

18. THE QUEEN MOTHER

- April, you are in the way. Just back off.
- You gave me the assignment., And now you’re terminating it.
- We found out what we needed to find out.
- THE HM PROJECT!* They’re coming down on you.
- This goes to the top. Now hold your tongue.
- April would like to say something. To go to the press. But it’s not as if it’s a great time to find another job. And she has always been the perfect *system girl*.
- Sunny, you just have to see it all inside out.
- I always have. That is what drew me to poetry in the first place. You speak the words and the sound resonates with such spiritual power.
- That’s how I feel when I see your body in action.
- You like it.
- I love it. But we need to change your name. How about Octavia?
- Like the empress!
- You have ambitions. But you can be so much more.
- Her body has so many assets.
- And we can exaggerate all that.
- So you like what I can do on camera.
- I like what you can do on camera.
- This is something that we need the world to believe.
- I never had a grasp on these cover stories. The loving wife. The adorable children.*
- I hate screaming kids.*
- It’s Sunday. Your day off. You go out shopping!*
- You take your kids.*
- You spend an hour getting ready. This is your stage.*
- You spend an hour cleaning up the kids so that they are ready. This is your stage.*
- You have pretty kids. Are you married?
- I am. But he’s not really adequate for my needs.
- Could you sneak me in the back door for a little hanky panky?
- I was thinking reality TV kind of thing.
- What I want to do they can’t show on public TV.
- Who are you?
- Who did I vote for?
- No, if I saw you naked, would I know who you are?
- I don’t understand.
- Do you have what it takes?
- Are they really your kids?
- No, the studio thought that I’d look good with a family.
- Studio? Don’t you make adult pictures.
- No, I make children’s movies for adults.
- Nothing illegal.

- No, cartoons with animal that talk.
- History-making things!
- You have to come over and meet my cat, Buttons.
- Do you always dress like this for the supermarket?
- It got you interested.
- I could get interested if you were in jeans and a t-shirt.
- I could go home and change for you.
- Can I watch?
- No, just wait for me here.
- What about the kids?
- I could leave them with my mother.
- I thought that they weren't your kids.
- Someone has to watch them.
- So you want to go swimming. I have a pool. All you need is a bathing suit.
- You have a pool so I don't need a bathing suit.
- It's not as if we're going to film a movie.
- But we could talk. Do you have the necessary equipment?
- What?
- To shoot an underwater scene.
- What is this movie about?
- Getting wet and doing silly things. Are you game?
- I saw your ex in a movie that I was watching. I was stroking away, and here she comes in this scene. It was her. I couldn't help myself. I couldn't hold it in.*
- She always had that ability.*
- This jacket looks really great on you.
- I really don't need another jacket.
- Just look at the fit. It seems as if it was made for you
- We had a report of something really major coming down.*
- And what are we going to do with that information?*
- What we always do! Make sure that it doesn't go anywhere.*
- I don't want us having to take the blame if some real shit hits the fan.*
- Someone is going to have to make the switch.
- Have him meet his contact in a tailor shop in Cyprus.
- What happens after that?
- We'll make sure that his luggage gets through security. After that, it's a free game.
- Someone is going to have to disarm this thing.*
- I don't even think that the damn thing is in working order in the first place.*
- It's like those stupid room keys. You put 'em in the door. And it lights green, but the door won't open.*
- Are you trying to tell me that room service is here?*
- Things don't work like that anymore. We can't have our operations so easily exposed.
- What does Octavia have to do with this scenario?
- She has everything to do with it. How do you think that we make things happen?

–You pay her!

–Of course, we do. And she does what we expect. All those little dips on camera.

–Code.

He nods his head.

–*Are you a fan?*

–*I’ve seen all your movies.*

She pauses a second.

–*Yeah, I love your acting technique. What is your key to success?*

–*Breathing exercises.*

–*Wow!*

–We’re going to have to get some publicity shots for your new movie.

