

# NATE

## 26. Living with Sally. Impatient, but not jealous at all. Totally not jealous.

I like Sally well enough. She has the figure of a woman born to raise children, real curves, not at all like those thin ones with eating disorders that are standard issue nowadays. Better yet, she's not ashamed of her body. If I can't keep my hand off her, for example if I grab her ass while walking down the street, she just purrs, she likes it. Not at all like Nina, who didn't even want to hold hands. That's good for my self-esteem and I don't have to spend so much time being jealous anymore.

I think we're on equal terms when it comes to this. There's no discontent and I've had some really good years with Sally. I think that it will actually be fun to see what your true feelings are when you are tempted or how easy it is to fall when someone is trying to seduce you. Even though I'm open for any outcome, I'm pretty certain that me and Sally are going home together as a couple; otherwise, I would never have signed up for the show. If that was so, we'd be in therapy and not on national TV, as Sally is fond of saying to everyone that asks.

Infidelity is so much more than just sex. It's the feelings that count. To hold somebody's hand can easily be a lot more unfaithful than sticking a dick in a hole. As long as Sally and I go home together afterwards, I don't really care what happens during the show. Looking at other women, fantasizing about other women, usually leads to a deeper appreciation of the woman that you actually love. When I fantasize about women I see, I usually think that I'd choose Sally over them. It is got to be an active choice, right?

I'm a bit afraid of falling in love. I mean, I'd have to start that entire learning to trust business all over again. I want to have children eventually, and if I meet Her this week, I'd have to wait another three or four years to make sure it works before having kids. My life's just a big wait, or so it seems. And breaking up now would mean moving house, dividing assets and all that. People that break up must really have an ass of a relationship. Otherwise they would never have the strength to go through a divorce. Sally and I have had our years of learning to trust. And I trust her well enough. My mom wonders why we are not married and Sally's dad talks on and on about grandchildren every Christmas. Of course you feel the pressure. I sometime lie awake thinking of children, what it was like to be a child and of course I want one. But sometimes I look at Sally and hear this strange voice in my head saying that I'm not supposed to have one with her. It is complicated. At some point, however, I have to have children. After all that is the meaning of life.

When we have the time, we work as youth group instructors down at the Unitarian church. I'm not particularly religious, or religious at all anymore, but I do enjoy the kids. Lacking religion conviction, I should probably resign, but I'm not doing that until my group moves on to the senior activities. That just wouldn't be right.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

# the Upgrade!



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# SALLY

## 24. Living with Nate. Event planner. Intrigued by the possibilities.

One thing that has been on my mind lately, for the first time in years, is the one act of adultery that I ever committed during my time together with Nate. I was drunk and on the way home from some conference with a lot of Japanese or Chinese people that were planning on building some copy of some American small town in their country and were selecting plants, looking at architecture and whatnot. Endlessly boring, needless to say.

Anyway, I was on my way home and stopped on a motel and met this interesting guy that was actually a trucker. Very manly, very straight-forward and very much unlike anyone I've ever met. He was some kind of Mexican, I think. He undressed me with his eyes from square one, and I never felt so sexy and exotic in my entire life. We ended up doing it in my room and I never for one second had any problems or second thoughts. It was electric, and made my life brighter for several months after. This was three years ago, and I'd stopped thinking about it, until recently, when we got the letter saying that we had been selected for the show. Since then, it has entered my thought time and time again.

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When we decided to apply, we agreed never to ask about what happened with the new partners. Nate won't keep that bargain, I'm sure, but I won't tell. A deal is a deal.

I think Nate thinks a lot about kids. He speaks about kids a lot and wants us to move to a bigger apartment and stuff like that. Not really subtle, right? My dad is even worse. He keeps talking about how it is to live alone and that he would have the time to take care of grandchildren. Always children, never child. I don't want children, at least not now. Maybe later; when things are a bit slower. A year maybe. Maybe two. I can't possibly run around with a big stomach among hoards of conference guests. Also, I don't like the thing about everyone wanting to touch my belly. That's way too personal for me.

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# JASON

## **27. Applying with step-sister Helen. Failed entrepreneur. Impostor and opportunist.**

Enrique got the idea to open a coffee shop. He said, all we ever do is drink coffee, why not make some money on it. And if it doesn't go well, it is not the end of the world. This world is all about free business. And the government always pays in the end.

Going bankrupt wasn't really that smooth though. Not only does it drain your funds; it also consumes a lot of energy. I've just recently noticed quite a few of my shirts has stains. Wrinkles on my pants. I need to pay off my debts and get going again. Get back on track. I always used to be the winner. Luck seriously needs to change.

This Upgrade! thing is going to be a nice vacation. A few weeks in the limelight, a few weeks away from it all. I used to model, and unless I fuck up royally, I'm just too handsome not to vote for. I'm going to play this beautifully. I'll endure any challenge event. I'm going to be the hunk of the season. Any cash prize will have my name on it. I'll step over bodies if I have to.

We're going to fool them all. Helen is my sister-in-crime, and I love her like if she was my biological sister and not just my stepsister. But I worry: she will try to find the man here. All good and fine, but the people on the island will be bad people. I can't control her. She needs a man we can trust. I just hope they won't find us out.

I watched the last Upgrade! season closely. Taped all the episodes and collected news paper clippings, and I think I understand the psychology behind it all. All I need to do is connect with the viewers. If Helen hooks up with some no-brain fireman their sympathies will go to me. It's good I picked up a few tricks before dropping out of actor's training. I've got to construct the most favored couple. Some quarrels with Helen that leads to her hurting me. Perhaps even some crying. The ladies love that. We'll just have to find a place where we can plot that's not bugged or filled with cameras.

