

Lemon Face!

Word Count: 3632

By
Mars Dave

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Diane	Optimistic, charming, deeply sad.	Late 20s	Female
Scott	Jaded, rough, conscientious, sweet.	Late 20s	Male
The Boss	Suave, dumb, scary as hell.	Any	Any
The Mark	Gullible, but doesn't know it.	Any	Any
Paulie	A lovable idiot.	Any	Any

SCENE 1

At center stage, a lemon tree grows. Its branches stretch out from side to side, until it becomes a table and two chairs. SCOTT, holding a book, walks over and sits on one. He opens the book and begins to read. DIANE walks by, and Scott looks up. Music starts to play. Diane sits on the other chair, and removes a clementine from her bag and peels it. She notices Scott, who tries to pretend like he was reading. Diane very unsubtly checks him out.

DIANE

You want a piece?

SCOTT

What?

DIANE

Of the clementine?

SCOTT

What?

Diane holds out the clementine.

SCOTT

Oh. Oh! Yes please.

Diane and Scott both eat a piece of the clementine. When Scott finishes his, Diane hands him another.

DIANE

I'm Diane.

SCOTT

Scott.

DIANE

I like that name! It sounds fake, you know? It's like the kind of name they give you in witness protection.

The music stops. Scott stands up abruptly.

SCOTT

It was nice meeting you Diane.

DIANE

Where are you going? Did I say something wrong?

There's an audible *ding!*

DIANE

Holy shit.

SCOTT

I have to go-

DIANE

Holy shit!

SCOTT

I- I have to go.

DIANE

You can't drop a bomb like that and just leave!

SCOTT

I've dropped no bombs, I'm just leaving.

DIANE

Witness protection?

SCOTT

You can't prove that, and if you try, then they'll just move me somewhere else.

DIANE

Woah, hey, calm down! I'm just trying to understand here, I'm not going to track you, I was just eating this clementine.

SCOTT

You're not, like... carrying out a hit or anything?

DIANE

No. Do I seem like I am?

SCOTT

And you're not a cop?

DIANE

What?

SCOTT

Legally, you have to tell me.

DIANE

That's actually not true.

SCOTT

I know. If you were a cop, you probably wouldn't have corrected me. So then you were just...

DIANE

Making an observation. Honest to god.

SCOTT

You know, it's not really called witness protection. It's witness security.

DIANE

I always thought it was witness protection.

SCOTT

Nope. Witness security.

DIANE

Huh. So you're like, a hardened criminal.

SCOTT

Do you mind if we don't talk about it?

DIANE

Fine. I do want to hear this story though. Sooner or later.

SCOTT

Sooner or later?

DIANE

Oh. I guess I don't actually have any way to follow up on that, do I?

Beat.

SCOTT

Would you maybe want to get a drink sometime?

DIANE

I'd like that.

Diane pulls a clock from under the table and hands it to Scott. He hangs it up and moves the hands forward. Diane watches him.

DIANE

Two months

Scott pulls a plate of grapefruit out from under the table and puts it in front of Diane.

SCOTT

Gross! Actually gross! It's the world's worst fruit.

DIANE

Don't talk about it that way, it's sensitive

SCOTT

It's also bitter, and like, fifty percent peel.

DIANE

Yeah, but when you can crack into it, it finishes sweet.

SCOTT

I can't believe I'm dating a grapefruit person.

DIANE

Oh, I'll make you a grapefruit person, mister. Just you wait.

Scott moves to the clock and winds it forward.

SCOTT

Six months.

DIANE

So I'm talking to this guy about movies, and he keeps going on about *A Clockwork Orange*. I'm sure it's a great movie, but if I tell you I haven't seen it, then just accept it, right? So I go home, I watch the movie, and I immediately block him.

SCOTT

Oh I cannot watch that movie. My cousins made me watch it when I was seven and it messed me up for a month.

DIANE

Cousins?

Beat.

SCOTT

Yeah.

DIANE

I didn't know you had cousins.

SCOTT

Well, for the sake of our safety, I don't.

DIANE

It's okay Scott. If you let something about your life slip, I'm not going to tell anybody.

SCOTT

I know. Neither am I.

Diane looks at Scott and realizes for the first time that Scott doesn't trust her. She stands and winds the clock forward.

