Easy Does It

Episode 8

Home is Where the Heart Is

By

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INT. DAY. STUDIO.

Bentley Internet Designs has been closed for business for three months since Hurricane Katrina almost completely demolished most of the neighborhoods and the economy of New Orleans. The entire staff has not been together at the same time until this day. Minor renovations have taken place at the building and it’s time that they put the business back together. This is their grand re-opening. Rustan has arrived early. He hears heels hurriedly coming up the stairs.

**RUSTAN**

Roxy?!

# ROXY

Rustan?!

# RUSTAN

Get your ass in here!

Roxy enters the studio.

(continued)

You bastard!

# ROXY

You bitch!

They hug each other gleefully holding back tears.

**RUSTAN**

Ooooh, it’s so good to *see*

you!

# ROXY

You too! I’ve missed you so

*much*!

Looking around.

(continued)

The place looks *great*! It’s like

it’s been untouched. In fact, it

looks better than before. What’s

been *done* to the place?

# RUSTAN

*Well*. You’ll be *happy* to know

that we were *heavily* insured.

This old building took it like

the old New Orleans wench she is.

We had some roof and water damage

but it’s been thoroughly repaired

and she’s ready for *another* century.

We’ve got money to *spare*!

Rustan and Roxy jump around in circles hugging each other.

# ROXY

I’m *so* relieved. You can’t

*believe* the horrible thoughts

I’ve had these last months.

**RUSTAN**

Oh, yes I can. Me and horrible

thoughts?; good friends now. We

made it, though. We made it!

The sound of the downstairs door is heard opening and another set of footsteps is heard running up the stairs. Diana enters the studio.

**RUSTAN AND ROXY**

AAAaaaahhhh!!!!!!

Diana, Roxy and Rustan hug and hold each other continuing to jump around in a circle. They can’t help but start to cry. Diana is already in a pool of tears.

# DIANA

(crying)

You’re here, you’re here. Oh

my God, you’re here!

# ROXY

Are you alright?

# DIANA

Who the hell’s alright?

Touching their faces with both of her hands.

(to both of them)

You’re here. Are you OK?

# RUSTAN

(laughing and crying)

Who the hell’s OK?

(pause)

# DIANA

(seriously, choking on memories)

Maman.

They stand sentimentally looking to each other for several moments. They all begin crying together.

## RUSTAN

*Thank* you, Diana.

# DIANA

For *what*?

# RUSTAN

For doing what you did.

Rustan cannot speak further blocked by tears.

**ROXY**

You went and *got* those people.

It took a lot of courage for you

to do that. Maman would have

been left to…

Roxy cannot continue.

# DIANA

*Stop* it ya’ll. You’d have done

the *exact* same thing. I just

wish I would have gotten there

sooner. It’s *Denny* I’m worried

about.

**RUSTAN**

How’s he doing, anyway?

# DIANA

You’re just going to have to

ask him yourselves. He’s bringing

my stuff up from the car now.

Denison enters the studio carrying two boxes and puts them down on one of the tables and looks at the other three. Roxy goes to him instantly and quietly hugs him. Rustan hasn’t seen him since before the hurricane. He was out of town for Maman’s funeral. Denison and Rustan make eye contact and gravitate toward each other. Rustan breaks down crying. Denison holds him strongly.

# RUSTAN

I’m sorry, Denny. I’m so

sorry.

Denison holds and comforts him for a while.

# DENISON

(sarcastically)

You *are* sorry, bitch. *Get* off

my ass.

Rustan is now crying and laughing, still holding on.

(continued)

I’d have stayed *home* if I’d

known I was gonna have to put

up with *this*.

# RUSTAN

(composing himself looking him in the eye)

*Don’t* pull that tough black man

crap with *me*. I’m sorry I had

to miss the funeral. She was a

*great* woman. You’re very lucky

to have had someone so special

in your life. *How’s* your momma

doing?

**DENISON**

As best she can. She still feels responsible for her death. I’m

worried about her. She hasn’t

been herself since.

The sound of the door is heard again and Evan makes his way up the stairs, enters the studio and surmises what’s going on.

# EVAN

Oh, Gawd. Don’t tell me ya’ll

are still having your nyu nyu

funeral boo hoo reunion going on.

I thought this would‘ve been

over by now or I’d’ve come

later.

Roxy goes over to hug him.

**ROXY**

Get over here, you *ass*.

