no need to break out the “A-Word”. I'm just wondering if you can, like, suck it back in, or something?

SAPPHIRE
You have no idea how the human body works, do you?

Rufus removes a KEY from under the mat, unlocks the door.

INT. RUFUS' BUNGALO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Haphazardly strung CHRISTMAS LIGHTS illuminate the DISGUSTING DEN as Rufus enters with Sapphire. The floor is not visible beneath the strewn CLOTHING and GARBAGE. A tattered COUCH faces a '80S-ERA TV with ANTENNAS by a COFFEE TABLE covered with MARIJUANA and SMOKING PARAPHERNALIA.

RUFUS
Look, let's not talk about this, anymore. Let's just chillax, smoke some weed, and watch Wheel of Fortune. It's Thursday!

Rufus plops on the couch, grabs the dirty, resin-caked BONG. Sapphire crosses, slaps the LIGHTER out of his hand.

SAPPHIRE
I can't smoke, I'm pregnant! And that means you can't either.

RUFUS
What? That's not a thing.
SAPPHIRE
Do you want our baby to be born as stupid as you?

RUFUS
Babe, you know I came out the womb smoking a jay and spinnin’ Bob Marley.

SAPPHIRE
This is exactly your problem. You can’t take anything seriously!

RUFUS
That’s funny.

SAPPHIRE
Shut up! No it’s not! Look at this place. How long have I been asking you to clean? This is no home for a child.

RUFUS
I cleaned. I ate all the corn-chip crumbs from between the cushions.

SAPPHIRE
That doesn’t count. What happened, Rufus? Do you remember when we fell in love, three years ago? You had such dreams, then.

INT. RUFUS’ BUNGALO - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

The lighting changes to a PINK HUE as a VISION FROM THREE YEARS AGO fills the room. Younger Rufus and Sapphire dance to HIPPIE MUSIC with Tweester and Brittany while D-Wayne and Marina smoke a joint on the couch. The room is clean and filled with life, lined by BEAUTIFUL AMATEUR PAINTINGS.

SAPPHIRE
Oh Rufus, you are a beast!

RUFUS
I’m your beast, baby.

SAPPHIRE
Tell me more about your novel.
RUFUS
I don’t want to give too much away, but it’s going to be an epic treatise on the philosophy on perception. Just wait, babe. Someday, I’ll have thousands of students lining up to receive my brain gems straight from the source.

SAPPHIRE
I want to be with you to see that.

RUFUS
Stick around, maybe you’ll get to see a lot more.

They kiss. D-Wayne and Marina “OOH” at them.

BACK TO SCENE.

The room reverts to its current sad state. Rufus and Sapphire sit, sullen, on the couch, resenting each other.

SAPPHIRE
I’m still waiting for that book. Have you even started writing?

RUFUS
(taps head)
I told you babe, it’s all up here.

SAPPHIRE
How much is left in your cash stash? I bet you don’t even know.

RUFUS
I’m sure there’s plenty.

SAPPHIRE
No, Rufus. You’re broke. I’ve been completely supporting both of us for over a year, now.

RUFUS
Nah-uh. That’s crazy. There was like twenty gees in there. That’s enough for a lifetime!

SAPPHIRE
Maybe for one lonely man living off weed and corn chips, but not for a family!
Sapphire stands, crosses to the door.

SAPPHIRE (CONT’D)
I need to go stay with my parents for a while.

RUFUS
What? No! You can’t. Please!

SAPPHIRE
Sorry, but I just can’t deal with you right now. I need to be with someone who cares about the future.

RUFUS
But babe, the future is like the ocean waves crashing on the beach. You can’t predict it! All that matters is cherishing the now and doing what feels good. Just go with the flow, and the universe will provide. It always has!

SAPPHIRE
No, Rufus. It hasn’t. You may be fine in your rut, by I want more than just beaches and waves.

Sapphire rushes out the door.

RUFUS
Wait! But, what else is there!?

INT. RUFUS’ BUNGALO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rufus enters an equally dirty BEDROOM with CLOTHES SURROUNDING a SHABBY MATTRESS on the ground. He sighs.

INT. RUFUS’ BUNGALO - BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

The pink hue returns as shirtless Rufus and Sapphire, in a bra, appear under the covers, snuggling. The room is clean and nice, more AMATEUR PAINTINGS decorate the walls.

RUFUS
I’m so glad you finally moved in!

SAPPHIRE
How could I not? This place is amazing! Now, will you finally tell me how you can afford it?
RUFUS
Well, if you must know... My dear old pops, the king of the surf, left it to me. Along with this.

Rufus grabs a COFFEE CAN, opens it to reveal a WAD OF CASH.

SAPPHIRE
Oh my God! How much is this?

RUFUS
Twenty gees! We’ll never have to work a day in our lives, babe! And we never have to leave the beach!

SAPPHIRE
I can’t wait to buy some new canvasses tomorrow, walk out to the shore, and start painting.

RUFUS
You’re gonna be a world-class artist someday, babe.

SAPPHIRE
You too, my love. You’re the ink that coats my bristles.

RUFUS
And you’re the surfboard beneath my feet.