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# HELEN

## 26. Applying with step-brother Jason. Unemployed. Impostor and man-hunter.

I must admit I'm a bit scared about all this, but Jason is probably right, as he tends to be; he keeps telling me it's gonna go just fine. I just have to constantly remember not to call him ``bro." I mean, it is not like we share a biological parent, but he is my brother. And those nick-names are kind of hard to unlearn.

This is going to be fun. Going with your step-brother must be the best way of doing it. I mean, I don't need to care or worry at all, and if The Upgrade! is no different from other reality shows, then there will be at least a couple of nice hunks there for me to rub shoulders with. I really need a man. It's been a while. I guess it is the biological alarm clock, but I've been thinking about kids more and more during the last couple of months. I've never even gotten pregnant accidentally, so I don't know if my systems are working alright. It is kind of scary, actually. It is going to be a big part of your life and you take it for granted, but there is no telling if it is gonna work. Let's clear our minds of this now, shall we?

I'm between jobs at the moment, so chilling out on a nice big island with a hot sun and free drinks might not be so bad. It will be like the vacation I never had, or rather, never could afford. I've applied to a dozen jobs. Just things that I'm qualified for and not some fantasy administrative profession. I'd rather be a stylish secretary that answers the phone than running around trying to coordinate a project or something or other. I'm just not that kind of woman. And besides, I really don't want to think about work when the day is over. I have friends and a life and I like it to continue like that. I know my priorities.

This is my boyfriend wishlist: Not sports nerd, no endless Friday nights of TV football and games on Saturday afternoons. He needs to want to spend time with me, even during the AFC playoffs. Lover, not fighter. Someone that finds out nice things to go to, things to do like water skiing or mountaineering, etc. A good job is also important. A bank teller or a consultant maybe. Perhaps something in uniform. Interesting in bed, or creative. But no ear-blowing. Or biting.

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# ERIC

## 26. Living with Rose. Help desk technician. Dreaming about something better.

It's a bit sad that Rose works the night-shift. It is good money, though, and I'm that kind of person that needs some space - being home alone in the evenings is often quite enjoyable. At work, I'm usually on the phone for ten hours straight with annoyed people that should never have been in front of a computer in the first place. A few quiet hours at home with a book is usually what I need to calm down. Rose usually has the food ready when I come home; we eat and talk a bit and then she dashes off to work. It works, but, needless to say, it would be nicer to go to bed together and wake up together. Now that only happens on the week-ends when you're tired after a long week. Rose wants to cuddle in bed and all of a sudden, half of the day is gone. Besides, you could set a clock by our sex life.

Marcus and Simone signed us up for the upgrade. I'm guessing they wanted to enroll themselves but ended up enrolling us instead. Lack of balls probably. I honestly think it will be fun. I've actually gotten my act together, started to eat better, work out (when Rose is working, of course), etc., since we got the letter that said we were going to be on. I'm ready for this. I've always loathed picking women up in bars and the like. Even though the situation is contrived, I think it will be more relaxed than in a bar. Conversations will be natural, I think, since we all know why we're there. No pressure, and importantly, Rose is in on it all. I don't know what I believe will come out of this, but one never knows. People on TV are usually beautiful people.

Sometimes, I think that maybe I'll fall in love. That maybe that big love will hit me (again) and I'll fall head over heels for someone on the show. That scares me. It is not like when you were in your teens, and "upgrading" (if you can call it that) was business as usual. I'm over thirty, and married, and if I fall in love, those moments will be captured forever and broadcasted all over the country for everyone to see. It scares me, even if I do long to be really in love again, feel the heart pumping in your chest and be in constant pain unless you are with her. Rose and I are good, but I sometimes think we are doing something wrong, or that we've stayed together too long. I want the rush back. Where's the rush?

I've not told anyone, but I'm thinking of quitting my job. Lately, I've come to understand that I hate it. First I thought maybe just work part time, but then I figured, "fuck it". I've had my life's share of computer illiterates. I want to chill for a while, take a trip or two with the car, go canoeing. Catch up with my life; let my thoughts catch up with my body. Stop stressing. I need to tell Rose, but the right moment has yet to surface. I don't think she'll be pleased since she's pretty concerned with money and economics. She wants the economic stability, and I can't say I blame her. However, I think I've made up my mind and going through with the plan is all that's left to do. I've earned more than her for as long as I can remember, night-shift or no, so I think I'm well within in my rights to do this. I do need to tell her, though, before she gets any idea of buying a new car or getting a house or anything. Then she'll just assume I'm trying to go against her which means I'll have a living hell at home too. She can be very stubborn at times.

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# ROSE

## 25. Living with Eric. Night shift supervisor at a dairy. In a deep rut.

Working the night-shift isn't really a problem. We do meet in the afternoons, when Eric comes home from work. That gives us enough time to eat something and cuddle a bit before I have to run off to catch the bus. Of course, you miss waking up together, but we get that on the week-ends and then it is really special. The only thing I can really complain about is that since I've been home all day, I'm usually the one that cooks dinner. I realize it is easier and all, and that unless I did cook we would probably not have time to eat together, but it still annoys me. Eric does try to compensate, at least sometimes. He makes me breakfast in bed some weekends. Simone, my girl-friend, complains that he should do some more of the household work though. I'm actually the one that does the most of it. The laundry especially.

