

FADE IN

by
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based on:
Channel 79

by
Joe Acton

Episode #5:

Jesus Take the Wheel
(and Give it to Las Vegas Vinnie)

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JESUS TAKE THE WHEEL AND GIVE IT TO LAS VEGAS VINNIE

INT. BILLY MULDOON'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A coffee shop with burgers and magazines. Flat screen televisions blaring horse races, professional sports and betting lines from around the world.

An eclectic crowd fills the place, taking notes, cheering on their favorites, tearing up pieces of paper which then litter the floor.

Brad Franklin and Lu O'Neil are at a postage-stamp-sized table. Brad looks over the menu, Lu signals to the waiter.

BRAD

Best burgers in town?

LU

That's what it says.

BRAD

Says who? Zagat? Michelin?

LU

Zagat? Michelin? Did you hit your head on the way in?

BRAD

I don't even get the menu.

(off the menu)

Do I want to know what a "Colon Blow" is?

LU

Chili -- if it says, "With Floaters" it includes corn.

BRAD

They got anything in a nice hermetically sealed bag?

The waiter shows up complete with two-day stubble, dirty apron, and what looks like horse betting forms sticking out of the apron pocket.

WAITER

Hey Lu. Who's the virgin?

LU

Brad -- new guy at Channel 8, kinda my boss.

WAITER

Just kinda, eh?
 (to Brad)
 OK, Kinda Boss, what'll it be?

BRAD

(off the menu)
 Well... ahhh... gee... I dunno...
 what do you recommend?

WAITER

The Golden Duck --

BRAD

-- I didn't see duck on here --

WAITER

Two doors down. \$1 Chinese food,
 all you can eat. Tell 'em you're
 from Muldoon's and they'll throw
 in some Pepto-Bismol with your
 cookie.

(to Lu)

I ain't got time for this Lu, I'm
 flying solo here.

LU

Couple of rendering plants with
 glue.

WAITER

Jesus take the wheel, was that so
 hard?

The waiter heads for another table.

BRAD

That's a new one.

LU

It's a song.

BRAD

You mean like "Drop Kick Me Jesus,
 Through the Goal Posts of Life?"

LU

Yeah, but now it ain't funny. Now
 they really mean it. Some chick's
 driving to Cincinnati, hits some
 black ice, loses control and
 decides to let Jesus take the
 wheel.

BRAD

Is he in the car, or something?

LU

Apparently he's always in the car.
That's the point.

BRAD

Seems about right, he's everywhere
else. He's all over the Iowa
caucuses. Can't swing a losing
candidate without hitting Jesus
over the head.

LU

I didn't think he took sides.

BRAD

Me either. But everyone in second
place or worse is trying to out-
Jesus everyone else. Kinda makes
you wonder.

LU

What?

BRAD

You know, if he were really here,
what would Jesus do?

LU

Hell, I don't know, what would
Scooby Doo do?

The waiter shows up with the "rendering plants". Brad
looks at the plates, then at Lu.

BRAD

You couldn't just say
"cheeseburger"? You had to mess me
around?

LU

White people are so polite. You
order a "rendering plant" for a
brother and he's like, "Oh, hell
no -- I ain't even hungry now."

BRAD

You know, we coulda got a
cheeseburger anywhere, what's so
special about this one?

LU

Nothing, really, but I'm going
down on a UFC guy after I see if
he's got any action.

BRAD

Whoa! Stop talking right now. This is EXACTLY the kind of conversation white people don't want to have while they're looking at a rendering plant.

LU

You are such a moron.

(imitates sign language)

Me, big, beautiful, black woman place large bet on Ultimate Fighting Championship after lunch.

BRAD

I knew that. It was the raw meat that threw me.

LU

It's rare -- that's why they call it the "rendering plant".

BRAD

You gotta stop saying that. And isn't betting illegal?

LU

Not if you're the state or an Indian.

BRAD

Which are you?

LU

Neither, but see that guy over there?

(points)

That's Las Vegas Vinnie and he's a....

BRAD

Bookie?

LU

I like to think of him as my retirement advisor.

