



The Bride
The Groom
The Twin

Clara Lou



Carmen is sitting on a gray couch wearing a red t-shirt, frayed, low-waisted flares, and flip flops. Dave, in a black tank top and trackpants, is in a chair at a right angle to the couch. The camera swings toward Randie, the wedding planner. "So as far as the cake goes," she says, "you guys had some ideas, right? Carrot cake, what else?" "Let's just get this out in the open," says Dave. "I have kind of an eating problem. Whether it's the greatest cake in the world or a ding dong, I'll eat the whole thing." The shot widens. We see that the couch and chair are framed by a beige rug. Dave rests his feet on the coffee table.

A house is a place for things to happen.

Wide shot of oil drills. White text appears on the screen: "Stocker Oil Fields, Los Angeles." Cut to a series of close-ups of Dave's face and chest. An assistant is applying makeup that makes him appear like a corpse. He airbrushes veins onto Dave's skin. "We're shooting the wedding invitation that's going to go out to our friends and family," says Dave in a voiceover. "The idea is that it's Carmen and I, lying in a morgue, still together, even after death," he continues, now talking directly to the camera. Carmen enters the shot. "Oh my god," she says, reacting to Dave's makeup. "You really look dead. It's freaky. Honey, I think you should quit smoking," she jokes. Carmen and Dave are facing each other in profile. Cut to Carmen in the makeup chair, Dave behind her wearing a robe, their reflections visible in the

mirror behind them. Purple eyeshadow has been applied to her lids. "I hope we don't really die," says Carmen. The makeup artist navigates the outline of her lips with a pale lip liner even as she speaks. "Yeah, we haven't done enough shit yet," says Dave. "No, we haven't had a baby," says Carmen. Close-up of the makeup artist's hands dipping a brush into a beige lip tint. Dave reenters the shot, a cigarette behind his ear. He is carrying coroner toe tags. "We have to fill in 'date expired,'" he says. "Why don't we put the date of our wedding? In a sense, it's the expiration of our single life." "Which is death," says Carmen. "Marriage equals death," says Dave.

Bridging shot of sunset at the oil field. Cut to Carmen and Dave, shot from behind, standing on a tile floor next to two cadaver tables. "They're cold and slimy," says Dave. "I don't think they washed off the extra embalming fluid." Medium shot of Dave swinging himself onto the table. "I'll bet you anything there's DNA on this," he says. "This is so you, Dave," says Carmen, climbing onto the other table. Both are still wearing their robes. They lean toward each other and kiss. "I definitely didn't think I could ever be this much in love," says Carmen in a voice-over. Cut to an interview segment: Carmen on the gray couch wearing a t-shirt that says "gorgeous" across the front, the neck cut so that it slips off her shoulder, revealing a black tank top underneath. "I had just gone through probably one of the hardest times of my life, and honestly I felt like I just wanted to give up. I was like either I become a lesbian

or I'm just going to be alone." Cut back to Carmen and Dave sitting on the cadaver tables, kissing. "I really had no hope, no faith," continues Carmen, in a voiceover. "I would go to sleep at night feeling so sad, I would just grab a book, read self-help books, do everything I could to keep my spirits up. A year later I met Dave." A team of assistants are wrapping the couple in plastic.

The photographer David LaChapelle is standing on a ladder looking through the viewfinder of his camera. The assistants continue to adjust the plastic. "Okay, chins back, Carmen and Dave," he says. We hear the click of the camera shutter. "Squint a little bit," he continues. Carmen and Dave narrow their eyes. "That's it," he says.

"Open your mouth, Dave." Closeup of Dave repositioning his lips. "That's good." Cut to LaChapelle looking at the contact sheet. "Oh wow, they're beautiful," he says. "We're done." Two assistants help Carmen into her robe.

I had only ever seen Am in the summer; I discovered that she wears all white in the winter too. Her white coat was something to behold. One could describe it as radiant. Am and I were, one could say, sitting on adjacent folding chairs. We were rummagers in too many loops. Hair had been cut: that was an open secret. We were, I'd like to say, sitting on adjacent barstools, grabbing for the new spelling. One of us might have said, "television is the

echo of the lived no longer living.” One of us might have imagined our position as fan and bride simultaneously. One of us might have thought that fame was glass and could be touched, and the fame we touched wouldn't melt. One of us might have smoked a cigarette. One of us might have made the death drive appear innocuous. In the late hours, then the wee hours, the tragedies emerged.

