

STUCK WITH THE BILL

A Rowe Show Sketch

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INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A group of five friends, late 20s. Guys night. The WAITER approaches with the check and sets it down in the middle of the table like a live grenade. No one moves a muscle.

ALEX/FRIEND 1 AND 2

Not it!

FRIEND 3 (CONT'D)
We can't just do it like that.

FRIEND 2

I will do cash.

FRIEND 5

That's not real money.

ALEX
I paid the whole check last time.

Let's just have someone put their card down and we Venmo.

FRIEND 2

Not fallling for that again. I am going to somehow lose money.

FRIEND 3

My venmo doesnt even work, so.. Tension builds.

ALEX
How about the card game.

Everybody's card is in, one gets picked, that person pays the whole bill. A beat of dread passes around the table. One by one everyone hands their cards to the WAITER, who shuffles them. The WAITER draws a card. He looks at it. Alex.

SMASH ZOOM on Alex's face. Ominous, over-the-top music hums. The life visibly drains from his eyes.

Around him in slow motion, his friends erupt in celebration. Laughter stretched and distant, like it's coming from underwater.

FRIEND 4

(hysterical, slow-mo) Bro, I barely even ate.

FRIEND 3

(holding in laughter) WAIT. Wasn't Alex the one who suggested this game?! Alex stares blankly ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

Alex sits alone behind the wheel, staring into the distance. Silence. Kinda scary. His phone LOUDLY RINGS. JUMP SCARE.

ALEX
(answering, shaken)
Hello? ...Hello?

Nothing. Just dead air.

BANKER (V.O.)
(robotic, customer
service)
We're calling to inform you that

your credit card has been cancelled due to an overdraft.
(pause) Would you like to complete a brief survey about your experience today? Alex hangs up. A beat. He just sits with it. Quietly, he decides to go home. He takes a breath. Engine starts. He pulls out. Driving alone with his thoughts. Then -- Phone rings AGAIN. It's his girlfriend.

ALEX
(happy to talk to her)
Hey baby, I'm on my way to yours.

Sorry I'm running late, crazy day. A beat of silence. Then--

FRAT GUY (V.O.)
Yo brochaco... I'm literally with
your girl right now. Silence. Alex is shocked.

FRAT GUY (V.O.)
Oh my god, you're such a loser.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
I was out thrifting with one of

your cards and it got declined. We're done. Never talk to me again. As she hangs up, we catch the tail end of her turning to the frat guy.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
...so, Cabo? Like, this weekend? My

boyfriend would never. HAHHAHAHA! She hangs up. Alex pulls the car over for a long beat. Too shocked to even process what is happening. Starts the car. It sputters. Tries again. Sputters. Anger starts to take over. Phone rings AGAIN.

TOYOTA EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
(bored teen, probably
vaping)
Yeah... so your car payments

weren't going through, so we remotely shut down your Prius. Honestly, we didn't even know we could do that till today. Pretty wild. Good luck, bro. Hangs up. Alex stares ahead. Trying to control his anger. Can't be happening AGAIN... right? Phone RINGS.

ALEX
(fully crashing out)

WHAT! WHAT. WHAT?!?!

A beat.

HOSPITAL NURSE (V.O.)
(overly cheerful)
Hi sweetheart. Is this Alex?

ALEX
(smaller now)
...Yeah.

HOSPITAL NURSE (V.O.)
(sweeter than pecan pie)
Yeah, I'm very sorry to tell you

this, but since your payments for the hospital bills didn't go through, we did have to take your mom off life support.... Your mother has passed away. Alex drops the phone. Motionless. His eyes drift shut.

HOSPITAL NURSE (V.O.)
Have a wonderful evening!

MONTAGE - ALEX AND MOM, THROUGH THE YEARS

Home-movie vibe. Quiet piano score kicks in. A) YOUNG ALEX on a swing set, mid-flight, overcome with joy. MOM pushes him, laughing, completely present.

YOUNG ALEX

Higher! Higher! ...I love you so

much, Mom! A genuinely sweet beat. Let it sit. B) YOUNG ALEX sits in his high chair at the dinner table. Laughing, face full of leftover food. His mom walks over and shows him her credit card. Points to the table. Then back to the card. Wags her finger.

MOM

Never ever put your card down for

anything, baby. You put your card down, they win. Young Alex nods like he's being told the meaning of life.

C) TEEN ALEX at a fancy, dim-lit restaurant. A first date. The bill comes. Alex reaches for his wallet. Looks up. His mom sits across the restaurant, alone, holding a newspaper up in front of her face with two eye holes cut out of it. Staring. Full eye contact.

MOM (CONT'D)

(mouthing, sharp)

Don't. You. Fucking. Dare.

TEEN ALEX freezes. His date has no idea. The newspaper snaps back up.

END MONTAGE. THE WARM PIANO FADES.

BACK TO:

INT. ALEX'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Alex's eyes snap open. Haunted. Just as it seems nothing else could possibly go wrong, a slow TAPPING comes from the driver's-side window. Alex turns. The barrel of a pistol gently knocks against the glass. Standing outside, calmly, is a MOBSTER.

MOBSTER

(muffled)

You know why I'm here. Where's our

money?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Alex is thrown into the back of a truck, a bag over his head. They speed off.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Alex, tied to a chair. Two intimidating mobsters stand behind him. One is in his face.

ALEX
(about to piss himself)
You don't understand.

(MORE)

ALEX
I got stuck with the bill! The

Venmos are going to come through, I swear! You have to believe me! A SIDEKICK MOBSTER in the back cracks up.

SIDEKICK MOBSTER
(to the room)
Yeah, right. Everybody knows. Never

put your card down. Only an idiot falls for that.

MOBSTER
(inches away from Alex's
face, silently calm)
Are you an idiot Alex...

ALEX
Uh. No... No sir.

The whole room laughs. Alex looks down, genuinely thinking. Then it hits him.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(idea)
Wait. Let me call my friends.

Please! Lead Mobster snaps his finger, triggering the sidekick to hold the phone up for Alex.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey! Hey man! You there?

Listen--

FRIEND 2 (V.O.)
(calling to the others)
Yo... you guys get over here, you
wouldn't believe it. Alex is on the phone right now.

FRIEND 3 (V.O.)
No way. Is this loser already going
to beg for his money back?

ALEX
(frantically)
Guys. Guys! I'm being serious. The
Mob are holding me captive. I need you to send me money--
Laughter from the phone cuts him off.

FRIEND 2 (V.O.)
I'm not falling for this, man.

FRIEND 3 (V.O.)
Yeah man! A mobster?!? Sure...

FRIEND 2 (V.O.)
Bro. I literally have zero dollars!

HAHAHA! What a loser!

FRIEND 2 (V.O.)
(cackling)
I just can't believe you thought we
would fall for this... we will see you tomorrow for drinks.
Hopefully you don't have to put your card down again. It
might kill you. They all laugh in unison Alex slowly lifts
his eyes to the camera. SUPER SLOW ZOOM on his face. Same
dead, defeated look as the moment his card was picked. A
single tear rolls down his cheek. The phone slips as their
laughter keeps playing, further and further away. A gun rises
into frame, pressed directly against his temple. His entire
life has unravelled, all because he put his card down for
dinner.

BLACKOUT.

BANG!