Marcus and Simone signed us up for this. I don't really know why, as a joke maybe? I'm not looking to upgrade. Simone keeps telling me that I should find a man with a nicer body, keeps saying that I'm too thin for Eric, whatever that means. I try to tell her that it doesn't work like that, that just because she and Marcus rides across the world on a bike and coach each other in the gym, it cannot be like that for everyone else. Marcus is a hunk, though, I'll give her that. It was so long since I made love to someone that's not overweight that the idea kind of interests me. To sleep with someone who doesn't get tired after a couple of minutes. But trying to improve on Eric is hard when you're never around. If I started working the day-shift maybe. But I'd have to nag and I don't want to be like that.

Eric actually thought this was a good idea. He said it would be like taking our relationship on a test-drive. I'm not certain what that means but I'm glad we can talk about it. I'm not feeling we are a borderline couple on the verge of breaking up. We are pretty happy as is. At least I think so, but Simone keeps telling me that it is just because I've lost perspective on things. My mother remarried after Dad died, when she was 62, so I guess it is never too late to upgrade, right? Anyways.

Mum keeps nagging me about children. Grandchildren, that is. I must admit I'm not too keen. I can't really see myself in the role of being a mother. A lot of running around changing diapers, being stressed and trying to stop them from hurting themselves or try to make them stop crying. It doesn't feel like Eric is so keen either, which feels good. Of course we've discussed it once or twice, usually after sex, but we usually move on to other topics pretty quick. We like it like it is. I think.

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# ALESSIO

## 27. Living with Patti and her son John. Unemployed. Insecure and conflicted.

Took John to the park today to play with the boat. The new engine really gives so much better acceleration and higher top speed. John was close to crashing the boat several times. I think I have to tweak it down a bit. I really like that kid, but it saddens me that Patti sometimes seems to look at me as little more than a baby sitter that gets paid in sex. I'm really in love with Patti, though. But I'm not accepting that attitude much longer. I need respect. I wish Patti would take it easy. I'm not sure what I must do to really prove to her that I love her. That all my attempts so far have failed is obvious. I can never really be sure. Sometimes I see in her eyes that she really loves me and is happy that I love her back, love to kiss her neck and snuggle my head into her shoulder. But quite often, I just feel insecure. Not sure that she really loves me, like she could just up and leave at any moment. That's really though. As if I have to conquer her, or court her over and over again. Like there is no end to it. I wish life was simpler.

Met my new job advisor down at the unemployment agency today. Pretty woman in her late 20's. Very involved and interested. A lot of other unemployed graphic designers on her roster, apparently. Graphic work is hard to come by these days, but she recommended me a few courses that might increase my chances. It is so bad that I just don't know my way around a computer, nor seem to be able to learn. Very sweet woman, by anyone's standard.

I'm not really sure about what this upgrade business is good for, or what will come of it. I'm not sure why it is so important for Patti that we participate in this. I think she is looking to prove something to herself, but I'm not exactly sure what. Fantasizing of finding another woman is natural, of course. Someone "better" than Patti, whatever that means. Someone that just makes your heart race. Someone tall and thin with red-blond hair that will melt your heart when she looks at you. Actually, I've always had an eye for older women, that's how I got together with Patti from the beginning. But recently, my eyes have opened up to a world of younger women, like in their early 20's something like that. I never seem to react on women my own age. But maybe that will change as well. Imagine taking your pants off, laying down on the bed with your eyes closed and just surrendering yourself to another person, with soft skin and warm breath. Hear the sound of a jumper falling on the floor, inside-out. Feel how the bed rocks when someone glides down beside you. This is how Patti has it, she deserves it, and I'm happy to provide it for her. But to be perfectly honest, it would be nice to be the person in the bed from the start, for once.

In any case, I'm pretty nervous. I've never been good at making small talk with strangers. Just imagine the pressure when you're in that room with the women the computer has determined you perfect match. And imagining Patti is in the same position at the same time someplace else. I'm not very enthusiastic, that's all. Took John to a café with Barbara (my job advisor) today. I really like her. It turned out that she is breeding dogs in her parents' old summer house as a part time job. Imagine creating a business of your own just like that. Impressive. I'm taking John there sometime.

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Where would you go for your dream vacation?

Cat or dog?

Cozy night at home or crazy night on the town?

What sports do you enjoy?

Have you ever been unfaithful?

INCLUDE SIGNATURE BELOW

## Answer these questions together, as a couple:

Are you married?

In not married, why? If married, how was the wedding?

Do you have pet names for each other? Share!

Where did you go on your last vacation?

What do you usually do on Sunday mornings?

If your relationship had a flaw, what would it be?

## Hot Tips

- **Be honest and open at all times!**
- **Answer promptly, though not necessarily to the question!**
- **Don't let anyone put words in your mouth!**
- **Be good television!**

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# PATTI

## **35. Living with Alessio and her son John. Country singer. Confident and strong.**

I signed us both up for this. I'm not looking to trade Alessio in for someone else, but I don't want him to feel too secure in our relationship. Men that feel too secure start taking things for granted and the next thing you know, they start looking at other girls. One important fact to learn about men is that they only bring you flowers if they feel they have to. If Alessio feels he has to pursue me, make an effort, he will always be a bit more careful, remember my birthday and bring me roses. I imagine that he, being a bit younger, would consider himself a great catch, that I should be thankful as it is objectively desirable for a woman to have a young lover. I don't give a damn about what everyone else thinks, as long as Alessio is not everyone else.

