

THE BRINK

Episode 1.01:
REALITY TELEVISION

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FADE IN:

INT. - SITCOM SCHOOL

We open on what is obviously a cheesy Saturday morning teen sitcom, immediately signaled by the sound of canned laughter. PRINCIPAL WALTERS (Later known to be actor DIRK HOWARD) stands in the center of a group of stereotypical sitcom high schoolers - JOCK, CHEERLEADER, BRAINY GIRL and SPAZ. Spaz is holding something behind his back. The principal speaks in a warm, mildly condescending tone.

PRINCIPAL

Kids, you all did the right thing when you came to me about Spaz's caffeine addiction. I think we all learned a little something about trust, forgiveness and chemical dependence. Isn't that right, Spaz?

SPAZ

You said it, Principal Walters!

BRAINY GIRL

But Spaz, without drinking all that caffeine, how will you be able to cram for our big math exam tomorrow?

SPAZ

Easy!

Spaz produces a bucket of fried chicken from behind his back.

SPAZ

(Continued)

Brain food! It's my third bucket today! I just can't get enough!

ALL (BUT SPAZ)

Oh, Spaz!

Everyone laughs. Jock and Cheerleader kiss for no apparent reason. Spaz takes a big bite of chicken. The camera closes in on the principal.

PRINCIPAL

Oh, Spaz!

The scene freezes and the camera immediately pulls back to reveal:

INT. - LARK'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The sitcom we have just been watching is playing on a television screen. LARK, a college student, sits in her apartment's common area. She's wearing pajamas and eating a bowl of cereal, watching television. Homework and study books surround her, untouched, as Lark is clearly enjoying her program too much. In to this comes LIZ, Lark's studious and bitchy roommate.

LIZ

What the hell are you doing? You have an exam today!

LARK

Not until three. I'll be fine.

LIZ

Lark, you need to pass. If you flunk out, I'm screwed. I can't afford this place on my own.

LARK

I won't flunk out. Even if I did, I'm not moving out. I'm never going back home.

LIZ

Yeah. Well, we'll see.

LARK

If you're so concerned about me, you could actually help me study once in awhile.

LIZ

I don't have time to help YOU! I've got plenty of work to do myself!

LARK

Yeah, for MY boyfriend.

LIZ

What?

LARK

Don't looked so shocked, Elizabeth. I know you've been writing papers for Mark. You think he'll go out with you if you get him good grades.

(MORE)

LARK (cont'd)
 But it won't work...Principal
 Walters will find out and stop you.

LIZ
 What the HELL are you talking
 about?

LARK
 (Indicating the tv)
 The same thing happened on "Oh
 Spaz!" And it didn't work out for
 the cheaters.

LIZ
 For the love of God! Your sick.

Liz unplugs the television.

LARK
 What are you doing?

LIZ
 This is my television. I'm putting
 it in MY room. YOU need to study.

LARK
 Put it back!

LIZ
 I'm doing you a favor, Lark. Trust
 me.

Liz goes in her room and shuts the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LIZ'S ROOM - SAME

Liz puts the tv down on her desk, but does not plug it in.
 She sits on her bed and resumes her studying. Suddenly, the
 tv comes on.

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)
 I know you were just trying to help
 your friend, but cheaters never
 win!

Liz is startled.

LIZ
 What the hell?

SPAZ (ON TV)
 But principal Walters, if she
 hadn't written that paper for me,
 I'd have failed!

Liz goes to the desk and turns off the tv. She looks at for a moment - it's definitely unplugged. She steps away, shrugging it off, but as soon as she turns her back, it comes back on.

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)
 Oh, Spaz!

LIZ
 Oh my God.

She runs for the door, but she can not open it. It is locked. She tries to unlock it from her end, but it remains shut. She bangs on the door.

LIZ
 Lark! Lark! My door is stuck,
 help me open it!

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)
 I guess you'll never learn.

Now, the entire room starts to shake. Items on Liz's desk, bed and vanity all tremble, some falling to the floor and breaking. Liz is terrified. She pounds on the door.

LIZ
 Lark!

A flash of white-blue light. The sound of electricity and television static fill the air, eventually drowning out Liz's cries for help. The camera moves to the possessed television, tight on the Principal's face.

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)
 Cheaters never win. Cheaters never
 win. Cheaters never win. Cheaters
 never win. Cheaters never win.