DIANE

One year.

Scott and Diane collapse into each other, giggling. They're both drunk.

SCOTT

I think you're making fun of me, but you know what, I'm the world's sweetest boyfriend, so I won't hold it against you.

DIANE

I'm not! I'm just saying, no one likes Springsteen that much. I should have known.

SCOTT

Okay, now you're just full-on stere- ste-. You're assuming stuff. That's what this is. You're a bigot.

DIANE

I should not have bought all those fancy limes. Look at you, you're drunk.

SCOTT

You're drunk.

DIANE

No! I just love my big *New Jersey* boyfriend!

SCOTT

You can't tell anybody.

DIANE

I'm not gonna tell anybody.

SCOTT

Especially Diane.

Diane finds this hilarious before she finds it hurtful.

DIANE

Hey. I'm Diane.

SCOTT

I know! I know. I love you so much.

DIANE

Yeah. I love you too Scott.

Scott walks to the clock and winds it forward.

SCOTT

A year and a half.

Scott pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket and puts it on the table, before exiting. Diane looks around.

DIANE

Hey Scott! Do you remember where I left those weird kumquat candies? They're not in the snack cabinet. Scotty!

She sees the note.

DIANE

Scott?

She reads it. Scott is gone. Diane winds the clock forward and sits down.

DIANE

Two years.

Diane reaches down and pulls more from under the table, a comically huge pile of lemon slivers (can be oranges that look like lemons), a fork, a few whole lemons, a digital timer, a glass of water, and a bottle of antacid tablets.

DIANE

(to audience)

The record for the most lemons eaten in one sitting is 117. I've prepared 118. I'm gonna eat these lemons. No leaving the table, no eating anything else until these are done. Looking at this pile now... it's more lemons than I thought it would be. But I have all these lemons now, and if I eat these, then I have... you know. A lot of lemons and a world record.

Diane sits down, hits the timer, and begins, slowly, to eat the lemons. She takes a few bites and then takes a second to pucker, but she powers through it and continues to eat. She makes it through a lot of lemons, eating very fast, before she stops, breathing hard.

DIANE

That was about... five. I just need to do that... twenty three more times, and I'll be the world lemon champion.

Diane eats more, and there's a knock on the door.

DIANE

Oh! Shit, I was getting a package today.

Diane takes another bite of lemon. This time she puckers.
The door knocks again.

DIANE

Look! You can just leave it there, I'll come get it later!

The door unlocks and Scott walks in. He's well-dressed, he looks put together, but there's a bandage across his nose. He's been hit in the face.

SCOTT

What?

(Noticing the lemons)

What?

DIANE

Hell no. Out. Get out.

SCOTT

Diane-

DIANE

Get the fuck out! What the hell are you doing here?

SCOTT

Do you want me to tell you or do you want me to leave?

DIANE

Leave.

Beat.

SCOTT

Okay. Shit. Okay. This was... I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come.

Scott turns to leave, and makes it halfway out the door before noticing the lemons.

SCOTT

I'm sorry, I have to ask. What's with the lemons?

DIANE

Fuck you is what's with the lemons!

SCOTT

Right. Sorry. I'm sorry. I'm going. You're just... It's a lot of lemons, Di.

DIANE

I know it's a lot of lemons! It's supposed to be a lot of lemons!

Diane eats some more lemon.

SCOTT

You're eating them?

DIANE

Yes!

SCOTT

Why the hell are you eating that much lemon?

Diane throws one of the whole lemons at Scott.

DIANE

Fuck you is why! Get out!

SCOTT

You're going to give yourself a heart attack!

Diane shakes her bottle of antacids at him and shoves some more lemon in her mouth.

DIANE

(Mouth full)

Bye Scott. I'm beating a world record.

SCOTT

New hobby?

DIANE

Get out.

Scott starts to leave, but Diane notices his face.

DIANE

Did you get in a fight?

SCOTT

(too defensive)

No!

(beat.)

Yes.

Diane who, for a moment, is too angry to remember how sour lemons are, shovels a larger-than-average bite into her mouth.

SCOTT

Are you okay?

DIANE

(mouth full)

Go to hell!

SCOTT

Diane, I came to apologize.

Beat.