BRAD

Bet he thinks pretty much the same thing about you.

LU

Really, he's not just a bookie he's a --

BRAD

-- gangster?

LU

No, he's not a gangster. He's like a Renaissance Man.

BRAD

So, he paints AND covers the spread and knows the over and under?

Lu is chewing, she flips him off.

LU

I'm calling him over. You'll see.

BRAD

I'm just getting used to the idea of eating a rendering plant, I don't think I can handle a Renaissance gangster --

LU

(shouts to Vinnie)
Yo, Vinnie. Bring it over here.

BRAD

'Course, he's a friend of yours so "what are the odds" I won't like him? Unless he's been mean to his "ante". Heck, he's probably a "river" of information. I'll just "flop" down here and --

Lu holds up her hand as if to say, "Enough".

LAS VEGAS VINNIE, a balding, 50ish, mouse of a man approaches the table. He looks like a gangster like Tim Conway looks like a gangster. He carries a large Moleskine notebook and a small laptop.

VINNIE

Hey, Lu.
(off Mark)
You bring the Vice Squad or something?

LU

Vinnie, Brad. Brad, Vinnie. I'm working for Brad so I can go down on some action.

BRAD

Always nice to know your role.
Pull up a sharp rock and sit down.

Vinnie sits, not sure what to make of Brad.

LU

So, what kind of odds are you giving on the UFC.

VINNIE

Gimme a minute. Been concentrating on the election - gotta kick up the UFC thing.

BRAD

You make book on the presidential election?

VINNIE

Why not? Good odds are as good a reason as any to vote.

BRAD

Ahh, yes, democracy in action.

LU

More like what's the action on democracy.

VINNE

Yeah, you guys might want to get down on the odds I'm giving, before Iowa changes them.

BRAD

You serious? You taking book on the election?

VINNIE

Only as fast as I can.

LU

What're you giving?

VINNIE

Well -- you want long odds or short?

BRAD

Why would I bet the long shot?

VINNIE

Old bookie rule: when the odds are evenly split amongst the front runners, bet the long shot.

BRAD

Like . . . for instance.

VINNIE

Well, for instance, I'm at 3 to 1 says Hillary takes the whole thing.

LU

What whole thing? There's a lot of whole things between now and November.

VINNIE

The whole, whole thing. The big enchilada. 3 to 1 says she takes the general election.

BRAD

So, what about Iowa?

VINNIE

Well now, that's where it gets interesting. Right now the polls show Obama and Edwards tied at 29% and Hillary pulling in right behind at 28%. In a three horse race, she's dead last.

BRAD

a) there's more than just three horses and 2) one point behind ain't much of a dead last.

VINNIE

Tell that to an Olympic swimmer.
(a beat)
See, Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina -- none of them really represents the majority of Americans. But what they do is show where the candidates are strong or weak.

LU

So, what? If Hillary loses in Iowa she's not going to throw the towel in. Or in New Hampshire, either.

VINNIE

Right, but Iowa is the first test of the high negatives.

BRAD

Is that like "jumbo shrimp"?

VINNIE

Hillary's got a high negative trust factor -- people's major beef is they don't trust her.

LU

To do what?

VINNIE

Do anything. Doesn't matter if they're right or wrong, it's trust they're talking about. Kinda like faith, you either have it in the candidate or you don't.

BRAD

OK, so Hillary's got a high negative trust. But you're still giving 3 to 1 on her, which is pretty damn good. Why's that?

VINNIE

Well, Obama's the only one that can derail her -- Edwards is a one-trick pony. Even if he wins in Iowa -- which he might because of the time he's spent there and the organization he's got -- it don't matter. He's got nothing going for him in New Hampshire or South Carolina.

LU

So what's his negative?

VINNIE

Experience. People may not trust Hillary, but they don't think Obama has the experience to do the job.

LU

Who doesn't? He's a U.S. Senator for Christ's sake.

VINNIE

Ain't enough.

LU

He's as qualified as anyone to be President.