FADE TO:

INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOK SHOP - EVENING

We are in a tight close up of the same face of the principal, but he is older now. The camera pulls back to reveal, sitting alone at a table stacked with books and DVDs, is DIRK HOWARD.

He looks older, but more or less exactly the same as he did in the sitcom - down the same bad suit, which is starting not to fit. A sign behind him reads "MEET DIRK HOWARD - STAR OF OH SPAZ! SIGNING HIS BOOKS AND DVDS TONIGHT ONLY!"

Nobody has been here all night. Dirk looks at his watch.

DIRK

Christ.

The book store manager, MR. KUSNER, approaches the table.

DIRK

I thought they said this was a big college town.

KUSNER

It is. I...I'm sorry, I don't know why nobody came.

DIRK

I do. Hey, it's okay. I've spent the night worse places.

KUSNER

Look, I know you're advertised to be here till we close, but if you want to take off now...

DIRK

Yeah, thanks. I don't suppose you could point me in the direction of a decent bar?

Both men are startled by the sudden appearance of a customer. It's Lark.

LARK

Excuse me, Mr. Howard?

DIRK

Yes?

LARK

I hope I'm not too late, I was hoping I could get your autograph!

DIRK

Of course! Of course! Come on over!

Dirk, slightly re-energized, sits back down at the table. Kusner gives Dirk the "thumbs up" and goes back about his business.

DIRK

What can I sign for you today,
young lady?

LARK

If it's ok, could you sign your
book and my dvd box set?

DIRK

I think that would be okay. I
don't think we'll hold the line up
too much, do you?

She laughs. He takes her book.

LARK

You have no idea how much it means
to me to get to meet you. When I
was a kid, I watched your show
every day - you all seemed to care
about each other so much! It's
like you say in your the epilogue
of your book - "In all my years
working on Oh, Spaz -as well as the
two TV movies and the Oh, Spaz:
Hawaiian Style spin-off - there's
really one thing that has stuck
with me - how close we all were as
a family. In many...

Dirk, transfixed by her memorization of his book, takes over
the quote.

DIRK

Many ways, those kids were my kids.
I watched them grow,
I lived through their triumphs and
their tragedies and, I hope, they
came to see me as a bit of a father
figure in their own lives.
Perhaps, through the magic of
television, I was a father to all
of you, too.

They stare at each other for a moment, the silence broken by
an off screen voice.

MARK (O.S.)

Baby, let's go!

Lark turns, startled. Her boyfriend, a young jock named Mark
has entered.

LARK
Just a second, Mark.

MARK
Well, hurry up, I didn't put any
coins in the meter. (Notices Dirk)
Hey, hey, it's Principal Whats-His-
Name from that stupid show you
watch!

LARK
His name is Dirk Howard, Mark. (To
Dirk) Please excuse him.

DIRK
It's okay. I don't want to keep
you...

LARK
Lark.

DIRK
Lark.

He starts to sign the book.

LARK
If you don't mind, could you sign
that as Principal Walters? It's
just that...you really were like a
dad to me.

Dirk smiles. This isn't the first time he's heard something
like this.

DIRK
Well, that's the magic of
television, isn't it?
(Signing)
To Lark, who was always like the
daughter I never had. With love,
Principal Walters...and Dirk
Howard.

He hands her the book back.

LARK
Thank you! Thank you so much!

MARK
Let's boogie.

LARK
One second, Mark.

MARK
Lark, this is LAME, even for you.
Now Spooner and the Bomber are
waiting back at the house for me...

Suddenly, the cup of coffee on Dirk's desk spills over violently, splashing Mark. Mark is stunned, Lark's expression blank. Dirk leans over with napkins.

DIRK
Oh geez, did I do that?

He tries to clean up Mark.

MARK
I got it, old man. (To Lark) I'll
wait in the car.

Mark goes.

DIRK
Not a fan, I take it?

LARK
I'm sorry, no. He's too thick to
get it. And the DVD too, please.

Dirk signs and hands it over.

DIRK
My pleasure.

LARK
Good-bye. Thanks for talking to
me.

DIRK
Wouldn't you like to have your
picture taken with me, young lady?

LARK
No, I'm fine for now. Thank you
for the autograph!

She shakes his hand, slipping him a small piece of paper. Still at his desk, Dirk unfolds Lark's note, which reads "42 OAK ST, APT 3G ~ Lark." Dirk's eyes light up.