–I’m tired of all this extra work. Can’t you just use something that you already have?

–We’ve got a stylist and some great clothes.

–Can I keep any of the clothes?

–You’re not Julia Roberts.

Octavia is brimming with excitement as the flash explodes in time. She can feel the viewer who will be looking at these photographs.

–It’s a special power that you have.

–So much of myself was taken from me when I was a kid, this is my only way to really come alive.

She is practiced at stringing together all these surfaces as if there is a personality that holds it all together.

–I don’t like to think about such things.

When she can, she tries to stay upbeat. It has been such a struggle for her just to make it this far.

There is really no connection between her and the isolated viewer in Omaha. He may slide his DVD into the player in the hope that he can affirm some deeper link between them. While he watches her scenes, he can see how much she gives to the camera. He can read the telepathy behind the shots so that he feels clued into that same source hidden power. He can save up all his pennies to make it out to California in the hope that he might catch a glimpse of her on the street. But that is the closest that he can ever come to seeing her up close.

–Does she actually have a body guard?

–There’s some guy who hangs around with her. He does a host of things for her. In the final analysis, he’s her final line of defense.

–Is he very tough?

–I’ve seen him toss some big guy half across a bar. Let’s just say that I wouldn’t mess with him.

Nevertheless, he feels that he has special information for her.

–I’ve been watching this tape over and over again. I can relate.

Octavia can’t give any more of herself. She put too much of her personality out on the screen.

–I need to save some me for me.

–Ever thought about seeing someone?

- There’s nothing wrong with me.
- That’s not what I mean. It can help your peace of mind.
- I’m OK. Believe me!
- I know. It just never hurts sharing how you feel with someone else.
- We’re sharing!
- That’s not what I mean.

Octavia, you have millions of men hanging off of your every move. You need to use that to your advantage. There are countless women who would love to learn your method.

- What are we talking about?
- Sort of an advice tape. But a little more spicy than that.
- So I’m going to make a self-help video.
- More of a character-building video.
- And I’m going to sit in a chair and speak my mind on camera.
- You’re going to do a little more than that.
- You want me to demonstrate what I know.
- You’re pretty comfortable when that camera’s running.
- Another dirty movie!
- Not quite. Something a little more tasteful.
- More suggestion and less action!

She’s digging the attention!

- I never thought that I’d be doing a job that I enjoyed this much.
- So the video idea appeals to you.

–I love it. It’s something that I need to do.

She thought about the potential for her new status.

–You have a gift. Don’t let it go for waste.

This is only going to be the beginning of something momentous.

Octavia realizes that she only exists to the fullest extent when the camera is on. Her film career has allowed her to come to life. She hasn’t yet had the opportunity to explain herself. This will be all that she needs to let people know the real her.

She sits down with the writer to map out the scenes.

- We are going to include some stories?
 - More like mini-scenarios. These help the actual scenes.
 - Nothing silly. I don’t want to parade in a French maid’s costume.
 - Not at all. You’re there to share your knowledge with the viewers. Guys who can’t even talk to the girl that they see everyday at the gym.
 - This is a confidence booster.
 - I never thought of it that way.
- So she is empowering her fans to make things happen in their lives.
- Look out world. Look at what I’ve got.
 - Guys would get a kick out of watching you do the laundry.
 - I’m going to give laundry advice. Don’t mix whites and colors!
 - Octavia, don’t take me so literally.
 - I guess that I have a problem with that. Isn’t that a risk for my fans as well?

–That they’ll believe everything that you tell them.

She puts on a gruff male voice:

–I got this hard on watching your movie. Doesn’t that make you excited?

–Has anyone ever said that to you?

–I’d probably have Kevin beat the shit out of him if he did.

–You know that’s what’s it all about.

–Kevin beating the shit out them.

–No, not at all. Every guy who watches your DVD’s wants to believe that he’s the one.