VINNIE

Lu, they don't call it the White House because of the paint job. Blacks are maybe 13% of the population -- if every black in America voted for him, it wouldn't be enough. Overall, I'm giving him 8 to 2 odds to take the general and even odds to take Iowa.

(a beat)

But if loses Iowa, it better be pretty damn close or he's going to be looking that high negative of experience right in the face.

The funny thing is around 60% of New Hampshire's Democrats are polling for Obama, so I give him the lead there.

BRAD

What about Hillary?

VINNIE

Hillary doesn't expect to win Iowa or New Hampshire. She expects to get her message out, be competitive. But she knows this is an endurance contest and she'll be in it to the end. Reagan and Clinton both got waxed early on in the primaries and pulled it out at the end. Don't expect her to panic if she loses along the way to Pennsylvania Avenue.

LU

So what happens if Edwards wins?

VINNIE

Like I said, he might. In fact, Bill Clinton predicted Edwards would win in Iowa. But given the time he's spent there and the shoe leather his people have put into the blue-hair vote, if he doesn't win he's just about got to fold it up and call it a career.

BRAD

You giving odds on the rest of the Dems?

VINNIE

Somebody might, but you're wasting your money. Everyone else is either setting up for another election or lobbying to be V.P. It's these three or nobody.

The waiter makes another pass at the table with coffee refills.

VINNIE

(to the waiter)

Can I get a Roy Rogers?

WAITER

(as he walks away)

Two words: Golden Duck.

Vinnie looks at Lu, like, "What the hell?"

BRAD

We're going down there later and applying for meal tickets.

LU

(to Vinnie)

So what about the Republicans?

VINNIE

Five of consequence: McCain, Huckabee, Romney, Giuliani and Jesus.

LU

Yeah, we were just talking about that. What is it with Jesus and Republicans.

VINNIE

Must be He thinks they need more help.

BRAD

I don't get it, why are the Republican's trying to out-Jesus each other? There ARE other issues, you know.

VINNIE

Well, most of it's Huckabee and Romney trying to hold on to what they think they got. McCain dances in on religion when it's convenient, but immigration is his bogeyman.

LU

Yeah, I thought they did a full ten-count on him a while ago.

VINNIE

Pretty much they did and then Huckabee and Romney went self-destructive and suddenly McCain's got a shot. He's the candidate that the Democrats fear most in a general election because he's got the experience. But he's 71 and really hated by a lot of conservatives for his immigration stance -- I'm giving 7 to 1 on him.

BRAD

So, who's got the inside track?

VINNIE

That's where I make all my money. The Republicans are all over the place based on the issue of the week.

(rifles through his notebook)

I'm giving 6 to 1 odds on Romney to win the nomination, but he's got to finish first or second in either Iowa or New Hampshire. Anything less and the only thing he has in common with Jack Kennedy is good hair.

LU

So, what about Giuliani?

VINNIE

Pretty much the only thing he's got going for him is 9/11. Everyone in the Republican party is astonished he's led in the polls all year. He's got more personal baggage than a minivan on spring break. I'm giving 10 to 1 and I wouldn't take the bet unless someone else melts down, hard.

BRAD

Which leaves Huckabee and Jesus.

VINNIE

I'm giving 13 to 1 on Huckabee but he's got the same problem that Edwards' got -- the "then what" factor. Say he wins in Iowa -- which he has to if he wants to stay in -- then what? He's not strong anywhere else besides a few primaries in the South. And you gotta win more than the South, no matter how much Chuck Norris or Jesus likes you.

LU

So, we're back to that.

VINNIE

Back to what?

BRAD

Jesus, take the wheel.

VINNIE

Oh, yeah, Carrie Underwood. "Jesus take the wheel/ Take it from my hands/'Cause I can't do this on my own/I'm letting go/So give me one more chance/Save me from this road I'm on/Jesus take the wheel."

LU

Sounds a lot like the Republicans.

BRAD

I'm surprised you know the words.

VINNIE

Oh, yeah. I like all music, political parties, and religion. I'm strictly agnostic and a real Renaissance Man.

(a beat)

And I'll give you 2 to 1 odds on it, too.