CUT TO:

INT. - MARK'S CAR - LATER

{NOTE: IF EASIER, THIS COULD JUST BE THEM WALKING DOWN THE STREET OUTSIDE THE SHOP}

Lark gets into Mark's car. He is using a fancy cell phone with a video screen, trying to reach someone who isn't answering.

MARK

Where the hell is your roommate Liz? She hasn't answered my calls all day.

LARK

I don't know. I haven't seen her since this morning.
(Then, pointedly)
What do you want to talk to her for anyway?

MARK

(Covering)

Uh...I was going to invite her to the house party later. I think Spooner has the hots for her.

LARK

Right.

Lark starts to admire her autographs.

MARK

What is it with you and this guy, babe?

LARK

You know I had a bad home life when I was a kid. Well, on Saturday mornings from nine to ten, while my mom was still sleeping off Friday night's bender and my step-dad was at God knows where, I could watch Oh Spaz and be happy for an hour... and it's like Dirk said, through the magic of TV, I had a dad who made everything better.

MARK

I thought I made everything better.

LARK

You do now. You try.

MARK

Baby, you have some seriously
strange choices in you life idols.

LARK

You just don't understand, Mark.
Sometimes you're just like Spaz.

MARK

(Laughing)

Hey, I get it. I'm sure meeting
him was fun for you. I bet he
taught us something all about
truth, forgiveness and chemical
dependance. Or some shit like
that.

LARK

That show meant a lot to me. That
MAN meant a lot to me. And not
just to me - millions of people
love that show.

MARK

Lark, I got news for you. The only
people who watched that show were
retards, six-year-olds and teenage
boys who that the cheerleader had a
nice rack. And nobody - NOBODY
watched it for the stupid
principal.

LARK

I did. Stop the car.

MARK

What, come on, Lark! I was only
joking.

LARK

I said stop the car, Mark!

He pulls over.

MARK

Lark, I'm sorry! Look, I wasn't
making fun of you - it's just a
silly show. But if it means that
much to you, I won't say another
word.

Lark gets out of the car.

LARK

I'm sick of your lying to me. Go off with your stupid frat brothers, Mark. Just leave me alone.

MARK

Lark! Lark! Come back! Look, I said I'm sorry.

LARK

Go away. Go away, I don't want to see you.

MARK

Lark, come on! It's freezing out there!

She runs off. Mark sits in confusion for a moment, then he turns off the car and gets out, running after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY WAY - SAME

Mark comes into view from around the side of the building. There's no sign of Lark.

MARK

Lark? Lark?

Further ahead, in the darkness, he hears what sounds like a muffled sob. He approaches slowly.

MARK

Babe?

MARK'S POV

Nothing - darkness and empty campus. Then the sound of footsteps coming from behind.

REVERSE

Mark spins around. There's no one there.

MARK

Lark?

(Suddenly, his cell phone rings, startling him.)

Jesus.

He pulls out his phone and answers.

MARK

Hello?

SFX: There is nothing but the sound of television static on the other end.

MARK

(Continued)

Who is this? Lark? Lark, this isn't funny, come on! I'm cold! Let's GO!

Suddenly, a voice from the cell phone.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

I think you're in need of a time out!

MARK

What? Who's there? Answer me!

Mark takes the phone from his ear and looks at it's screen.

CLOSE ON:

MARK'S PHONE

It's an episode of "OH, SPAZ!". Principal Walters is talking to Spaz.

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)

Deeeeeeeeeeeetention!

CUT TO:

MARK - SAME

He stares at the phone in disbelief. There is a flash of white-blue light. Mark's eyes grow wide in terror.

PRINCIPAL (ON TV)

Detention! Detention! Detention!
Detention! Detention!

The sound of electricity and television static fill the air. Mark shields his eyes as we

WHITE OUT.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - SAME

Mark's cell phone, off, lays on the ground. Mark is gone.

FADE IN:

INT. LARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lark sits on the couch, curled up, an episode of *Oh, Spaz!* is on Liz's television, which is now back in the living room.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)
Well, I think we all learned
something today.

SPAZ (O.S.)
What's that, Principal Walters?

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)
That just because someone's skin is
a different color, it doesn't mean
we have to be afraid of them.

SPAZ (O.S.)
Oh! I thought it was that Lunch
Lady Marge moonlights as plus size
underwear model!

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)
Oh, Spaz!

LARK
Oh, Spaz!

There's a knock at her door.