**EVAN**

(hugging Roxy, to Diana)

You don’t have that *gun* in your

purse, I hope.

### DIANA

(hugging him too)

I just *might*. Don’t *mess* with

*me*, sucka.

### RUSTAN

Yeah, she’s probably wanted by

the *law.*

(continued, to Denison)

And *you*, too.

Denison shrugs off the comment.

### EVAN

*What* law? The last thing I heard,

they’ve moved the District

Attorney’s offices to an old

live music *warehouse* down the

street.

### ROXY

Don’t you worry, Diana. If they

try to come and get you, I’ll

tell them that I’m Thelma and

you’re Louise.

### DIANA

Ya’ll *won’t* believe it. We had

absolutely *no* trouble parking today.

We pulled up right in front and

just *parked*!

**DENISON**

I was still looking over my

shoulder for a meter maid, though.

I guess it’s just instinct. If

the City of New Orleans gets

anything up and running soon,

it’ll be them.

**RUSTAN**

*I* was surprised when I came in

this morning to hear traditional

Mexican music coming out of two

different buildings. I thought

I was in the wrong city.

### ROXY

Bienvenidos Nuevo Orleans! I

hear that they have filled all

of the local motels that aren’t

flooded and are camping out in

City Park.

### RUSTAN

There’s *so* much work that has

to be done around here. Eighty

percent of our neighborhoods are uninhabitable! *Our* people aren’t

going to be back for a long time.

I’m grateful they’re *here*. I

can’t say how *legal* any of it is.

#### ROXY

Well, some of us are back. We’re

just staying in hotels that none

of us have ever been able to

*afford* without FEMA’s dime.

#### DIANA

(to Roxy)

How badly flooded we’re your

family’s houses?

**ROXY**

In the houses, up to my neck.

If you were standing in the street,

the water would have been over

your head. They’re still finding

bodies. I’ve never seen anything

like this in my life. Ask Rustan.

He knows.

#### RUSTAN

Yep. My house flooded up to the

kitchen cabinets. It’s almost

surreal to describe what it

looked like the first time I

went in. Ruined furniture lying

in unimaginable positions. Walls

covered with mold. My washing

machine was in my bathroom.

Files, photographs, artwork,

books strewn everywhere, ruined.

The dead grass. Everything dead.

Comatose.

#### EVAN

And all those rotting refrigerators everywhere. It stinks so bad!

**RUSTAN**

At least you have a *house* to

live in.

#### EVAN

Yeah. And, lucky for you, *you*

do *too*.

#### RUSTAN

You *would* be bitching about your

small problems.

**EVAN**

One of my *small* problems could

become one of your *big* problems.

#### DENISON

(to Diana and Roxy)

It’s good to know some things

never change.

#### ROXY

(unknowing)

*Wait* a minute. *You two* are going

to be *living* together?

#### EVAN

Where the hell *else* is he going

to go? It’s going to take FEMA

*months* to set up trailers.

Roxy, Diana and Denison consider the possibility of Evan and Rustan living together in the same house.

#### DIANA

(facitiously)

I know some social workers.

I can call them *now.*

#### RUSTAN

*Believe* me, it won’t be for long.

I’m going to move in here onto

the upper floor. Hell, Evan

still doesn’t have *power.* We

might *all* be moving in here.

#### ROXY

I’m not leaving *my* hotel until

I *have* to. It’s going to take

*months* to fix all of our houses.

My insurance company hasn’t even

returned my calls yet.

#### DENISON

I’m just so grateful that our

upper floor didn’t flood. There’s

still no electricity or gas

anywhere in the neighborhood.

Living in a hotel temporarily

is a minor inconvenience compared

to all of those who lost everything.

I can’t *imagine* how devastating

that must be for those people.

#### DIANA

And all those poor people along

the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

They’re pause momentarily reflecting on all the loss.

#### RUSTAN

(changing the mood)

But it is *so* good to be home

and back together.

### ROXY

You are *so* right about that.

I’ll be forever grateful to

the City of Houston and the

Red Cross for putting us up,

but it’s another *world* out there.

I went into a sandwich shop and instinctively ordered a roast

beef po-boy dressed and the

woman looked at me like I was

from *another* planet. Luckily,

one of the girls behind the

counter understood and told

her, “She’s from New Orleans.”

She still didn’t know what

I had ordered.