Octavia is overwhelmed by her new feelings of power. She sees herself as a source: all energy emanates from this one place. All energy flows to this one place. The world exists through her! **The world begins and ends in this one location.**

–I am not exaggerating. I am both touched and untouchable.

–You are creating a persona for yourself that is so big that no one could ever measure up.

–Why are you trying to criticize me? I know what I’m worth!

–There is some kid who is watching one of your DVD’s in the suburbs of Chicago. And he thinks his hard on is going to change the world.

All this has a unique ring for Octavia. If so many men are tuned into her unique power, could that be the basis for changing the world.

–What if my number went to the billions?

–That’s cool to wish that. But you’re not making Disney movies.

–But the level of belief that guys bring to my movies more than compensates for that.

–You’re never going to crack the female audience.

–If they really knew how well I could affect men.

–Most women establish the same connection with a lover or a spouse.

–I just feel that I have more to give.

–Sure you do!

Octavia has been watching HM. She feels that they both appeal to the same primal experience.

–I want a career in politics.

–Think about a career with a politician.

She is becoming adamant.

–I changed my name for a reason.

–No one takes you that seriously. You make stroke movies.

–That’s not true.

–Octavia, we can add all this dialogue, but that doesn’t change a thing. Someone could watch one of your movies with the sound turned off, and it would be pretty much the same thing.

–What about my acting?

–I believe it. But who else does? It’s not like you think it is.

–I meet my fans. I read their letters. There is something a lot more profound going on.

–I know that some of them want to think that you’re the Virgin Mary. But you parade your snatch on camera. A lot of women think that your psychotic.

–A lot of people think that HM is psychotic. How is he doing anything different than I am.

- He has a law degree. A background in politics.
- But if you strip away the pretense, it's all about stroking the ego.
- HM gets people to believe in themselves. He's an uplifting character. He respects women. You make people think that the only way to get ahead in life is to take your clothes off.
- I'm honest. I understand how power works.
- You're all about exaggeration. A society that makes it harder and harder for people to relate to their next door neighbors. Things that we used to take for grants are now available to us only on the big screen. And there you are, making sex seem like it's communing with the god. It's not as if any audience would pay to watch a homeless man beating off.
- What's your point? I don't create the illusion. I am only part of it.
- April is doing her thing. Getting closer to the *HM PROJECT*.
- No one would ever believe this shit.
- April, it's politics. Nobody cares.
- I am getting a clearer picture of what is wrong with the world.
- We are what is wrong. We assume order where there is none. So our superiors take our random data and piece together a scenario that fits their purposes.
- It makes me feel discouraged. I did believe in something once.
- Isn't that what motivates you in the first place?
- I admit that I ant all this to mean something. But as you say. It's all random.
- You feel the same thing about HM.
- There's something more going on with that. A basic theory: what goes on deep inside of me corresponds to an accurate picture of the world.
- I'm trying to make sense of it.
- They have a motto: **THE WORLD IS MY FANTASY!**
- And they succeed at imposing their vision on the world.
- He does. He is the HEAD!
- I think that I understand. The world is just shaking to that beat.
- A little bebop.
- And beyond! What about all that stuff about gold and a secret society?
- I think that he is somehow tied in with those characters. But he is looking at it from a totally different direction.
- All that glitters is not gold.
- It is gold. But what good is its glitter? The glitter of gold means that only its imprint is valid in justifying his dreams.
- That's it! That's the whole deal about his fantasy. He needs the fantasy to make sense of the HM.
- He is getting the world off.
- But they don't know it.
- Down deep they do.
- What if we all walked away from the fantasy?
- It's all been strung together to keep everyone entranced.
- So there is an intersection point that gives meaning to it all.
- Like a reflection of what is in his mind.

–This is really freaky.

–It is indeed.

He has just got a new DVD in the mail. It is Octavia’s advice tape.