LARK
Who is it?

DIRK
It's Principal Wall..uh, it's Dirk.
Dirk Howard.

Lark smiles, turns off the tv and runs to open the door.

LARK
I can't believe you're here!

DIRK

Are you kidding me? It's not everyday I get the address of a beautiful girl like you.

LARK

(Flattered)

Oh, Mr. Howard! Please, come in. I'm sorry the place is so tiny, I hope you don't mind.

DIRK

Not at all.

He does so.

LARK

Having you here - well, it really is like a dream come true.

DIRK

For the both of us, I'm sure.

LARK

I just knew that my boyfriend Mark wouldn't understand about any of this. He always had his brothers and his sports teams as a kid. I just had you. What you said tonight about the cast being a family - I always knew it would be like that. It just HAD to be...the way you loved those kids.

DIRK

Huh? Oh, right. The kids. Yeah, great group.

LARK

Do you still keep in touch with them?

DIRK

Aw hell no. The jock is mister movie star now and those two girls, the brainiac and the bimbo, are making late night skin movies...together.

LARK

What about Spaz?

DIRK

Last I heard he was still in living
outside of Vegas, probably in debt
up to his ears.

LARK

But can't you help them? It must
be awful for you not being there
for them.

She sinks into him and he holds her.

DIRK

Look, they were nice kids and all -
but it was all a long time ago.
They've got parents of their own -
and better still, agents who take
care of them. And what do I have?
Nothing. The college lecture
circuit - no offense. But I'm never
going to be anything more than
Principal Walters to the tv
audience...

He slides his hand up her side.

LARK

Principal Walters, I don't want to
be alone anymore.

DIRK

You don't have to be, sweetheart.
Dirk's right here.

LARK

I know just what you want.

DIRK

You do, do you?

LARK

I know a way to make everything
feel better. A secret way.

DIRK

Well, why don't you share it with
Principal Walters?

He moves in to kiss her.

LARK

No! That's not what I meant!

DIRK

Come on, I won't bite. Don't make me give you detention, Lark. Have you been a bad girl?

He starts to caress her chest, but suddenly the bed starts shaking. Lark jumps up.

LARK

I CAN'T SEE YOU LIKE THIS! I CAN'T!

DIRK

What the hell? You asked me here! Just another crazy loser fan.

Dirk gets up to go, but a powerful force knocks him back onto the bed. The room starts to rattle.

DIRK

Jesus H. Christ.

As the scene builds, the shaking in the room becomes more and more prominent.

LARK

Everything is going to be alright now. For everybody. Don't you want to get what you've always wished for, Principal Walters?

DIRK

I want to get the hell out of here! Please, let me go!

The room is out of control.

LARK

NO!

The white light begins to fill the room again, seeming to emanate from behind Lark. The deafening noise of electricity and television static fills the air again. The television comes on, scanning through channels at a crazed speed. Dirk is scared out of his mind.

DIRK

Sweet mother of God.

The room shakes as the light brightens. A huge FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT and then everything is normal again.

Dirk and Lark are gone. Silence for a moment, and then the faint sound of canned laughter.

The camera pans down from the bed, across the floor, passing Lark's signed memorabilia. (Signed: "HOPE YOU LEARNED SOMETHING! DIRK HOWARD") and then up to television, where we see:

ON SCREEN:

The high school from *Oh, Spaz!*. Lark, in dressed as Cheerleader from the first scene, is on screen, smiling. Dirk, the older Dirk, zombie like and robotic, enters as Principal Walters.

CUT TO:

INT. SITCOM SCHOOL - AS BEFORE

LARK

Oh, Principal Walters! I think we all learned something today about truth, forgiveness and listening to one another. Don't you think?

DIRK

I sure do, Lark.

Next enters Liz, in the "brainy girl" costume. Zombie like.

LIZ

And I learned that cheating gets you nowhere. I guess I'll just have to repeat the tenth grade until I learn.

DIRK

Lark, you've always been like the daughter I never had.

LARK

And you've always been like a father to me.

MARK (O.S.)

That's funny...

The camera pulls back to reveal, Mark, in the same zombie like state as Dirk and Liz, dressed as "Spaz," holding a bucket of fried chicken.

MARK

She doesn't look anything like you!

Oh, Spaz! ALL

They laugh.

Freeze frame.

Canned laughter builds and builds and builds.

The sound of television static.

FADE TO BLACK.