

THE APARTMENT

by

Brandi Self

writerbself@yahoo.com
Los Angeles, CA 90020

INT. UBER CAR - DAY

A DRIVER jams through traffic as PAUL and SHIRLEY WATANABE, early 30's, tourists, type on their phones in the back seat.

SHIRLEY

Are you sure we're going the right way?

(whispers to Paul)

The app says--

PAUL

Not now, babe. Posting.

SHIRLEY

Don't forget to tag me.

(scrolls)

Ooh, another one of those dancing-in-public videos. They're on the escalator, no one can get by. Look at the people's faces behind them. Hate upvote.

PAUL

Inconsiderate twats, gotta love them. LOL.

A ding sounds.

SHIRLEY

(without looking up)

We're here!

PAUL

You sure?

SHIRLEY

Yep. The little car is on top of the building.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

They grab their bags, still typing on their phones. The driver goes to speak, but Shirley shuts the door.

DRIVER

Thanks and have a--

SHIRLEY

Decent driver. Nice conversation. A bit of a smell. Four stars.

The car takes off.

PAUL
Where did she say we would find the
keys?

SHIRLEY
"Under the big rock".

PAUL
"Under the big rock", what does
that mean?

SHIRLEY
That's what it says.

A HOMELESS MAN stands with a sign that reads, "Seeking
Humanity."

The Homeless Man looks hopeful as they excitedly rush over to
him.

HOMELESS MAN
Spare any--

SHIRLEY
(extends selfie stick,
posing)
Selfie!

She snaps a picture. They examine it, the Homeless Man stuck
in the middle.

PAUL
That's a good one.

SHIRLEY
Ugh, look at my chin, it's all
bunched under. Do over.

PAUL
Just edit. Maybe turn it black and
white.

SHIRLEY
Artsy.
(types)
Hashtag "Best Trip Ever".

PAUL
What about texting her?

SHIRLEY
No phone number.

They walk to the building as the Homeless Man follows.

HOMELESS MAN
I take donations...

SHIRLEY
(types on her phone)
Messaging her on IG again.

PAUL
My battery's low, I need to plug
in.

The Homeless Man opens the door for them as he holds out his hand. They go in, ignoring him.

Paul and Shirley gaze down at their phones.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Just finished my island city in
Minecraft. Killed it!

SHIRLEY
Ooh, seventeen "likes" already.

PAUL
(types on his phone)
Eighteen!

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Shirley walk inside, completely immersed in their phones. The door closes behind them with a thud.

PAUL
Big rock. Big rock.

SHIRLEY
Maybe it's code for something.
(types on her phone)
Googling.

PAUL
Asking Reddit.

SHIRLEY

The page won't load.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No connection.

PAUL (CONT'D)
There it is!

Paul bends down at a potted plant. Picks up a big rock with an emoji face, the eyes replaced with "X's" and tongue out.

PAUL (CONT'D)
LMAO, look at this.

They both make the same face. Take a selfie with it.

BOTH
Blah!

A vintage key drops from underneath it. They put it into the door. It creaks as they open it.

They throw the rock down. Its X eyes seem to follow them.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Shirley look around the bare basic studio.

SHIRLEY
Absolutely nothing like the photos
online. It's so... boring.

PAUL
Smells like mothballs.
(stares at phone)
Great. Dead.

He plugs his phone in as she stares up at the whiteboard with
"Tina Spurious 323-543-0000", written across it.

SHIRLEY
Here's her phone number. She
couldn't just e-mail it to me? I
don't know about this place.

PAUL
It's a little monk minimalist chic,
but at least she's got a smart TV.

He plops down in a chair in front of the TV. Grabs the
remote. Clicks it. Nothing. Tries another button.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What's wrong with this thing?
(pulls the back open)
No batteries. Where's my laptop?

SHIRLEY
Small bag.
(on her phone)
Still no reception...

Paul opens it. Sits down with his laptop. Turns it on. A
screen pops up, "Welcome to The Apartment."

PAUL
"Welcome to The Apartment"?
(to Shirley)
What's the network?

SHIRLEY
I don't know. I can't see my e-
mails without connecting. What
networks are coming up?

PAUL
None.

SHIRLEY
For me either. Let me see my
tablet.

He hands it to her. She turns it on. Stares at the screen.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Nope.
(calls into the air)
Alexa, are you there? Alexa? No
one's answering.

PAUL	SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Alexa, hello?	Alexa? Siri? Google
	Assistant? Echo?

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
This is so weird.

PAUL
Maybe we just have to reset the
router. You see it anywhere?
(searching)
If I was a router, where would I
be?

SHIRLEY
Maybe by the TV?

Paul walks over. Looks in and around the TV stand. After a
moment, he steps back in horror.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

PAUL
This... isn't even a real TV.

SHIRLEY
What?

PAUL
(thumps it)
It's fake.

SHIRLEY
Well, that's not creepy at all.

PAUL
Why would anyone put a fake TV in here?

SHIRLEY
I don't like this. I knew something wasn't right as soon as I walked in.
(hands her phone)
Go outside and call her, will you?

PAUL
Yeah. This is ridiculous. BRB.

SHIRLEY
Make sure you threaten her with a well-worded, angry review. I would rate it zero stars if I could!