As an artist, a country singer, it is always good to get some media exposure. People will recognize me and if I'm lucky they'll buy my album. It could use a push. If I really wanted to make it big, I guess I should make out with another woman, but there is a limit to everything. Heidi says she is more turned on by two women making out than two men. I know my sexual preferences well enough not to agree. Men. And a tad young.

Working up the courage to sign up wasn't particularly hard. I actually signed up for "Loves Me, Loves Me Not", but I never heard from them. I guess we were too old for them. In any case, this'll be a good test. David gets to play a bit in a not too raunchy program on prime time TV. And if he still prefers me after having tasted the tonsils of those young silicone dolls, I wouldn't be surprised. I have content.

John, my son, is eight years old. His father's name is Mike and works at a photographer for a newspaper. It was a one-night-stand, that started at some budget bar in some suburb and ended in a luxury suite at Radisson on his gold card. We traded number out of politeness rather than of interest, but I'm glad I did. You should never marry for the sake of your kid.

After four years, I had had enough. Mike just worked and worked, and John did nothing except screaming and shitting. The divorce was less of a hassle than the marriage, and the allowance was alright. Mike almost fought me over not avoiding custody. I have to nag him every once in a while to take John to see his grandparents. He has got a new girlfriend new, some 25-year-old who poses naked for one of those magazines. I don't care. I'm happy that Alessio likes John and even happier that the feeling's mutual. But who am I kidding? John likes everyone. He is everything but picky. As long as it is a man and the man is not a dork, he'll love him. That Alessio actually enjoys fiddling with the radio controlled toy boat is pure bonus.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

# the Upgrade!



We ask these questions to prepare you for being in the spotlight. These questions relate to things in your personality that will most likely be exposed when you participate in the TV show. If you feel uneasy about these questions, please tell us.

### Answer these questions together, as a couple:

How did you meet? Was it love at first sight?

What is "your song"?

What did you do on your first date?

Do you have kids? If not, why not?

What did you do on the night before leaving to come here?

How do you make up after a fight?

### Answer these questions about yourself:

A hard workout or a decadent meal?

What do you miss in your love life?

What do you miss in your *sex* life?

What's something we don't know about your current partner?

Hot or cold?

What sign were you born under?

Why would you want to upgrade?

INCLUDE SIGNATURE BELOW

## Hot Tips

- **Be honest and open at all times!**
- **Answer promptly, though not necessarily to the question!**
- **Don't let anyone put words in your mouth!**
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# HOST OVERVIEW

# the Upgrade!



This sheet is intended for the game's hosts, but there are no secrets here. Members of the cast are encouraged to read this sheet as well. It outlines the structure of The Upgrade! and offers some advice for structuring and pacing play.

## Welcome to MBS!

As host, you are the public face of the network, and it is your job to deliver good television. As a facilitator, you'll be keeping an eye on the pace of the game, player engagement, and areas that need more tension or pressure applied.

Go read the cast overview sheet if you haven't already.

## Preparations

You need:

- One or two game masters, ideally two.
- An even number of players, ideally six or eight.
- A large space in which to play, with chairs for everybody and possibly a few generic props. The play areas need to be clearly defined.

## What The Upgrade! Is About

The Upgrade's premise is a least common denominator of television entertainment. Couples are chosen and flown to an exotic resort. Then they are broken up and formed into new couples that date beneath the glare of the cameras. In the end, there is a closed vote where all participants decide whether they would like to stay in their old relationships or "upgrade" to the new one.

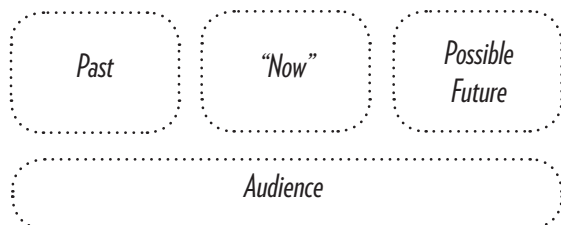
If both "new" partners vote to upgrade, they are lavishly rewarded. In contrast, couples that survive the upgrade process enter the Hall of Faith and receive a modest prize. Couples that split their votes – well, that's good TV. The audience may also select a "couple of the week", forcing likely (or unlikely) pairings by popular mandate.

As participants, we're interested in the stories of these individuals – real people with real relationships, caught up in very public drama, much of it manufactured. We're also looking at producers and hosts and critiquing the entire media juggernaut. Generally, nothing is scripted – although a little pre-planning won't hurt anything.

## First steps

Have each player choose a character and read the Cast overview, fill out their personal questionnaire, and then pair up to fill out their couples questionnaire. This should be done in character. Encourage them to flesh out their relationship.

Walk the play space and explain what each area is for. Provide a brief overview of the techniques you'll be using, getting players to participate in examples to warm up. Once everyone has been exposed to the various techniques, begin media training.



## Media Training

The media training exercise is designed to get the players to talk about and present their characters, as they warm up and learn a bit about what is interesting to a TV audience. Ask a series of questions in interview format, perhaps one question per player.

- Why do you want to participate in this show?
- Can you see yourself with other partners?
- What is your view on "open" relationships?
- How do you feel about long-term commitment?
- Name three properties do you look for in a potential partner—how many of these properties does your current partner possess?
- If you could improve one thing about your partner, what would it be?
- If your partner could improve one thing about you, what do you think that it would be?
- What would you count as infidelity? Can your relationship survive it?

When the media training event is over and done with, the show will start.