They kiss.

BACK TO SCENE.

Rufus sits in bed, depressed. Most of Sapphire’s paintings have fallen or hang crooked. NEWER ONES show depressed blue images, random, angry slashes of paint, or are just blank.

Rufus grabs the cash can, empties it on the bed. Inside are just a few damp ONE-DOLLAR BILLS. He stands, determined.

INT. MERIGOLD HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sapphire sits at the dinner table with MR. MERIGOLD (65), her starched-shirt father, and ANITA (50), her rotund mother. She twirls her GREEN BEANS with her fork, but is not eating.

ANITA
Not hungry, Sapphire?
MERIGOLD
Sure you don’t want some steak?

SAPPHIRE
You know I’m a vegan, dad.

MERIGOLD
Still?

ANITA
It is nice to have you home, dear.
How is work at the galleries?

SAPPHIRE
Same as always.

MERIGOLD
They don’t pay you enough for your talents. That art history degree wasn’t cheap, you know.

SAPPHIRE
I know, Dad. Sorry I’m not a corporate stiff like you, for the thousandth time.

MERIGOLD
At least this “Corporate Stiff” puts meat on the table! I mean, veggies. Why don’t you let me buy you a new apartment, at least? You’ve spent enough time living in squalor with that brain-dead lunatic.

SAPPHIRE
Now, that’s too far! Sure, Rufus may be a little aimless at the moment, but he’s not crazy.

RUFUS (O.S.)
SAPPHIRE! SAPPHIRE!

SAPPHIRE
Oh God.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MERIGOLD HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Rufus stands in the driveway, yelling at the house. Sapphire runs out the door to him, followed by her parents.

SAPPHIRE
Rufus! What are you doing?
RUFUS
I came to win you back, babe.

SAPPHIRE
We’re not broken up! I just said I wasn’t sleeping at home tonight.

RUFUS
Oh, good. What a relief!

MERIGOLD
But, since you’re here, why not join us for dinner?

SAPPHIRE
That’s not really necessary--

RUFUS
Sure, I’m down for some grub, bub.

INT. MERIGOLD HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone stares in horror at hunched-over Rufus as he shovels food into his mouth with his hands, snorting like a pig.

ANITA
It’s been a while since your last visit, Rufus. I was starting to worry you don’t like us.

RUFUS
Sorry, Mrs. M. I’ve been busy.

MERIGOLD
I’m sure smoking dope and making sand castles eats up most of your day.

RUFUS
I also do a lot of deep thinking!

ANITA
That’s right. You studied philosophy, if I recall?

RUFUS
Half a year at the DeVry Institute!

ANITA
Splendid. How’s your book coming?

MERIGOLD
Yes, please tell us all about it.
SAPPHIRE
That’s alright, it’ll be better if you wait to read it when it’s done-

RUFUS
Oh, I don’t mind! It’s going to explain how what we perceive as reality is actually etherial cosmic energy from distant stars controlling our destinies. When we think we’re walking around, we’re really just floating in a great gelatinous web, flowing towards wherever we’re supposed to be.

MERIGOLD
So you believe that you don’t have to take any agency in life? The universe just works everything out for you?

RUFUS
That’s right, man! And Sapphire said you wouldn’t get it. We ought to drop acid together, sometime.

MERIGOLD
Oh, I get it. I get that you are a bum. A no good, lazy, bum! Get out of my house, you bum. I forbid you to continue poisoning my daughter with your hippie claptrap!

Merigold stands, pounds the table. Rufus stands, pounds the table in retaliation.

RUFUS
You can’t stifle her freedom, man!

MERIGOLD
Of course I can. I am her father and I know what’s best for her!

Sapphire leaps up, pounds the table even louder.

SAPPHIRE
I can speak for myself!

ANITA
Oh, please don’t bang the mahogany.

SAPPHIRE
My father has a point, Rufus. You are a bum.

(MORE)
SAPPHIRE (CONT'D)
But, unlike him, I believe you can change. That’s why I’m giving you a week. One week to find a job, or we really are done.

RUFUS
A job? Babe, don’t be irrational. Why can’t things just keep going the way they’ve been?

MERIGOLD
Because the world is not a cosmic jelly web, Mr. Bugelbaum. This house is made from brick and mortar that I earned through a life-time of hard work and sacrifice. Do you even know the meaning of an honest day’s labor?

RUFUS
I know the band “Honest Day’s Labor”. They’re totally righteous.

Merigold grabs Rufus, pulls him to the door, opens it.

MERIGOLD
Look out there. Do you know what that is?

RUFUS
Um, some lame suburbs?

MERIGOLD
That is the working world, Mr. Bugelbaum. Welcome to it!

Merigold shoves Rufus out, slams the door. He turns, pounds on the door until Sapphire comes to the small WINDOW.

RUFUS
Babe, I get it, okay. I’ll find a job. Now, please, come home.

SAPPHIRE
I’ve heard that before, Rufus. One week. Next Friday. Show me you can change. Or we’re done.

Sapphire walks away. Rufus slumps to the ground, defeated.

RUFUS
This is so not bodacious.

END OF ACT ONE