DIANE

I'm sorry, was that it?

SCOTT

No-

DIANE

Apology not accepted!

SCOTT

No, Diane. Please just let me-

DIANE

Explain? Scott, you've had the chance to explain yourself since we met. It's a little late.

SCOTT

I know. I know and I'm sorry. Diane, I've never been more sorry.

Beat. Diane begins to throw the whole lemons at Scott.

SCOTT

Di! Ow!

DIANE

Do you know how long I've wanted to have this goddamn conversation? Forever, Scott. Jesus!

SCOTT

I know.

DIANE

You know when the right time to have this conversation was?

SCOTT

Two years ago?

DIANE

Two! Years! Ago!

Diane throws her last lemon.

SCOTT

I know the timing's bad.

DIANE

The timing *is* bad!

SCOTT

But I want to tell you everything!

DIANE

What happened to your eye?

SCOTT

I got clocked in the head with a gun.

DIANE

What?

SCOTT

It's part of the story. I have to start at the beginning.

DIANE

Okay then, start.

As Scott tells his story, the characters in it appear onstage and act out his story as he tells it. He jumps into it when needed. He removes his bandage when he's in the story. As he does, Diane begins to slowly work her way through the lemons.

SCOTT

My family isn't the easiest family to be a part of. I knew, ever since I was a kid, that I was going to join the family business. Which just happened to be crime.

THE BOSS walks out, flanked on both sides by members of the family.

THE BOSS

All right, you sorry sons of bitches. Let's do some crime.

DIANE

Wait wait wait.

The story freezes.

SCOTT

What?

DIANE

What kind of crime?

SCOTT

Oh, I don't think it's that important.

DIANE

Scott, are you telling me everything or not?

SCOTT

Fine, okay, it was a little bit of everything. Money laundering, insider trading, I don't know. I had some cousins that I think worked as hitmen when times got tough? I was always too scared to ask.

The story resumes.

THE BOSS

All right, you sorry sons of bitches. Let's do some money laundering, insider trading, and possibly some murder if times are tough.

SCOTT

When I got old enough, I joined them. I knew it was illegal, but what was I going to do, just abandon my family?

THE BOSS

Hey, Scotty, you got that next shipment?

SCOTT

Yeah, boss. I won't let you down.

THE BOSS

That's my boy.

The Boss hands Scott a cart piled high with shipping crates.

SCOTT

There are ten basic cons. No one bothers to learn about them any more because, well hell, who really cares, right? But my family is old fashioned. I learned them all in grade school. This one is called pig-in-a-poke.

DIANE

Why?

SCOTT

That's not really important.

DIANE

Probably not. I'm still curious.

SCOTT

Okay. Okay fine, it goes like this. You get a mark to buy something from you. The first people to perform the con used a pig.

The Boss enters with a burlap sack and a stuffed piggy. A MARK enters behind them.

MARK

I sure wish I could buy a pig right now.

THE BOSS

I'll sell you a pig!

The Boss pretends to put the pig in the bag. The Mark pays the Boss and makes his way across the stage.

SCOTT

The grifter takes the money, and gives the buyer a poke. A faulty product, or something else entirely. The trick is, by the time the mark finds out they've been fooled...

The Boss makes a swift exit. The Mark opens the bag and flips it over. It's full of lemons.

Hey!

MARK

The Mark chases the Boss

... the grifter is long gone.

SCOTT

Pig in a poke.

DIANE

Pig in a poke.

SCOTT

Scott dons a pair of coke bottle glasses and a lab coat.

SCOTT

That's this con. What do you think?

DIANE

You look good.

(Diane hardens)

...for a traitorous bastard. So what are the boxes for?

SCOTT

This is the poke.

DIANE

Uh huh... and you're the grifter?

SCOTT

No, the boss is the grifter. I'm the pig.

The Boss enters, The Mark following close behind.

THE BOSS

See, this kid just graduated with his fourth PhD.

Scott slyly mimes lowering expectations.

THE BOSS

First! Sorry, something in my throat. His first PhD.

MARK
Wow! Congratulations!

SCOTT
Yeah, thanks.

DIANE
Seriously? You're playing a doctor?

SCOTT
Hey, I'm wearing glasses.

DIANE
Unbelievable.