–*Good to have you aboard, The next hour and a half is going to be the most relaxing that you have ever experienced in your life. Pour yourself a drink, dim the lights, and settle back. The ride is about to begin.*

He is thinking about his talk with April as he watches Octavia play with her sheer bathrobe.

–April, you need to see this.

April is mesmerized as she watches.

–Where did you get this?

–Amazon.

–Who wrote the dialogue?

–It’s not just the script. She knows!

–Do they know.

–There is no way that they do. Otherwise, this would never see the light of day.

–What are you going to do about it.

–Whatever we do. We can’t say anything about this to anyone else.

–They’re not going to kill us.

–The video is out there already. There is nothing that they can do to us.

–But we see the connection.

–**You know who she is. She is a sin.**

–*I want to taste it.*

–*It?*

–*What gives you the power?*

–*You’ve never tasted it before.*

–*Not your juice. I want to taste your power drink.*

–*I can give you some Atomic Drivel. But you will never be the same.*

–*I need a boost.*

–*You need more than a boost.*

–She was the wife of one of your business partners.

–What are you saying?

–You get her involved in some threesome while her husband’s on the couch passed out.

–He was playing along.

–What did he do? This kind of thing is normal for you. Do you think that anyone can take you seriously after that?

–Everyone was into it.

–You made it happen. You initiated it. It’s one thing for these whores to do this kind of thing in the movies. But you can’t invite your friends to play around like that.

–It’s natural.

–No, it’s not. Now she’s telling him that they need counseling.

–They were having problem before that.

–Everyone has problems. This was positively perverse.

–Endora is a free spirit. Ashley got into it.
 –You don't know the difference.
 –What difference?
 –Between thought and action. Exercise some judgement.
 –You are freaking me out!
 –You should be freaked out. You know what this means?
 –What?
 –We can't use you anymore. We can't have this kind of scandal circulating with our clients. It's not as if you're a porn star.
 –I was able to snap a few pictures. They look really good.
 –Respectable people find all this disgusting. Do you know how to love anyone?
 –I'm sorry if I can't be Mr. Perfect.
 –You're not being much of anything.
 –You'd do the same thing as me if you had the chance.
 Octavia feels that the story is getting away from her. Maybe she revealed too many of her secrets in her latest DVD. She imagines all these women taking her ideas and using them for their own. Sure she wanted to help, but she didn't want to render herself obsolete.
 –She doesn't know what she has.
 –Maybe it's better that we leave it at that.
 –Someone else is going to put two and two together.
 –Who?
 –Some horny intelligence officer.
 –Then what? You already said that she has nothing to worry about.
 –I'm not sure now. I've been thinking about how potent is her argument.
 –Can you really know? You're a woman!
 –What are you telling me?
 –It's a stroke film.
 –Yeah!
 –For men!
 Octavia puts on a figure-hugging blue dress with heels.
 –Are you wearing panties under that?
 –Funny!
 –That dress looks as if it's painted on you.
 –You wish that you had a body like this.
 –I'm a guy.
 –Exactly.
 –Where are you going?
 –I have a press conference?
 –Aren't you tired of all this work?
 –The video is moving. I've never made as much money with one of my other projects.
 –Maybe people like you being serious.
 –It's probably the same thing that it's always been. Only this time, I'm blessing their fantasies with an air of religious belief.

