

Why So Serious?

by

Michael Cornetto

BLACK

CARL JENNER(16) badly vocalizes talk show introduction music.

CARL (V.O.)  
Do DoDo Do Do DoDo DoDo Do Do...

The lens cap is pulled off.

RUSSEL CROWE

watches us, he looks buff and oh so Roman on his Gladiator poster. Carl fakes a deep voice. The image shakes as Carl talks.

CARL (O.S.)  
And now it's time for Tonight,  
Tonight. Let's have a big warm  
welcome for your host. Here's  
The Joker.

Carl makes a crowd sound as we move along the wall to find a Batman poster featuring none other than

THE JOKER

Carl uses a higher, nasal voice to imitate him.

CARL (O.S.)  
Hey everybody, why so serious?

It's on the poster. More crowd sounds from Carl.

CARL (O.S.)  
I just flew in from Gotham City.  
And boy is that jet in for a big  
surprise.

Silence.

CARL (O.S.)  
Big suprise? I left a little  
package? KABOOM!?

Silence.

CARL (O.S.)  
Awww, forget it! Why so serious?!

Crowd sounds again.

CARL (O.S.)  
What a fantastic audience and  
have we got a great show lined up  
for you. Tonight's guests are the  
great and powerful Arnold "The  
Terminator" Schwarzenegger...

And we lean to the right catching

ARNIE

on his Terminator poster, sideways.

CARL (O.S.)  
And the better looking half of  
Brangelina, Angelina Jolie.

Then we tilt up to the ceiling where

ANGELINA

looks down from her Tomb Raider poster, all sexy and tough.

CARL (O.S.)  
But our first guest this evening  
is Carl Jenner. Who nobody knows  
or cares about.

We head back down the wall past the Batman and Gladiator  
posters to settle on

CARL JENNER

He bites his lip and looks tentative. He's just an ordinary  
kid. He sits on his bed with his back against the poster-  
covered wall. Then up the wall to find

THE JOKER

Who looks the same as he did last time

CARL (O.S.)  
Welcome to Tonight, Tonight,  
Carl. Let me start by asking you  
one question, a question that  
must be burning on every  
Americans mind -- Why so serious?

More crowd noises and as we

INTER-TILT BETWEEN THE JOKER AND CARL JENNER

we notice Carl with his mouth wide open making the sound.

CARL  
I'm not being serious.

Carl makes a silly face to prove his point.

CARL (JOKER)  
You can't kid a kidder Carl.

CARL  
What's that supposed to mean?

CARL (JOKER)  
Let's just say that I know more than the punch line here. Why don't you just come out with it?

CARL  
Now? Here?

CARL (JOKER)  
It's how you wanted it.

CARL  
It's not! I don't want to talk about it at all.

CARL (JOKER)  
That's what this is about Carl, avoidance. That's what she called it, isn't it?

CARL JENNER

stares into space. He continues to use The Joker's voice.

CARL  
Isn't it?  
(he nods absently)  
What did she say? If you can't talk to me then try talking to someone or something you're familiar with. I think that someone is me, Carl. You chose me Carl and I know you're dying to talk about it. So, come on now, get it off your chest. -- You want to please her, don't you?  
(he nods again)  
Why is that Carl? Why would you want to please her?

Carl snaps to a realization and slides into his own voice.

CARL  
Because she reminds you of your mother.

Carl glances up over his shoulder, wide-mouthed and wide-eyed, at The Joker.

A single tear drops down Carl's cheek. He closes his eyes.

Then tight-lipped with anger, he turns toward the camera, lowers it...

DIRTY CUT TO BED

The back of Carl's foot moves forward clearing the foreground. We bounce on the bed. The sound of thick paper tearing is heard. Carl seems full of anger.

CARL (O.S.)  
...she loved me. The only one and  
I treated her like shit!

Carl hops to the sound of more tearing paper and we jiggle around. A rain of poster fragments falls to the covers.

CARL (O.S.)  
That serious enough for you?  
(as The Joker)  
Boo Hoo Hoo, Sob Sob. You're  
tearing me apart. If you ask me  
she deserved it. Your mother was  
a whore. Everybody knows that.

Carl tenses then shouts loudly in his own voice.

CARL (O.S.)  
Shut the fuck up! What did you  
know about her anyway?! You're  
nothing but a fucking poster!

He falls to his knees on the bed, racked with sobs. We bounce once again. Carl picks up a torn piece of poster and holds it in his hands.

CARL  
A fucking poster.

Then he slumps sideways on the bed, his face close to us and his teary eyes evident. That piece of poster held near his lips, as if it can hear his confession.

CARL  
She just needed someone to love  
her. Everybody does. When dad  
left I thought it was because of  
her but now...I-I don't know...So  
many times I wished...I wished  
she was dead...and that night...  
that night I told her...I told  
her...

His face crinkles and he crushes the piece of poster in his hand.

CARL  
I didn't think she'd do it! It's  
my fault! I know it is! Oh God!

Carl sobs for a long moment. Then he glances toward the camera. Alarm. His arm reaches out toward us...

DIRTY CUT TO CARL JENNER

He stares directly at the camera, his eyes red but some time has passed since he last cried. He seems calmer than before. His hair is combed neatly. He bites his lip, then

CARL

Hey everybody! Why so serious?

A sort of uncomfortable chuckle.

CARL

For those of you who don't know me, which is probably all of you, my name is Carl Jenner. I'm making this video because, um, my mother died a month ago...

He goes a bit teary here.

CARL

Well, technically, she killed herself, handful of pills and I've been having a difficult time adjusting to her death. The psychologist assigned to my case said it's grief avoidance. She recommended that I find some way to talk about, um, it.

He swallows hard, then sighs.

CARL

But I don't think her diagnosis was correct because I think I figured out my real problem. I'm not suffering from grief avoidance at all, I'm suffering from guilt avoidance. I killed my mother, I just didn't realize it or accept the guilt until now. If I had been a better son my mother would still be alive. I can't bring her back but I can exercise my duty as her son and see to it that her killer gets the punishment he deserves.

He smiles in an odd way.

CARL

Thank you all for your patience.

BLACK

SUPER: Carl Jenner was found dead on March 31, 2009 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head. This videotape was found next to him.