MARK
So. I've heard you've got a medical breakthrough on your hands.

SCOTT
I do!

The Boss shoots Scott a thumbs up.

MARK
You do!

SCOTT
Do you know what the newest disease sweeping the continent of North America is?

MARK
Oh I know this one. The common cold!

The Boss and Scott both laugh like this is the funniest thing they've ever heard.

SCOTT
(dead serious)
No.

MARK
Then what?

SCOTT

The thing that's killing thousands of Americans every day is... scurvy.

MARK

What?

DIANE

What?

SCOTT

Not just regular old pirate scurvy, no, no, no. I'm talking about Superscurvy.

MARK

Superscurvy?

SCOTT

Superscurvy.

MARK

Superscurvy?

THE BOSS

Superscurvy.

DIANE

Superscurvy?

SCOTT

I'm laying it on a little thick, but look. It's working.

MARK

That's awful!

SCOTT

It is. So I did what any self-respecting bioengineer would do, and I solved the problem. Do you know what the cure to regular scurvy was?

MARK

Oranges.

SCOTT

Dihydroxyethyl dihydroxyfuran, otherwise known as ascorbic acid, otherwise known as vitamin c.

DIANE

Oh my god, you drama queen. You're eating this up.

SCOTT

You like it when I talk chemistry?

DIANE

You can't flirt with me when you're telling me your tragic backstory.

SCOTT

Your mouth says no but your eyes say sodium chloride.

DIANE

My eyes say no and my mouth says keep telling the story.

SCOTT

Vitamin C is common in oranges, yes, but it's even more common in...

Scott removes the lid of a crate. It's full of...

SCOTT

...lemons. I've engineered lemons with enough Vitamin C to eliminate Superscurvy once and for all.

DIANE

Where'd you get the lemons?

SCOTT

Walmart.

MARK

I see. I'm not sure... I read your proposal, doctor. You're charging an awful lot of money for these lemons.

SCOTT

They're my life's work.

MARK

Still, it's a very expensive product...

THE BOSS

Your competitors are more than willing to pay.

Beat.

MARK

Sold!

DIANE

So you used to be a conman. So what?

SCOTT

Oh that's not the end. This con went wrong in a big way.

MARK

Can I pay you in stock?

DIANE

No.

THE BOSS

Sure!

The Boss and the Mark shake hands and the Mark exits.

SCOTT

What are you doing?

THE BOSS

Stocks are good, Scotty!

SCOTT

Stocks are not good! Cash is good!

THE BOSS

Money is money! You worry too much.

The boss leaves.

SCOTT

When the lemons were proved to be fake, the stocks would plummet in value, and would probably trace back to us.

DIANE

Crime doesn't pay.

SCOTT

Crime pays, it just didn't in that specific circumstance. So. Things were awful, and I had two options. Either I stayed where I was and went to jail along with the rest of my family, or I did the right thing.

DIANE

Oh, please.

SCOTT

What?

DIANE

Give me a break, Scott. You didn't do it because it was the right thing, you did it because when things get tough, you run away. So you snitched, you went into witness security, you met me, we were together for a year and a half, and then things got tough, so you ran. What got tough?

SCOTT

Two days before I left, I got a call.

Scott's phone begins to ring. He answers.

THE BOSS

Hello *Scott*. Been a while.

SCOTT

How'd you get this number?

THE BOSS

I know some people who know some people. How's life on the outside treating you? It's treating me just great.

SCOTT

Outside?

THE BOSS

You heard me. Your favorite cousin made parole. You owe me a lemon scam. You're getting a flight to the city tomorrow, or we can have a little family reunion. I'd just love to meet your new girlfriend.

SCOTT

Shit.

(To Diane)

I left you a note, and I ran. I called my handler and he transferred me.

Scott hangs up.

DIANE

Where?

SCOTT

Philadelphia first, then some town in nowhere, Idaho. It didn't really matter, wherever I went...

Scott shakes his phone. It begins to ring.

SCOTT

So I thought... that's it. No more running.

(he answers the phone)

Fine. I'm in.

The Boss walks onstage. Scott falls in line behind him and PAULIE.

THE BOSS

The buyer will meet us here in five. You know what to do.