He opens the door. He steps out but immediately falls back into the apartment as if he never left.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
What are you doing, I thought you were going to call her?

He stands still, unable to compute.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Give me the phone, I'll do it.

She grabs it. Walks out. The same thing happens, back in the apartment as if coming in from the outside.

She goes at a more rapid pace, only returning inside faster.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Banging as Paul watches the laptop with the bouncing text that says, "Welcome to The Apartment". Over to Shirley who is pounding on the wall.

SHIRLEY
Help, someone, please let us out of here!

(MORE)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Something's wrong with our door,
the window doesn't work, and
there's no router! I repeat, no
router! I need you to DM someone
for me. Do you hear me? I'm @--

PAUL

Shirley, please, it's been hours.
No one's out there.

SHIRLEY

What are we going to do? You saw
what happened. That's not like a
broken lock or something, that's,
that's... I don't know what the
hell it is because I can't even
look it up or ask some niche
community to investigate!

PAUL

Let's not have a nervous breakdown.

SHIRLEY

(paces)

This was a bad idea. My stomach is
all in knots. I feel like I'm
sweating, am I sweating?

PAUL

I kinda feel sick, too.
(holds up his hand)
I'm trembling!

SHIRLEY

But, it's not even cold! Paul, I'm
scared.

PAUL

Yeah, you've really gotten us into
a mess, haven't you?

SHIRLEY

Me?

PAUL

Of course, you're the one who got
us the trip to Los Angeles in the
first place by filling out all of
those e-surveys!

SHIRLEY

It was your idea to sublet!

PAUL

The woman had impeccable ratings on BNB Buddies! The vlogger that cries while he overeats stayed here.

SHIRLEY

The one that no one's heard from in months?

PAUL

Yeah, he did kind of disappear, didn't he?

SHIRLEY

No one knows where we are. We have no way of contacting anyone. Why did I have to fill out so many e-surveys? God, I feel so stupid!

PAUL

Hey, look, it's not entirely your fault... There's got to be a reasonable explanation for all of this. Come on, emoji smile face?

SHIRLEY

How about an emoji frown face! How can anyone possibly explain this? It's completely absurd!

PAUL

Confused emoji. What do you want me to say?

She sits on the other side of the bed, their backs turned to each other.

SHIRLEY

I haven't tweeted in almost an hour. What if they think I'm dead?

PAUL

I was supposed to be online ten minutes ago for a rematch with BulletzforBreakfast.

They remain silent for what seems like an eternity before Shirley quickly stands, panicked.

SHIRLEY

I need to get out of here. I need to get out of here and find someplace where I can connect!
(desperate)
(MORE)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Maybe we could pray like they do on TV? That's a thing, isn't it? Isn't it?

She bursts into tears when he doesn't respond. He tries to comfort her as they turn to each other.

PAUL

There, there. You're going to be...

She looks up, her eyes red and vulnerable like "yes?" He zeros in on her.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey, your eyes look weird.

SHIRLEY

What?

PAUL

They turn green when you cry, I never noticed that.

SHIRLEY

You look different, too.

PAUL

I do... how?

SHIRLEY

Like you're in high definition.
Like I can see everything.

PAUL

I feel like we're always together,
but I've never really looked at
you.

SHIRLEY

(pulls away)
Well, please stop.

PAUL

What?

SHIRLEY

Nothing. It's just... it's making
me uncomfortable.

PAUL

Me, looking at you, makes you
uncomfortable?

SHIRLEY

Well, I have no control over the angles... I *can't* edit.

PAUL

What if that's... okay?

SHIRLEY

In what universe would that be okay?

PAUL

I'm just saying you look nice. And maybe being stuck in here isn't that bad. At least we're here together.

SHIRLEY

That's the sweetest thing you've ever said to me.

PAUL

I wonder if there are other things besides the weird eyes that I don't know about you?

SHIRLEY

Right, I mean, maybe...

A phone makes a noise. They make eye contact.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

My phone!

PAUL

Sounds like mine.

SHIRLEY

Trust me, it's not.

They run towards it. Paul grips it but stumbles. Shirley pulls his leg, dragging him away from it.

PAUL

Hey!

He smushes her head down. She reaches up, her hands wild, trying to poke out his eyes as he grabs. She bites his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ow!

SHIRLEY

Drop it!

PAUL
Will you stop it! Look at us, look
how we're acting.

SHIRLEY
You're right. I don't know what
came over me.

PAUL
Now if we can just--

She suddenly twists his nipple. Takes it from him.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Agh!

Starts typing as Paul nurses his hand and nipple.

PAUL (CONT'D)
A nipple twist, really?
And my hand, it's bleeding!

SHIRLEY
You brought it on yourself.
(looks at phone)
Damn it! Great! Service is out
again.
(throws phone on the bed)
God, I hate this place!

He grabs it. She's right. Back to the blank screen that says,
"Welcome to The Apartment". He tosses it down.

They slump back into their positions on the bed, their backs
to each other again.

They sit there for a moment, not looking at one another.

Emotions overcome Shirley, welling up inside. Paul sighs,
defeated. Shirley swallows. Closes her eyes.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Paul?

He turns. She turns to him.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END