

FRANK

JR

+

STROUWES

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Scene 6: The Strong House, New OrleansFrank Jr / SNOWGS

(As the Strong Family Dining/Living room forms around them, Frank Junior and Carol Strong have a moment. Brenda and her father, Roger Strong enter a few steps behind and take their seats at the dinner table)

#150 - Intro to Strong Family

CAROL STRONG

Family is important to us, Dr. Conners. You might say it's everything. Brenda's great grandmother, Anna Mae Lulu Jean Abernathy, was married in the front porch to her great grandfather, Jean Paul David Abraham Fort, f-o-r-t, which is French for "strong". We're an old New Orleans family with just a dab of Jewish. How else do you explain the Abraham? Brenda is our only child. We are very particular about who she brings home.

BRENDA

So is Brenda, mother.

(Frank Jr and Carol are seated)

ROGER

So, before Atlanta, you were in California?

FRANK JUNIOR

Yes, sir. Death Valley Children's Hospital.

ROGER

They have a Children's Hospital in Death Valley?

FRANK JUNIOR

Yes, sir. Right behind the Macy's.

CAROL

Well goddamn and gumbo, Brenda, I think you landed one this time. Much better than that ratty little Delacroix boy. This one's a hunky hunk of you-betcha.

BRENDA

Mother.

ROGER

Doctor Conners. Do you come from a large family?

FRANK JUNIOR

Please, sir, call me Frank. I'm an only child, but I hope to have lots of kids. Family is the most important thing.

CAROL
Ding ding! Correct answer. But now the make-or-break round. Don't lie to me, now. Are you. A Lutheran?

Why, yes, I am a Lutheran.

FRANK JUNIOR
ROGER
Well then, Frank, would you like to say grace?

(off Frank Junior's hesitation:)

Unless you're not comfortable.

FRANK JUNIOR
Oh, no, absolutely.

(folds hands, bows head, thinks)

Two little mice fell into a bucket of cream. The first mouse quickly gave up and drowned but the second mouse, he struggled so hard that he eventually churned that cream into butter and he walked out. Amen.

ROGER & BRENDA

Amen.

CAROL
Amen and God damn! That was just beautiful. Where did you learn that, you pious piece of cutie-ple?

FRANK JUNIOR
The, ah, First Lutheran Church of Death Valley.

ROGER
Frank, have you decided which hospital you want to work at here in New Orleans?

FRANK JUNIOR
Well, to be quite honest, I'm thinking about getting back into law

ROGER
Are you a doctor or a lawyer?

FRANK JUNIOR
Before I went to medical school, I passed the bar in California. I practiced law for one year, then I decided, why not try my hand at pediatrics.

BRENDA
You're just full of surprises.

FRANK JUNIOR

(a look to us: he's surprised himself)

Yes I am

ROGER

Awfully young to be a lawyer, aren't you?

FRANK

I get that a lot.

CAROL

Sakes alive, the yummy Yankee is a doctor and a lawyer! Oh, Brenda, darlin', you hit the jackpot with this one!

ROGER

Where did you go to law school? Harvard, Yale, Columbia...?

FRANK JUNIOR

Berkeley.

BRENDA & CAROL

Berkeley!

BRENDA

That's where daddy went!

FRANK JUNIOR

Oh! Wow. Fantastic.

ROGER

So, Frank. Was that snake Hollingsworth still teaching there when you went through Berkeley?

FRANK JUNIOR

Hollingsworth...yes. Grumpy old Hollingsworth, right? I tell ya, meaner than ever.

ROGER

And that dog of his? Tell me Frank, what was the name of his little dog?

FRANK JUNIOR

(works the problem, then:)

I'm sorry. The dog was dead when I got there.

ROGER

How unfortunate. A doctor, a lawyer, a Lutheran. So what are you, Frank? 'Cause I think you're about to ask my daughter's hand in marriage, and I have a right to know.

FRANK JUNIOR

Know what, sir?

ROGER

The truth. What are you doing here? What is a man of your accomplishments doing with Brenda?

FRANK JUNIOR

Brenda's the best girl I've ever known, sir.

ROGER

But who are you Frank? If you want my blessing...If you want my daughter...I'd like to hear the truth from you now.

FRANK JUNIOR

The truth? The truth, sir...is...The truth is I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm nothing, really. I'm just a kid who's in love with your daughter.

ROGER

No. I know what you are.

(pause)

You're a romantic.

FRANK JUNIOR

I am?

ROGER

Yes you are. Men like us are nothing without the women we love.

FRANK JUNIOR

Well goddamn and gumbo! May I hug you?

(All laugh.)

BRENDA

Oh, Frank!

(Brenda and Frank kiss, at length. Roger clears his throat to no avail. Finally, Carol jumps up.)

CAROL

Oh, Daddy!

ROGER

Oh, Mommy!

CAROL

Would you look at the time!

ROGER

Is it seven-thirty already?

CONT

BRENDA

Is it time for Mitch?

FRANK JUNIOR

Mitch, who's Mitch?

ROGER

Mitch Miller

#16 - Our Family Tree

CAROL, ROGER & BRENDA

And the Sing Along Gang!

(They all head for the couch and click the TV on.)

ROGER

Take it, Mother.

(PROJECTIONS of The Strong Family Singers "singing" along as Carol sings.)

CAROL

I FEEL A MIGHTY QUAKE
THE SOUTH BEGINS TO SHAKE
UNDER OUR FAMILY TREE

THE LEAVES BEGIN TO BLOW
GONE WITH THE WIND THEY GO
ALL THROUGH OUR FAMILY TREE

UP TOP MAGNOLIAS BLOOM
THEY SPREAD THEIR SWEET PERFUME
FOR THIS ANCESTRAL JUBILEE

NOW EVERY BOUGH MUST PULL ITS WEIGHT
ITS TIME TO PRUNE AND PROPAGATE
SO WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY TREE

Come on Daddy!

ROGER

Oh no I coul - alright then I will!