- There you go again, Sister Octavia.
- The Empress Octavia.
- How is the empire going?
- Slowly!
- It could be a bad time for empires.
- People want something to believe in.
- Something that they can hold on to.
- Something that they can stare at all day just to get them off.
- A perfect pussy!
- If I’ve got it, I can give it.
- They want your purity.
- They want to believe that there is some basis for their fantasies besides the dirty old man syndrome. That their desires to dominate the world result in creating something of beauty.
- Spoken like a perfect empress.
- I want to beat off just thinking about it.
- Have you ever got off watching your own videos.
- All the time. It gets me in the mood. It helps me perfect my performance. Like a swimmer watching himself in the water.
- That gives me an idea for a new movie.
- I need to take some time off.
- You need to keep earning money while you’re young.
- I’ve been thinking about something a little more serious.
- What could be more serious? A devotion tape.
- I don’t know yet. But we’ve opened up a whole new territory with this stuff.
- You sell only as long as this puffed up view of reality continues to hold. We are in the waning days of the empire.
- That is why it couldn’t be a better time for me!
- It couldn’t be a better time for HM either.
- I’ve spent a half-hour on a meaningless distraction.*
- It’s all part of the plan.*
- No plan could include this much gibberish.*
- The gibberish is quite essential to uphold the meaningful part of the message.*
- And you have algorithms to work this out.*
- I have a whole system to make sense of this.*
- Where the hell is April?*
- Who the hell is April?*
- April is an acronym for a person who responds to a random message.*
- What does the acronym stand for?*
- Aleatory Production of Informational Leakage.*
- Some trust fund baby is pissing away her legacy.*
- There is an equation that explains it all. Belief is equal to the inverse of the leakage in a closed-system of communication.*
- What are you saying?*

- There is a spiritual resonance for the need to be part of a social group.*
- All hail HM!*
- In her first year as Empress, the divine Octavia issued the following decree: all males must strip so that I can administer the appropriate punishment with a whip!
- I thought that you weren't into sadism.
- It's more like revenge.
- Getting back at the fans.
- They're not giving me the bounce that I need.
- You're not showing enough of yourself.
- I am willing to show it all. Just spread it wide.
- They want to see more innocence.
- I'll take it all back. I'll dress as Little Red Riding Hood.
- Such a familiar theme: all that wolf sex stuff.
- What do you suggest?
- Everyone is going to law school.
- A name change would be of the order.
- What about the Empire.
- You said that the Empire was on the way out.
- What are you replacing it with?
- Something more democratic.
- That's how HM started out. But he realized that he could get more mileage if he stroked the egos of the powers that be.
- So empire is in.
- For him, it is.
- I feel that he and I are on a collision course.
- There is this one rumor that he uses your videos to give himself a head start.
- I can hear it now: my fellow Americans, I am tender, but I am hard!
- No more sex jokes.
- I'm trying to make it more thoroughly political. But the smut keeps leaking in.
- DON'T RUIN IT FOR THE REST OF US!**
- Honey, I know how our love-making has got a little formulaic. So I picked up this video that we can watch.*
- I'm supposed to do the things that women does in the videos. I'm not that kind of woman.*
- I just thought that you might want to please me.*
- That is perverse.*
- Learn to use the phone book. My name is Elizabeth Turvolis. It sounds like a porn star.
- Sure it does, my dear. More like the chief librarian at a prison library for women
- Listen, the video is coming on:*
- I know that there are women who have trouble relating to their men. They feel that their guys are too mechanical about sex. But sex is something physical. You can be as caring as you like, but if you can't show your man what you feel, then you might as well stick to knitting.
- She is using big needles.*

–I think that she is going to take care of HM!

–Baby, look at this. Don't you wish that you can touch this!

–People always ask me; are those breasts real? Touch them if you like. Do they feel as if they're real. There was a time that I wasn't so blessed. But I did exercise to get the way that I am.

–Some nights I go home and shut the door behind me, and I say to myself why doesn't all that perversion flush itself down the toilet. And then I just fall asleep!

–You don't take anything for it?

–Like what? One of these?

–Where did you get that?

–That's army issue.

–A damn missile.

–This is going to be big.

–How big?

–Nuclear.

–I've read that story before.

–They made it into a movie about the young girl who falls in love with the atomic scientist.

–How young is she?

–She's not of age.

–So does he get caught?

–Revealing secrets to the Russians?

–Yeah!

–Yeah! But he eventually repents. And then they take him on a bombing mission. And he shits himself! All good stuff!