## Start the Show

The show begins in the studio, with the weekly recap. The contestants are there, perhaps lounging on couches. Remember a week has passed, so they have some history. As host, your job is to facilitate the weekly recap, and the best way to kick-start that is to immediately run a clip of the speed dating exercise that decided who would date who as a potential new couple.

## Speed-dating

The speed-dating concept will prevent you from ending up with the wrong woman during your fifteen minutes of fame. Speed-dating works like this: arrange the chairs into two rows facing each other in the center of the "now" area. The women sit on one row, and the men on the other. The couples should be facing each other. When the gong sounds and the music starts playing, the men move one chair to the left and start introducing themselves to the new women in front of them. Try to get a feel for each man or woman—is he or she a potential upgrade from your current partner? You have approximately two minutes before the gong sounds and it is time for the men to rotate left. This procedure is repeated until the couples are facing each other again. Now, discuss with your regular partner your feelings and goals and why you participated in The Upgrade! When the gong sounds for the last time, it is time for the women to choose which of the men they want to form a potential couple with. Each woman will give a rose to the man she wishes to date. If a man receives more than one rose, he is free to choose (unless his choice can result in a woman being forced to date her regular partner). The hosts will have to pay attention and solve any conflicts that might arise. Once the couples have been formed and possibly interviewed by the hosts, they are off to the Upgrade! Hotel to spend a weekend in love and luxury before arriving at the studio to record the weekly finale.

*Continued on back*

**"The Upgrade! is the best television show ever made!!!"**  
**- Harry Knowles, Aint It Cool News**



*Continued from front*

## **The Structure of Play**

Cut back to the studio. Interview the couples and encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings with the audience. Begin using the scene suggestions and techniques listed in the player's overview.

From this point on, the game is wide open. Each player should choose a clip to show, illustrating a moment that was important to them, and these are played out. You may need to demonstrate contextualizing past and future scenes, but once this is illustrated, it usually takes off nicely. Don't forget to inject commercial breaks when the cameras are turned off (note: The cameras are never turned off). You can also cut to a gossip session among the resort staff, a psychotherapist "checking in", or other off-camera moments. Anyone can suggest and initiate scenes; your job is to maintain a rapid pace, drive relationships in stressful directions, and edit judiciously when necessary.

A meeting of the show's producers is highly recommended – place it around the half-way point. Every participant plays a producer (the sleazier the better), and there is a round table discussion about each contestant and what their strengths and weaknesses are. How can they be manipulated to increase ratings? Does the show need a new scandal? More screen time for somebody? A re-shuffling of partners? A producer scene is a fantastic way to make any mid-course corrections to maximize fun.

Have fun with clips! Perhaps one contestant's body mic was damaged, and the action needs to be played out without sound. Maybe a clip was deliberately edited to appear more scandalous than it really was.

## **The Vote**

At the show's conclusion, the contestants vote on whether to stay in their current relationship – or upgrade. Have the original partners face each other, close their eyes, and simultaneously give a thumbs up (stay) or thumbs down (upgrade!). As soon as the voting is done, the game is over. Be sure to discuss the game after it is wrapped up. What worked? What didn't? Why did you make the choices you did?

## **On Tone**

The Upgrade! can be played like a comedy, a tragedy, or a drama. Going for laughs is the easy way out, but is not to be looked down upon. The important thing is to discuss this with your players and agree on a tone before playing. An interesting exercise is to change the tone halfway through the game.

## **Some Suggestions On How To Play**

As you've read in the participant overview, the game's physical space is divided into three areas. A good idea, if you have the necessary space and furniture, is to separate the studio from the "now" area. This way, the contestants can remain seated when they are looking at the clips instead of clearing the area for the players who are supposed to be in the clip.

When a contestant's clip is about to be screened, you should first

ask a few questions about the clip to give the player ample opportunity to telegraph information to the other players. This will help all the idle players to create or avoid supplemental scenes and follow the action. For example, if Eric says "this clip shows how my proposal to Rose was interrupted twice by Nate", Nate's player will know that he should enter and mess things up at least twice. A less revealing statement would be "This clip shows how I was saved by the bell by Nate". Now, Eric can lead Rose up on stage, play out his proposal to her, and Nate's player will hopefully understand that he should interrupt at the right time.

Clips will regularly only contain two characters, with occasional extras or group scenes. Players who aren't involved will watch and offer supplemental scenes. The interplay between the regular scenes and the supplemental scenes is a core game technique. Unless there are supplemental scenes, things will be boring and uninteresting. Try to encourage the players to flesh out other players' characters in supplemental scenes, even make up scenes of your own to show everyone where it's at!

## **Tips and Tricks**

Concentrate on one couple at a time. Idle players should watch so that they are able to launch supplemental scenes.

Timing is essential. It is not a bad idea to abruptly end a scene in a way that suggests something that did not really happen. If Eric gives Sally a massage and the screen softly fades to black and then shows the morning next day, it suggests secret sex regardless of what really happened.

When suitable, have an off-camera scene. For example, the camera team's night off enables the couples to meet in the bar for drinks without supervision and fear of doing something that will be shown on national TV. How does this affect their interaction? Also, it is excellent to have a few scenes that brings all the characters together, not to mention the effect of seeing someone else enter the room, hand in hand with your partner. Don't start with such a scene, though. The players have to form couple relations before it is interesting to toss them together. Also, the players should not be led to believe that they will be "served" with pre-made scenes. This is their game—they are the producers, audience and contestants.