Establishing shot of Carmen and Dave's house. It is white, with a pool out front. There is a yellow and white striped beach ball in the pool. Close-up of a pair of hands cutting a slice of cake and putting it on a plate. Randie is introducing Carmen to the cake designer. “The next order of business?” says Dave in a voiceover. “The cake tasting. I did not even want to be in the same room as those things. But I am the groom, and I had to be part of the process.” The camera follows Carmen's hand as she scoops up a piece of cake with her fork and deposits it in her mouth. “God this is good,” she says. “You don't want to try some?” Amanda, the stylist, asks Dave. “No, I'm not going to eat any,” he says. “It's real nice,” says Carmen. In slow motion, we see her sample the other slices of cake. She licks her fork. Dave looks on. Close-up of a half-eaten slice.

Finally, Dave gives in. “Let me see, where's the raspberry one?” he asks. The cake designer passes him a plate. He takes a bite. “You were being so strong,” says Carmen. “I don't know what happened.” Dave takes another bite. “You have to try this one,”

says Carmen. "Oh my god, that's insane," says Dave. "We might have to get married annually because of this," he continues. "I didn't try the chocolate." Amanda pushes another plate towards him. Medium shot of Dave taking another bite. "He's not stopping," says Amanda. "He's diving in," says Carmen. Dave continues to eat. The women laugh.

Sound emerged from the white house. Sound emerged from Los Angeles. The sound was automobiles, cameras in automobiles, fame in automobiles. We moved from air conditioned space to air conditioned space. We were safe. We were safe and swaddled, shuttling between air conditioned spaces. Two cars beside each other are not two cars beside each other but me here, you there.

Wide shot of skyscrapers. "I'm in New York City, at Badgley Mishka," says Carmen in a voiceover. "I'm here to try on my wedding dress." Carmen enters the atelier. Cut to Carmen standing in front of the dress, holding a can of Coke. "I love it," she says. Cut to a shot of Carmen from behind, wearing the dress, an assistant holding the train. "I feel like it's a princess dress," she says in a voiceover. She steps onto a black platform in front of a large mirror and looks at herself. She tugs on the dress. The beading on the dress catches the light. "So, I think we need to tighten it up a little here," she says, gesturing toward her waist, "and then loosen it here," she says, pointing to her bust. "I can't quite get it zipped right there." Mark Badgley, the designer, enters the shot.

“Beautiful,” he says, putting his hands on Carmen’s waist. “So it’s just a touch long-waisted, that’s why it’s buckling on you there.” The camera swivels from Carmen’s reflection in the mirror to Carmen herself. “What about the lacing detail we were talking about?” he asks. “I don’t know,” says Carmen. “I think it’s beautiful the way it is.” “We can actually get you a better fit if it’s not laced,” he says, “because that way the corset can continue.”

“Isn’t that beautiful?” he says as the camera zooms in on Carmen’s waist. “You’ve got all the right curves in all the right places, that’s for sure.” The camera pans the length of the dress. “Thank you,” says Carmen.

One of us might have said, “the outside has been made inside.” It’s the windows that make the room, marking the walls with a landscape.

Quick pan of a sand colored building, lanterns and Buddhas framing its doors. White text appears on the screen: “Jimi Hendrix Mansion.” Palm trees are outlined against the sky. Cut to a shot of the pool, in which the reflection of a palm tree is visible. Vines cling to the adjacent balcony. Carmen, Amanda, and an unidentified man emerge from a white SUV. Carmen walks towards the house, wearing large rectangular sunglasses, a teal three quarter sleeve shirt underneath which a white bra is visible, and flared jeans. The hem of her shirt reveals a triangle of flesh on either side, above the waistband of her jeans. She has a sip of Coke and the can skims the

bottom of the shot. Cut to an interview segment: Carmen, shot from the chest up, in front of a wrought iron balcony. "We're here to look at the house where Dave and I are getting married," she says. Pan of a beige wall. A brocade curtain enters the shot.

Yes, she touched the taboo and made sure to push against it at just the right moment. She lounged. She lounged for the camera. He smoked a cigarette. He made the death drive appear innocuous. The lens swung from nobody to somebody. The lens swung from no-name to big wig but in the swinging the big wig was made ordinary. We were assured of the contents of others' homes.