SCOTT

Then you and me, we're done. You're out of my life for good.

THE BOSS

Whatever, who needs you? Paulie's been a great replacement.

PAULIE

Yeah! I'm a great replacement!

SCOTT

I wouldn't advertise that if I were you, Paulie.

THE BOSS

Hey, lets you and I have a talk about how this is going to go down.

The boss ushers Scott away from Paulie.

SCOTT

I know how it's going to go down.

THE BOSS

Really?

SCOTT

You were the one who messed it up the first time. Don't get on my ass because you don't know how stocks work.

The Boss rushes Scott, they tussle, the fight ends when the Boss clocks Scott across the face with a revolver. Scott falls to the ground.

SCOTT

(face smushed)

And as I was laying on the ground, it was almost like I could see you there. Turning away from me.

THE BOSS

Civilian life has turned you into a smartass.

SCOTT

I've always been a smartass. Civilian life turned me into a person.

THE BOSS

Yeah, well you'd better get over that before the buyer gets here.

PAULIE

Guys! It went great!

Paulie emerges from the wings, no lemons to be found.

PAULIE

The buyer came by while you guys were talking! It went off without a hitch!

THE BOSS

What?

SCOTT

It's done?

THE BOSS

I guess so.

SCOTT

Paulie did it?

THE BOSS

I guess so. Huh. Well. That's it then. Have a nice life, Scotty.

DIANE

I know this part actually.

SCOTT

What?

DIANE

I hired a P.I. A month after you left, I got a name, a location.

SCOTT

Then what was the point of all this?

DIANE

A P.I. can tell you what someone did. They can't tell you why.

SCOTT

I didn't want to leave you.

DIANE

But you did.

(Beat.)

Let me tell you a story. I found out where you were living and what you were going to be doing.

Diane walks up to the wall and rewinds the clock a few minutes.

THE BOSS

Hey, let's you and I have a talk about how this is going to go down.

The boss ushers Scott away from Paulie. The boss exits, but Scott stays behind to hear the story. Diane stands and rushes up to Paulie. She's rushed and frantic.

SCOTT

Wait, you were there?

DIANE

I'm sorry, sorry, do you know them? Those two that just walked away.

PAULIE

Oh sure ma'am. They're my associates.

DIANE

Your associates?

SCOTT

Stop! Stop! You were there?

DIANE

Surprise.

SCOTT

You could have gotten hurt!

DIANE

I was already hurt.

SCOTT

Stop it, you know what I mean.

DIANE

I didn't say I was being rational, I just went.

PAULIE

Are you the buyer?

DIANE

The buyer? I mean. Yes, I am.

PAULIE

If you're the buyer, I should call my associates over, they're better salespeople than me.

DIANE

No! You can't! I'll uh... I'll take it! How much?

PAULIE

Gee, I don't know. These are really special lemons. A couple hundred bucks maybe?

Diane pulls out her wallet and ruffles through her bills.

DIANE

I'll give you a 50.

PAULIE

Done!

Paulie walks offstage. Diane maneuvers the lemon cart to the table and dumps them out.

SCOTT

No.

DIANE

Yeah. What now? You think just because you explained everything, we're good?

SCOTT

No. But if you want to work this out, then so do I.

DIANE

Just... just sit down. Why did you come back?

SCOTT

I didn't know where else to go. You're kind of all I have, Di.

DIANE

Desperate and sorry. Just the way I like 'em.

Scott sits.

SCOTT

Did you get new chairs?

DIANE

No.

Scott looks around the room.

SCOTT

You haven't really changed much.

DIANE

I haven't changed anything.

SCOTT

Hm.

DIANE

Don't read into it, I just like this room the way it was... is.

SCOTT

I'm not reading into it.

DIANE

You are.

SCOTT

Okay, I am a little bit.

DIANE

I wasn't... waiting for you.

SCOTT

Okay.

DIANE

I wasn't!

SCOTT

I know, I believe you.

DIANE

Do you want a snack or something? I think I've got some chips or something.

SCOTT

What about the world record?

DIANE

Fuck the world record.

SCOTT

Any grapefruit?

DIANE

Ha ha.

Diane offers him her fork and he takes it. He eats a bit of lemon and puckers. Diane laughs, and soon, Scott does too.

The End.