It is a good thing to have an explicit goal or a theme for each scene with a couple. For example, if the producers decide on a bungee jump challenge for Eric and Sally, the theme is obviously testing their relationship. Offering them money or prizes will encourage Eric to force Sally into jumping, even if she doesn't want to.

If you want, the game can continue for more than one week. Maybe give the contestants a day off! Have a producer meeting to decide next week's events. Maybe choose a theme for the upcoming week. If this sounds very loose, good! There are no good guidelines that we can give here—if your game is good and it feels like people are interested in continuing, you probably have enough inspiration and adrenalin to keep rolling without our support.

# CAST OVERVIEW the Upgrade!

MBS  
TELEVISION

This sheet is intended for the cast, but should be read by all participants. The techniques described here will be used throughout the game. Having an idea about the range of possibilities will make the game better for everybody.

## Welcome to The Upgrade!

As you may know, The Upgrade! is an MBS network tentpole – a daily 60-minute reality program with a Friday night recap that highlights the most exciting and sexy events of the past week. Viewers skew young, and we earn a solid 11 share in the 18-34 demographic, with 16 million viewers on average. Our premiere last season was the highest-rated Wednesday in network history. We beat CBS's Survivor by half a million viewers. Here at MBS we take the show's success very, very seriously, but we want you to have fun! That's what is most important.

The game will switch between the weekly recap, which includes interviews, questions from viewers and studio audience, and, perhaps most important, the screening of clips from the past week. All this will be played and we will jump around as seamlessly as possible. The pace will be hectic as you are thrown back and forth between different events. We'll be running a tight ship, and even though the game masters will try to keep tabs on time, you would do well to remember that it is a limited commodity. After all, this is television - time is expensive and things are edited down into its most basic elements. Subtlety is not a virtue.

Before you play, review the game's techniques, then spend some time thinking about your character. The game masters will go over the techniques and sequence of play before you begin.

## Transparency

The entire game will take place in one room. Since this game is not about surprises, don't leave the room if you want to have a private in-game conversation. We think that the characters are better suited to know less if the players know *everything*.

## Character Monogamy

There is no character monogamy! A supporting character might be played by different players at different times. Also, a character might be in play in different areas simultaneously. This is not a problem. You choose how to interpret any differences in how a character is portrayed.

Few games are complete without supporting characters. Examples of supporting characters are the psychotherapist coming to check that the contestants are not going insane, the media trainers that initially coach the contestants on giving good TV, some random passers-by that happen to witness something indelicate on the beach, the cabana boy, and so forth. Supporting characters can be played by anyone and introduced on demand at any time. For example, to save a scene that's getting stale, an idle player can suddenly choose to appear as the cabana boy. Make sure you observe how supporting characters are played so that you can play them yourself, and use them sparingly and with care.

## Telegraphing

Since we're not actually at a luxurious island resort, it is important that we communicate to others where a scene is taking place, or what in-game thing is represented by the blue cup, etc. We refer to this activity as *telegraphing*.

Telegraphing can be done by actually stating the information out of character, or by weaving the information into the game while playing. If two players wish to initiate a small scene played in the past area, they might jump up, step into the left-most part of the play area, and say, "Eric and Rose, in their kitchen, two years ago".

Of course, if the exact date isn't important, simply stepping into the past may be enough information. Eric could just have come on to the set, calling to Rose, "Rose dear, would you come into the kitchen?" We learn from context in this case.

As this is probably obvious, just try to think about what you need to telegraph to the other players as you play. If you are new to this style of play, don't be intimidated. Even though it isn't hard, a few mistakes are bound to happen in the beginning. As with most things in role-playing, you master them by doing them. Always bear in mind that it is better to use less agile, out-of-character ways of telegraphing than to not telegraph.

## Past, Present, and Future

For the game, we divide the physical space into three areas. The middle area is the here and now - the shooting of the reality show. Everything that goes on in the left area reflects things that actually happened in the past-time (the way the characters remember them, anyway), whereas everything that goes on in the right area is the future, or more accurately, a possible future - something that may or may not happen. The left and right areas are used to give perspective to what happens in the middle - where most of the game is played.

Supplemental scenes are played in the past area or the future area and are all about providing a perspective on what goes on in the middle - what's happening right now. Scenes taking place in the past or future that comment on the current action are great. They form a large part of the game's charm.

So, you may ask, "when should I start a supplemental scene?" The answer is "any time you think it is called for." Just remember two things: this game is not about stealing screen time; and don't disrupt the game too much - there is still a central story-arc somewhere...

## Using the Past

Playing the past is best explained by example. During a scene where Eric and Sally are dating and go on a romantic stroll on a high cliff, it might be interesting (for both the players and the audience) to know that Eric is actually afraid of heights. A player comes up with this idea and enters the past area grabbing another player by the arm to play a scene as Eric and his regular partner Rose where they have a similar moment ruined by his fear of heights. The game in the "now" area is suspended as this is resolved.

Eric's terror of heights was invented entirely by another observant and creative player. When this scene is played, it adds to the Eric character. Naturally, Eric of today might have overcome this fear, or might be able to control it. The point here is to show that there

*Continued on back*

# *"Upgrade to the best fucking show on television"*

*- Peter Hammond, Maxim magazine*



*Continued from front*

is more to this scene than what you can see on the screen. Also, hopefully, Eric in the now area can make some use of this additional input when the supplemental scene has ended. If Eric is in the "now" area playing a scene, he shouldn't pause his scene and play a past or possible future. Recruit observing players to do this!