The camera moves down the length of a tall grey building. An insignia comes into view: "The St. Regis Los Angeles." Rose bushes lie below the insignia. Cut to the doors of the hotel, a red carpet in front of them. Randie and Carmen enter the shot. We see them from behind. "I had a conversation with Randie about finding a different location for the wedding," says Carmen in a voiceover. "We're over budget. The Hendrix estate definitely isn't going to work out," she says, now talking to the camera. She is sitting on a stone bench outside the St. Regis, in front of a row of pink and red flowers. The bench slices the frame diagonally. The outline of a skyscraper is visible behind Carmen's head. She is wearing a strapless top with a cutout at the neckline through which a triangle of cleavage is visible.

Cut back to the interior of the hotel. Carmen walks through a set of white French doors into the bridal suite, followed by Amanda, Randie, and the hotel manager. To the right of the doors is a small table on top of which is a lamp which has been turned on. The camera pans across the room. We see beige carpeting and yellow curtains that cover the wall length windows. There is a red armchair in front of the window. As the camera moves, we see that the armchair has a twin.

“The view is amazing,” says Carmen, looking out the window. Through the window, we see skyscrapers, clouds, mountains in the distance. The camera pans across the balcony. On the balcony, there are several sets of wooden chairs and tables, punctuated by large potted plants, which cast shadows on the stone.

Ivory, cornsilk, linen, champagne.

Carmen and Dave are seated in the back seat of a limo. They are on their way to a Las Vegas strip club. There is a stretch of sky in between the black of the seats and the black of the roof. Cut to a wide shot of the limo from behind. Next to the limo is a white Toyota Rav 4. The cars cast shadows on their left side.

The freeway: that unbearable adjacency. Two cars beside each other are not two cars beside each other but me here, you there.

Carmen walks through the doorway of the strip club wearing fishnets and a bustier, followed by Dave who is wearing a black jacket and carrying a coffee cup. Cut to a pool cue sliding over a thumb, tapping a ball. The ball bounces against the edge of the table. Cut to a trio of girls, their arms around each others' waists. Cut to Carmen and Dave sitting on the couch in the strip club, kissing. Carmen is clutching a margarita in her left hand. In the foreground we see a woman from behind, a few inches of skin between tank top and jeans visible. Cut to Carmen placing her palm over the camera, removing it, then closing the door to their suite.

One of us might have taken a sip. We were so alluring because we wore clothes. Because we wore clothes, we were the only people to have ever felt the faint humiliating stirring of a crush.

Carmen is wearing a periwinkle halter dress and dreamcatcher earrings. She is seated next to Dave on the gray couch. His arm is around her. Dave is wearing leather pants and a shirt that says "pillow talk is extra." "I'll tell you what's sexy," she says. "Tell us what's sexy," says Dave. "I'll tell you a sexy moment," she continues. "When I first noticed Dave, that Red Hot Chili Peppers video, Dave and Anthony Kiedis making out. And I know that sounds kind of weird, and people would be kind of shocked about that—" "They were," interjects Dave. "But it was hot. It wasn't like you guys, you know...it was just a sexy thing. Like, for shock value." Carmen blinks, slowly,

revealing brown eyeshadow.

Cut to a bridging shot of the street outside Carmen and Dave's house, then a pan upwards toward the house itself. Carmen and Dave are inside, again, sitting on the couch. Carmen is wearing a blue Adidas tracksuit. Dave is wearing a black Adidas tracksuit. The camera zooms in on their adjacent faces. "I can't believe everyone's coming here, to see us," Carmen murmurs. They kiss. "I can't believe it's in two days," says Dave. "We gotta figure some shit out." Carmen laughs. The camera zooms back out. "So, did we decide on a song?" he continues. "I'm kind of feeling that Portishead one." Dave's hood is up. We see him in profile. "What about the one I sent you?" asks Carmen. "Oh, should we go check it out?" asks Dave, heading toward the computer. He sits down. His hood is still up, his jacket, unzipped, revealing his bare chest. He hits play. The song is Sade's "By Your Side." It plays as Dave kisses Carmen and wipes away a tear running down her cheek. "I'm just really happy," says Carmen. "I'm so emotional, god." "You're happy?" Dave asks. Carmen nods.

We drove north, we drove south, we drove east, we drove west. We were the double Os of the Hollywood sign.

"You look gorgeous," says Tai, Carmen's maid of honor, gesturing toward her peach slip dress and mauve knee length cardigan. "This outfit makes me want to interpretive dance," says Carmen, twirling

around the lobby. Cut to Carmen and Dave entering the rehearsal dinner. A pink purse has been added to Carmen's ensemble. Dave's shirt is unbuttoned to his stomach. Close-up of champagne being poured into a flute.

I had only ever seen Am in the summer; I discovered that she wears all white in the winter too. This is the fate of the permanent bride.