### EVAN

It’s like another world *here*.

Nothing’s open in Gentilly.

No people, no traffic, no

streetlights, these makeshift

stop signs everywhere. You

have to plan when you’re going

to get food in Metairie, no bars,

I always have my flashlight

at my side. Thank *God* the

toilet flushes. The sound of

the Red Cross van passing by

every day dispensing food and

water reminds me of the sound

of the ice-cream man coming by

when we were kids.

**DIANA**

Ya’ll should see the *North* shore.

Traffic *everywhere.* It seems

like the population doubled

overnight. This once small

rural community is now overrun

with people not knowing where

they’re going. It’s like we’re

having the opposite effect of

what’s happening to New Orleans.

**ROXY**

(reflecting)

It *is* good to be home. But is

*home* going to recover soon enough

to support our families? Guys,

we need to *talk* about this. Do

we *know* what the future holds

for this city, our families

and our business?

# RUSTAN

(reflecting)

*No*, we don’t.

**DIANA**

God, it’s so *sad*. I don’t live

in the city anymore, but you’ve

got to remember, I grew up near

Galvez and Canal. I *love* this

city with all my heart. What

has happened to New Orleans and

what could become of its future

just tears me apart.

**DENISON**

Things are never going to be

as they were before.

# EVAN

That could be a bador a *good*

thing.

# ROXY

(realizing his intention)

You have a point, Evan. But

we’re not talking about crime,

the murder rate, dismal education

or crooked politics. We’re

talking about the *city*. The

*spirit* of New Orleans. What

do we stand to lose if the

people of the city can’t afford

to return? New Orleans is not

just its history and architecture,

culture and cuisine. It’s its

*people* who created it. *That’s*

what makes this city so unique.

We stand a great chance of

losing just what *other* people

come here to experience. In

the long run, our lives and

our business might be greatly

affected by this.

# RUSTAN

Roxy’s absolutely right. Our

*greatest* problem is not getting

Bentley Internet Designs up and

running again; it’s ensuring

that New Orleans remains

culturally *intact.* *Face* it.

People from *all* over the world

would not be coming here if

it weren’t for the unique

qualities that only *this* city

can provide. If our tourism

base declines, so does our

local economy. And in business

sense, that pretty much spells

out a bleak future.

### DIANA

(sadly and insultingly)

Ya’ll are being so callous and

*businesslike* about this. Is

*that* all you’re *worried* about?

Rustan and Roxy look to each other.

### RUSTAN

(sensitively)

Diana, you *know* we love this

city as much as the next guy.

But this *is* a place of business.

This *is* a business meeting.

### EVAN

(interrupting)

And if you want to wax sentimentally

about New Orleans, just come over

to my house *any* night of the week

and I’m sure you’ll be treated to

one of Rustan’s *endless* proverbial predictions of what’s going to

happen to the city. I’m *sick* of

hearing about it.

#### RUSTAN

(referring to Evan)

I can’t believe I have to *depend*

on *him*.

(continued to Evan)

I *am* grateful, (pause) idiot.

#### ROXY

(referring to Rustan and Evan)

They are going to *kill* each other.

Diana, maybe you should put those

social workers on speed dial.

#### DENISON

Better yet, we should probably

have one positioned outside the

house around the clock.

#### RUSTAN

No, ya’ll don’t have to worry

about us. We *did* grow up together.

Some of us not *all* the way. I’ll

be the *first* to say how proud I

am of my brother rescuing people

in Gentilly. Our neighbors the

Giacamino’s niece drove down to

New Orleans to get some things

from their house and Miss Evelyn

sent a whole basket of Italian

goodies for us.

#### EVAN

What you mean, *us*?

#### RUSTAN

I already ate the biscotti.

#### EVAN

That was for *me.*

#### DENISON

(to Roxy and Diana)

They *are* going to kill each

other.

#### DIANA

My neighbor Natalie has been

cooking food and cleaning clothes

for all the people working

constantly since the storm.

I don’t know how she does it.

She’s got three kids of her

own but she’s more concerned

about everyone else.

**RUSTAN**

There are top notch chefs in

the city who have probably lost

their businesses who are cooking

great food for workers free.

##### EVAN

Events like this bring out the

best and the worst in people.

### ROXY

I think we’ve all seen enough

of the worst.