There is great power in fixing a scene in time before another that has already been played. For example, if Eric and Sally has a tender moment where Eric says "I love you. Wow, I never said that to anyone before!" other players can easily insert a supplemental scene, where Eric says the exact same thing to Rose the previous night.

## **Using the Future**

Possible futures work like scenes in the past, but with a different impact on the story. Instead of providing insights into the past life of a character, they convey what might happen in the future if a scene goes in a particular direction, or what might go on in the mind of a character.

After disclosing Eric's fear of heights in the above example, some other currently-idle players might want to start a possible future scene where they, as Eric and Sally, have been together for a few years. Sally talks about that day on the cliff where Eric, due to his fear of heights, turned out to be so "vulnerable and sensitive that she couldn't but help falling for him".

Another example: Eric and Sally have a tense moment where they have to decide whether to get physical or not. Two other players may start a scene where they as Eric and Sally are married with screaming children and quarreling, which might be perceived as a thought in Eric or Sally's head. After the scene has been played, a turned-off Sally in the "now" area slowly moves away from Eric.

## **Monologues**

The purpose of monologues is to inform the other players about what goes on in the mind of your character. If your character really does not want to date the person sitting opposite them, but you feel this would give rise to some great scenes, this is vital information to convey to other players so that they can make this situation happen. Don't be afraid to speak less in character in favor of sharing thoughts with other players through monologues. Be sure to make it clear that what you are saying is a monologue and not something that is actually spoken in-game.

For example, playing a scene in the now area, Eric suddenly stands up and changes the tone of his voice to mark that what he is saying is spoken in-game. He then proceeds to do an inner monologue: "Fuck, that was stupid. I should never have kissed her. I didn't want to kiss her. Just because I can see the lust in her eyes, I feel compelled to satisfy her. I am never going to get rid of her now! Damn, damn, damn! I'm in love with Rose! Why can't I stop thinking with my dick?" Eric then slides back into the couch and continues to make out with Sally.

## **Rewinding**

Sometimes we might want to play the same scene several times. One example is playing a scene once for each character in it to show how the differences in how he or she experienced it. In this

case, it should be OK to deviate from the "original scene" since everything is just nuances in peoples' heads. Another example is playing the same scene edited in a different way suitable for the younger audience. In this case, clips from other scenes (played or not) might be edited in, etc. Just act smart and it will go well.

## **Producer and Interview Scenes**

In our view of television, the producers control the final product. They will look at demographics and say, "we are going to lose the teenage girls unless we show more scenes with Rose" and then do something about it. While the game masters will inevitably bring the producers into the game, you should feel free to bring the producers in to alter the course of the game at any time.

In interview scenes, a game masters will state the forum, the time and ask one or two questions. If the game master asks you about something that has not yet happened in the game, just go along for the ride. Make sure not to say anything that will be too constraining to the game very early on - it is better to be a bit vague.

## **When the Camera is Turned Off**

Sometimes the camera will be off. What happens behind the scenes? Are there domestic quarrels between supposedly, when the camera is on, loving couples? Are the producers trying to make the show more scandalous? You decide. Just be aware of the status of the camera and choose if you want to act on it or not.

Remember that whenever you are playing in the studio, there is a history of events to play toward - at least a week has passed since we last saw you. Maybe you have met the love of your life the past week. Perhaps wonder if your wife has done the same.

## **Pillow Talk is Better Than Sex**

If Nate is supposed to jump through a burning ring with a car in order to win two thousand dollars and a luxury dinner with Rose, we will not make car sounds or run about the room. Instead, during the action event, our attention will be turned at someone in the audience, who will play a viewer in front of a TV set and through his reactions communicate what happens to Nate, and decide if he succeeds. "Fuck! He really does it, damn! Like an old stunt-man! He deserves that dinner. Jesus, my palms are sweaty. Pass me a beer."

## **Characters**

Once you've reviewed the techniques above, flesh out your interpretation of your character by answering the personal questionnaire in character. Answer the couples questionnaire together with your partner. Again, do this in character - imagine you are in the kitchen of your home answering the questions delivered to you by mail. All these answers will also be available in-game, and the producers will certainly review them.

## **Credits**

The Upgrade's Executive Producers are Olle Jonsson, Thorbiörn Fritzon and Tobias Wrigstad. This version was edited by Jason Morningstar.

# **HOT HOST TIPS** *the Upgrade!*

**MBS**  
TELEVISION

## **SCENE SUGGESTIONS**

### **Arriving at the Upgrade! Hotel**

The couples arrive at the Upgrade! Hotel to find that each suite has been specially prepared in some way—each suite will be decorated in some theme, for example a do-it-yourself theme with a lot of unprepared food, herbs etc. and a famous cook, a wild west theme with a mechanical bull, beer sausage, a water bed, a tiger rug etc. Let the players themselves describe the arrival scene and let them go as wild as you have all agreed is suitable for the type of game you want to play. Another possibility, of course, is that you describe the rooms to the players, but only do that if you have a plan.

### **The Japanese Bath**

Bring unequal and awkward gender roles to the fore. In the Japanese bath, the women will wash the men. Who washes who is randomly assigned as long as the original couples are avoided. Build tension. Maybe seeing your partner rubbing some sensual oil on the half-naked body of your rival is going to get your blood pumping? Remember, the goal is good television. Naturally, be careful with all events like this one if you are hoping to tone down the comical side to the game.