Wide shot of Carmen leaping through the lobby of the St. Regis hotel, wearing a pale blue sweatsuit and Uggs. Tai, wearing a pink sweatsuit, looks on and laughs.

On her wedding day, she shivered. This happened in a room with tastefully beige walls.

Cut to Carmen in a wedding dress and veil. Tai is holding the veil so that it doesn't drag on the ground. Carmen's reflection is visible in the mirror behind her. "I need a sip of Coke," she says. Diane, another bridesmaid, hands her a bottle. Carmen stands poised between Tai and Diane, Tai holding her veil, Diane handing her Coke. An orchid is visible in the foreground, alongside the flower girl. "I like your dress," says the flower girl. "Thanks, angel," says Carmen.

Cut to Carmen stepping into the elevator. Tai is still holding her veil. Diane is holding the train of her dress. The other bridesmaids step into the shot, each

holding two bouquets of roses. "I swear I have the hottest bridesmaids ever," says Carmen. "You're the hottest bride," they say.

Wide shot of Carmen and her bridesmaids standing around a table, their glasses lifted. "This is to Carmen," says Tai, "in her last moments of being a beautiful single woman. She's about to become a married, even more beautiful woman. I'm just so happy to be able to share this with you. I know that we all are. We just love you so much. You are the most radiant, beautiful bride and I just...I love you." Glasses clink. Everyone is drinking champagne except for Carmen who is drinking red wine. The flower girl approaches the table.

Dave, Dave, and David. And Dave.

The camera zooms in on Carmen and her father's linked arms. Carmen unlinks her arm to tug her dress up. The camera zooms back out. An assistant adjusts her veil.

The wedding march plays as Carmen and her father walk down the aisle arm in arm. Dave walks forward to meet them. Carmen and her father unlink arms and kiss. Carmen's father shakes Dave's hand. Carmen and Dave walk forward together, tearing up, then laughing. Dave wipes his nose with a handkerchief. "On behalf of Carmen and Dave," says the minister, "I want to welcome you to this evening of enchantment. You've been invited here to witness

and to celebrate the sacred vows of marriage. We ask that all the angels come and bless this evening, and that they anoint Carmen and Dave, that they may live in the house of their love. May the blessings of the air element be with you. The air element is the mind, and the bird represents the air element," she says, gesturing to a bird on the left side of the stage. Carmen, Dave and the wedding party laugh. "May the blessings of the water element be with you," she continues, as sprinklers turn on at the front of the room. "Nothing like Hollywood, right?" she says. The laughter continues. "The water represents the emotions. Let them flow. May the blessings of the fire element be with you. You can see that candles have been lit," she says, gesturing in front of her, "to represent that fire, that spirit, that spark that brought you here." "Carmen and Dave have both written something for each other," she says by way of introducing the vows.

The camera shifts to Dave's face. "Carmen," he begins. "I am truly honored to be in this journey with you. You have showed me some things that I simply cannot live without: the light of your eyes, the taste of your tears, your sweet smile and ever evolving laugh. I am so honored to be in this union with you," he continues, tearing up. "I vow to always carry myself in your absence as I do in your presence. I got your back. I love you." "Dave," begins Carmen. "Thank you for always making me laugh,

for opening my heart, for showing me that vulnerability is beautiful, for healing my broken heart, for being my best friend. I want to grow old with you and have a family, and be with you forever. I love you so much.” The minister puts a ring in Dave’s hand. “Carmen, Dave offers you this ring, but I think, more importantly, he offers you his heart. Do you accept his heart?” “Yes.” Dave puts the ring on Carmen’s finger. “Dave, Carmen offers you this ring but, more importantly, she offers you her heart. Do you accept her heart?” “Yes.” Carmen puts a ring on Dave’s finger. “Now we seal your love with love potion number nine,” she says, handing Carmen a goblet. Carmen takes a sip. “I bind our love through all time,” says Carmen. Dave takes a sip. “I bind our love through all of time,” he says. “I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.” Carmen and Dave kiss. The audience claps and cheers. Carmen and Dave are shot from behind, walking down the aisle.

One, two, three.

Close-up of Carmen and Dave’s hands holding the server, cutting into the first layer of cake. The white of the cake is reflected in the cake server. Together, they place two slices on plates. Facing each other, they each scoop up a forkful of cake and place it in the other’s mouth. They kiss. The crowd claps and cheers. They chew slowly.

Clara Lou is a poet, playwright, and critic. She is currently working on a play for radio, *The Furniture Supper Club*.

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