

ACT NATURAL Cycle 1 - Episode 1 "Brütal Ödor"

By

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INT. AUDITION WAITING ROOM

A bunch of MALE ACTORS lounge about on folding chairs in a small, spartan room adorned with vintage movie posters. Some socialize, some study single page scripts on 8x10 copy paper.

A small sign-in table sits in one corner festooned with clipboards, script pages, and pens on strings. A paper sign is taped to the wall above the sign-in table. It reads:
"Brütal Ödor sign-in"

GARY MITCHELL -- a 20s/30s non-threatening, vaguely out of shape and unkempt actor type -- sits in a chair by the sign-in table, nervously studying the script page in his hand.

SHAWN HECKLER-HEWLETT -- a good-looking 20s/30s celeb wannabe type -- plonks down in the chair next to Gary. Shawn's dressed in an 80s dance outfit, like one of the kids from Fame.

SHAWN

Hey what's up.

GARY

(baffled by Shawn's outfit)

Hey.

SHAWN

What the fuck's this for?

GARY

Brutal odour? Some kind of deodorant body spray thing.

Shawn grabs a script page off the sign-in table and casts a look around the room.

SHAWN

Do we have to make out with dudes?

GARY

What?

SHAWN

Never mind.

GARY

Aren't you going to sign-in?

(CONTINUED)

SHAWN

They know who I am.

GARY

Why the hell are you dressed like that?

SHAWN

Like what?

GARY

Like John Travolta from Staying Alive.

SHAWN

He wore a white suit Gary. Jesus, see a movie once in a while.

GARY

No, Staying Alive. It was the sequel. In the 80s. Where Tony Monero actually goes to Manhattan and tries to be a professional dancer.

SHAWN

No, now you're thinking of Scarface. Anyway whatever. It says right here. We're dancers.

GARY

No, it says we have to "dance and party." It's a nightclub scene.

Shawn notices RICHARD ROSENBLAT -- teens/20s, a nerdy momma's boy -- as he walks by and fist bumps him.

SHAWN

Heey! Slick Ricky Rosenblat! Nice S.O.C. work in that Cheese Strings thing!

SHAWN

(to Gary)

I was on hold for that. That guy's a dick.

Gary's nerves are getting to him, and Shawn's only making it worse.

GARY

Does this place have a vending machine? I'm going to get a water.

SMASH TO: TITLE AND OPENING CREDITS

INT. CASTING OFFICE HALLWAY

A grimy old coffee machine sputters away on a rickety table, surround by scattered cups and sugar packets. A slot-lid coffee can sits beside the machine with a small sign taped to it that reads "Coffee \$1". There are no vending machines in sight. Gary approaches the table, digging in his pockets for change. The thin layer of sludgy coffee looks disgusting, but he checks his meager funds. He doesn't have enough. He thinks about short-changing the tin, but he can't.

GARY

Shit.

Just then JULIE the casting assistant -- 20s, pretty, bubbly -- pushes a catering trolley by, loaded with glistening bottles of water, dewy cans of pop, and delicious-looking sandwiches and pastries piled up on trays.

GARY

Hey, hey -- I hate to ask but I'm waiting on a residual cheque and I only have fifty eight cents and that coffee costs \$1. Could I -- do you think I could have one of those waters?

JULIE

No.

GARY

Really? I have an audition, and I get really dry mouth. I'm a theatre actor, you know -- *the stage* -- I just still get a little nervous in TV auditions. I'll give you fifty eight cents. If you could just--

JULIE

Dude, I don't care if you're the phantom of the fucking opera, we don't feed talent. This is for the clients and agency people.

Humiliated and desperate, Gary watches as Julie opens a door and wheels the cart into a client room.

As the door opens Gary catches a glimpse of the inside of the room. He's transfixed, like he's staring into the monolith in 2001.

(CONTINUED)

CUT: FROM GARY'S FACE TO THE CAMERA FOLLOWING THE CART INTO
THE ROOM IN SLOW MOTION

INT. CASTING OFFICE CLIENT ROOM

SHOT: CUTS AROUND THE ROOM, EVERYTHING IN SLOW MOTION

From Gary's perspective, the client room is a golden-hued promised land. Good-looking, well-dressed ad agency men and women flirt, laugh and indulge themselves. A pretty girl sits on a guy's knee as he pours her more champagne. A man with a napkin tucked into his collar digs into a delicious-looking steak. A beautiful woman is getting a "buddy" shoulder massage from a handsome co-worker. People are in animated conversation, laughing at jokes and patting each other on the backs.

An ad man takes a pastry from the cart and slips Julie a \$50 bill with a wink.

Julie pockets the bill, turns toward us and leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

SMASH TO: GARY AS THE DOOR CLOSES, NOW IN REAL-TIME AGAIN

INT. CASTING OFFICE HALLWAY

Julie leaves down the hallway, shooting Gary a disapproving look. Gary is dumbfounded. He's just standing there in front of the door when it opens again suddenly, and MIKE KELLY -- same age as Gary but fit, strapping, well groomed and well dressed, one of the ad men -- slips out, closing it behind him.

MIKE

Oh, sorry chief.

GARY

(getting his wits back)

Oh yeah, sorry, no problem, I'm in your way.

MIKE

(catches himself)

Gary?

GARY

(uncertain)

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Gary Mitchell?

GARY

Oohhh... You must have seen me as Puck at the Sterling Theatre festival last--

MIKE

Holy shit! Gary the fairy? It's me buddy! Mike! From grade 10 gym! We used to rip your shorts down during murderball!