### **Experience Exchange**

The Experience Exchange is about the men meeting up and talking about the women in their absence, and vice versa. Use your gender awareness and let the men meet in the Turkish Sauna or at a football stadium, and the Women at a spa where they will be massaged and pampered. If necessary, let the hosts be present to serve as a catalyst for the discussions. Let the men boast about conquests, give each other advice, and so forth. Clips from the experience exchange event are particularly interesting to recap in the studio—the women will hear the men talk about them and vice versa. A husband who is going to vote Upgrade! with a bad conscience might give tips to the guy dating his wife how to win her heart. Or two women might agree to swap husbands.

### **The Teaser**

Told in a series of smash cuts, the 30 second teasers for The Upgrade! Can foreshadow events or be ludicrously out of context. Or both.

### **The Bungie Jump**

This could be any challenge event, really. The idea is to present the couple with the following question: "If you both do this yet undisclosed thing, you get 1,000 euros (or whatever, maybe a luxurious dinner), but if only one of you does it, or neither of you, you get nothing!" The couple is then separated and presented with the challenge alone. Of course, no one will know for sure what their partner has chosen. The idea is of course to generate scenes where one overcomes his or her fear of bungie jumping mistakenly believing that their partner of course jumped. Don't miss playing the aftermath—that's more interesting than the actual jumping. How to resolve action situations is described in the participant overview.

### **The Temptation**

Another favorite is to let the contestants spend one day in a room full of sweets and delights without eating and play it back like a series of short edited clips. Will they break? Make the reward worth some discipline.

### **The Producer Meeting**

The producer meeting is set in the piña colada laden sky bar at the Upgrade! Hotel right after the couples arrive. The producers can watch the couple's through cameras in the rooms. They have to decide where to take the show now that the couples have been formed. What couple should be forced to do what?

Keep this meeting short and effective as the producers probably have that other thing to go to, you know.

Make the players understand that the camera is off. You might need to give the players a push if this is a completely new situation for them. A voice-over might also help, for example, telling a tale about nervous producers, bad sales figures for commercials and exploding production costs. They have to save their asses, and the contestants will pay for it with their public lives (or whatever). Producers care about demographics, the potential each couple has to connect with the viewers, how to push certain products, etc. The players' goal in this scene is to produce a list of things that will happen to the couples over the next few days of shooting. Help them if they get stuck.

A good trick is to have a TV screen in the producer meeting monitoring what is currently happening in the hotel suites as the couples arrive. Thus, you could easily cut to playing a scene in one of those rooms and go back again. Remember, the producers have to know something about the couples in order to know how to deal with them.

### **The Therapist**

An on-call psychotherapist might be called into monitor the contestant's mental health. As a paid employee of the network, the therapist's primary loyalty is to good television. Leading questions, instilling paranoia or insecurity, encouraging destructive outbursts - anything that will boost the ratings.

*“Upgrade to the best fucking show on television!”  
- Peter Hammond, Maxim magazine*



## INSPIRATIONAL EXAMPLES

These should be freely available to all the players. If you need an idea for a scene, look no further.

### The Present

- X and Y meet for the first time after the speed-dating.
- X and Y talk about having sex and decide to...
- X and Y wake up after having had sex under the influence—high tension.
- Moonlight walk.
- Romantic dinner.
- A quarrel.
- Meeting regular partner during a romantic stroll with new partner. Perhaps the regular partner's new partner is there also.
- “Truth or dare” or “I've never...”
- Arriving at the theme decorated hotel room.
- Is given the opportunity to win a cash prize in a competition (what do you know about your new partner) or by doing an assignment or daring something (lying in a coffin with spiders).
- Cries on someone's shoulder.
- X realizes that he/she and Y are made for each other.
- X realizes that this (relationship with Y) will never work.
- X realizes that he/she can be totally him/herself wity Y.
- Accidentally hurts him/herself. (E.g., steps on a sea-urchin.)
- Discusses a possible future together---how do you want your life? What if we should marry... (‘‘I'm a vegetarian” and ‘‘I want to state up-front that I will never have kids/I want a dozen.”)
- X and Y has a ‘‘moment”, e.g., an oyster dinner that is ruined by stomach cramps or just works out splendid.
- X gives his/her date a massage with an entirely new product from a show sponsor and completely ruins the moment by just talking about how incredible the *product* is.

### The Possible Future

The purpose of the possible future scenes is to show what could possibly happen as a consequence of a scene in the now area if things continue in this direction, or show what goes on in the mind of a character, etc.

- My career finally started rolling...
- Some angry viewers whopped my ass on the bus...
- A lot of people come up to me...
- TV/radio/newspaper interview...
- Is given an official assignment due to celebrity status...
- Is invited to a celebrity party and cannot help try-ing to get a few autographs...
- X and Y are now married...
- X and Y meet in court...
- X dies...
- X says something about Y in an interview...
- X meets Y on the town and they chat a bit about memories past (revealing something, etc.)
- X is hosting a show of his/her own

### The Past

The purpose of the past area scenes is to show some perspective on the scenes from the new area---give a background to something that happens, show some depth etc. It is not until you learn that Eric is *very* scared of heights that you realise how much he is really trying to get together with Rose when he follows her to go mountain climbing.

- X is afraid of heights.
- X never learned to swim.
- X and Y really married to save their relationship.
- Scene that discloses why X (and/or Y) *really* wanted to be on the show.
- Everyone in my family was a celebrity in some form or another... (that's why I want to be on TV)
- This has happened to X before.
- Scene that shows that some other scene was true, false, etc.
- Scene that shows why it is so hard for X to trust someone.
- Scene that shows that Patti really always is *that* nervous.
- Scene that discloses that Jason and Helen are siblings.