### RUSTAN

(seriously frustrated)

Don’t get me started on the

looters. One of the journalists

got this criminal jerk on tape

saying, “When things get this

bad, we *take* from each other.”

I just wanted to grab him by

the neck through the television

and say, “*No* you don’t. You

*HELP* each other!”

## DIANA

(sarcastically)

I’m *glad* you’re not getting

*started…*

#### ROXY

(changing the subject)

Denny, I’m *worried* about Lorraine.

How *is* she doing, really?

#### DENISON

Not too good. She’s been

depressed, of course, but she

just hasn’t been herself ever

since. She keeps asking me

where I parked my car even

though I *know* she knows it

flooded. She’s disoriented

in the hotel. She keeps cleaning

up the room for housekeeping.

My uncle Clarence came down

to see her and he wants her

to get therapy or some kind

of medication but it’s hard

to find available doctors.

She loved her work and now

*that’s* gone. *All* of her friends

are scattered all over the place.

#### ROXY

Do you think it would help if

*we* talked to her?

#### DENISON

Maybe so. I’m sure she’d appreciate

any visitors. And Lord knows

I could *use* some time away.

#### DIANA

Well, you just say the word

and we’ll come over or take

her out or something.

(continued, hoping Denison’s sense of humor is intact)

She’s probably sick of *you*, too.

#### DENISON

I *know* she is.

#### RUSTAN

Did you all read the article in

the Times Picayune the other day

about how many people from New

Orleans are on anxiety medication?

There are *lines* at the few open

pharmacies. Unrelated deaths and

suicides are increasing.

#### EVAN

Well, it *goes* with the territory.

*This* city’s been beaten up badly.

#### RUSTAN

I *still* can’t go down Elysian

Fields toward the lake without

crying. It’s just so hard to

comprehend. House after house,

block after block, all just

ruined with nobody there.

And last week as I was walking

in the French Quarter, at a

certain point, I didn’t know

whether to sing or to cry.

#### ROXY

A lot of people are emotionally

and psychologically topsy-turvy.

#### DIANA

It’s going to take a *long* time

to recover.

#### DENISON

I heard this commentator on

television yesterday questioning

whether New Orleans should be

rebuilt at *all*. I wanted to

*knock* his lights out. Like

after three hundred years of

American history we’re just

going to up and leave. It seems

that the *only* people who truly

understand New Orleans are those

 who live here and the people

around the world who’ve been

somehow touched by it.

#### ROXY

And there are a *lot* of people

who’ve been touched by it.

The outpouring of love and help

from everywhere has been

tremendous. So many people

have some sort of *connection*

to this city that they hold

dear. I hate to admit it, but

I got tired of talking about it

to strangers. It got to the

point when we were in Houston

that if anyone asked me where

I was from, I would just say,

“Idaho.”

#### RUSTAN

(angrily)

After all this craziness, I

would want to say I was from

*Jupiter*. The way *this* situation

was handled politically from

*top* to bottom was *horrendous.*

#### EVAN

Don’t get him started.

#### DIANA

(agreeing)

Easy does it, Rustan.

Rustan, knowing that he could be set off at any moment, goes to the window and quietly looks out.

# DENISON

(to Roxy)

I *know* what you mean. No

matter where people are from,

they have this love and concern

for New Orleans. It’s not

just the tragedy of the storm

bringing it out in people.

This is heartfelt. It’s a

mourning. There’s a sense

of something lost. Maybe

forever.

**ROXY**

(verbally daydreaming)

And memories. Memories of

encounters that you may have

had on a French Quarter street

corner or remembering something

that you’d prefer to forget.

**DIANA**

Yeah. Or the nosy next door

neighbor on the porch in her

housecoat minding everyone’s

business.

(pause)

### EVAN

The rhythm.

(pause)

**RUSTAN**

The soul.

START: Louis Armstrong “What a Wonderful World”

VIDEO MONTAGE:

END.

###### What a Wonderful World

George Weiss ~ Bob Theil

Performed by Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green

Red roses too

I see them bloom

For me and you

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue

And clouds of white

The bright-blessed day

The dark sacred night

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow

So pretty in the sky

Are also on the faces

Of people going by

I see friends shaking hands

Saying “how do you do?”

They’re really saying

“I love you”

I hear babies cry

I watch them grow

They’ll learn much more

Than I’ll ever know

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

Yes, I think to myself

What a wonderful world

Oh yeah

, what a wonderful world

Oh yeah