GARY

(horrified)

Mike? Mike Kelly? What the--

MIKE

Yeah dude! I'm a senior accounts guy at Aardvark! We're doing all the interactive and TV for the Brütal Ödor launch.

GARY

W--

MIKE

Yeah dude!

GARY

I thought you were going to be a football player or something.

MIKE

What are we, 16? I got a job! I just bought an R8 and a Tip Top loft. What about you?

GARY

Uh, yeah totally, you know, pretty good...

MIKE

Still want to be an actor eh? Living the dream? I remember you and those mentally retarded kids used to play Dungeons & Dragons in the cafeteria. And you had that mime club.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

(stumbling, trying to play it up)

Yeah. I, I actually *am* an actor. Well I did a theatre degree, a little summerstock. Just making the move into film & TV now. You know. It's what my agent thinks is best. For my career, kind of thing.

There's an awkward pause.

MIKE

Right. Awesome. Well hey buddy, good to see ya.

Mike fake-punches for Gary, making him flinch.

MIKE

Aah! Got ya!

GARY

Yeah.

Mike leaves down the hallway, leaving Gary to beat himself up for acting like such a dork.

INT. AUDITION WAITING ROOM

Shawn is exactly where we left him. Gary enters, empty-handed.

SHAWN

Where's your water?

GARY

I have a university degree. I'm a trained actor....

CASTING DAVE appears from the audition room, closing the door behind him. Dave is the casting assistant and camera guy -- a nerdy sadist who looks like he hasn't bathed in a week. He's holding a clipboard.

CASTING DAVE

(reading, to room)

Okay listen up meat puppets. We're ready to go. Shawn Heckler-Hewlett, Paul Proteko-tits? Whatever. Richard Rosenblat, Gary Mitchell. You're all up.

Shawn, Gary and the two others head into the audition room.

INT. AUDITION ROOM

The black-draped audition room is small and brightly lit. A video camera sits on a tripod at the far end behind a bright lightbank, and Casting Dave crosses to it. Behind the camera are a small group of agency people at a folding table. The DIRECTOR -- 30s/40s dressed in black with creative facial hair and sunglasses -- leans against the table, studying the four actors. A small boombox sits beside him.

The guys take their positions in a row on the line of tape on the floor in front of the camera.

Richard is obviously nervous. Paul is a metal-head. Gary tries to look enthusiastic and cooperative. Shawn begins stretching.

DIRECTOR

So. You are four gentlemen friends at a nightclub. You are sensual predators, but lonely. You seek mates. You have doused yourselves in Brütal Ödor, and now you are irresistible to women. I want you to dance and party. Action.

The director presses play on the boombox and tinny euro house music starts squawking from the tiny speakers.

Gary is mortified. The other three guys tentatively start to dance. Shawn launches into a string of cliched, energetic popular dances, Paul starts thrashing and banging his head, his hands in devil horns, and Richard nervously reenacts a series of moves from a ballroom dancing class, occasionally trying to co-opt someone to be his partner. All the while the director is shouting instructions at them, driving them harder.

DIRECTOR

(con't)

Come on, more partying! Smiles!
Smiles! Seduce me! You call yourselves actors? Act, damn you!
Hear the music! Hear it in your loins! Express yourselves with fierce passion!

Surrounded by escalating chaos, Gary begins to dance out of pure shame and fear. It's painfully awkward. Like the Elaine dance but worse. He's so embarrassed he could die.

(CONTINUED)

DIRECTOR

(con't, to Gary)

You there! You're not dancing
right! You're not partying! Dance!
Party! Act, god damn you! Look!
Look at your friends! Feed off each
other! Use each other's movements
as inspiration! Feel your bodies!
Smell the Brütal Ödor emanating
from each other!

Then, just as the dancing reaches its ridiculous fever pitch
the director stops the music and the entire emotional
atmosphere of the room shuts abruptly off.

DIRECTOR

(con't, politely)

And cut. Thank you.

EXT. CASTING PARKING LOT - DAY

Shawn and Gary exit the casting place. Shawn's obviously
feeling pretty good about himself, but Gary looks positively
suicidal.

SHAWN

Well that went pretty good.

GARY

Are you fucking kidding! That was
humiliating. We looked ridiculous.

SHAWN

Give me a break, they make it look
cool with editing. Anyway, it won't
be so humiliating when you're
cashing those residual cheques. You
gotta loosen up.

GARY

I'm a trained actor for god's sake.
I have a university degree.

SHAWN

(immitating)

I have a university degree.
Whatever Shakespeare. Acting is all
bullshit anyway. Auditions are like
a lottery. They just draw names at
the end.

(CONTINUED)

Enter JEN -- 20s/30s, quirky, pretty but not bombshellish. She's dressed kind of like a little kid and she's obviously wearing a diaper under her pants.

JEN

Hey guys.

SHAWN

Hey Jen.

JEN

What are you guys here for?

SHAWN

Brütal Ödor. Some douchy body spray thing.

JEN

Do you have to make out with guys?

SHAWN

I know, right?

JEN

Hi Gary.

GARY

Hi Jen. Uhm, are you wearing a diaper?

JEN

Oh I have an audition. I'm supposed to be an incontinent teenager.

SHAWN

Seriously?

JEN

What! It pays scale and a half, alright?

There's a pause as that sinks in, and then Gary and Shawn both nod as if to say "that's a pretty good deal". They mope as we:

SMASH TO: END TITLES