

'The Other Two' Staged Its Saddest Moment in a Fake Applebee's

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Some weeks, it's easy to forget just how sad *The Other Two* really is. As its title suggests, however, Thursday's "Cary Gets His Ass Handed to Him" packs an emotional wallop.

For three seasons, we've watched Chase Dubek's rise to fame as "Chase Dreams," much to the initial chagrin of his "other two" older siblings, Brooke and Cary. The more they've tried to leverage their brother's fame into their own career success, the more miserable they've become. And Chase's mother, Pat, has become a superstar talk-show host who can't leave the house without her security detail.

The title might be "Cary Gets His Ass Handed to Him," but everyone's kind of suffering here. In particular, as *The Other Two* director Charlie Gruet told *The Daily Beast's Obsessed*, this week's episode marks the culmination of Cary and Pat's "parallel unravelings."

Pat is living her nightmare, and also Cary's dream. While he's willing to do anything for a little fame (even play sentient blob in a Disney movie) she's too famous to walk the streets without either a team around her body or prosthetics covering her face. She's dating Marvel's Simu Liu these days, but he doesn't even know how to go down on her properly—honestly, a tragedy.

What better place to air all this out than at a friendly neighborhood Applebee's? When Pat grows desperate for a "normal family dinner," her dutiful boyfriend hires a team to construct a fake one from scratch on a soundstage. Apparently, this is what it takes for a grown woman to eat some chicken wings in peace.



Courtesy of Max

The Other Two's production team constructed the funhouse Applebee's in what had been the courtroom set used for this season's *Pleasantville* homage. Gruet credited production designer Rocio Gimenez and art director Rosa Callejas for getting the look just right. From the color palette to the wood grain on the tables, everything is spot-on.

As Gruet recalled, the decoration got pretty granular—and while the overall look nails that classic “Applebee’s” aesthetic, some details had to look intentionally wrong. Rather than use a green screen to create a realistic cash register screen, the team decided to use a sticker to make it look even more lo-fi. “I was like, let’s make sure we roll the corner like the sticker has been used 100 times,” Gruet said. “You know, make sure it doesn’t look very good.”

Nevertheless, the set was convincing enough for some. Looking back on the shoot, Case Walker—who plays Chase—told me that sometimes, the illusion could be tough to shake. “You do these scenes, and then you’d walk out and be like, ‘Man, this isn’t an Applebee’s and Molly isn’t actually my mom,’” he said



with a laugh. One day, Gruet recalled, the team did the inevitable and ordered a big spread from the real restaurant to capture that “Applebee’s spirit.”

Like the show itself, however, the cheerfulness of the location belies the sadness of the moment. Here the family all are, gathered together at a fake restaurant to stage an ordinary dinner. Eventually, when Pat realizes that everything’s just a little off, she goes crashing through one of the set’s walls, revealing the soundstage beyond.

There’s humor to how Pat finds out—especially when she notices that all the strangers at this restaurant only seem to be saying “peas and carrots,” a phrase background actors whisper to each other to make it look like they’re having conversation, to one another instead of actually talking. After serving as director of photography for the airplane episode in Season 1, when Chase finds out how his father really died, and helming Pat’s Season 2 fashion-show meltdown, Gruet had some context for how the character tends to react. When she finally pieces it all together, he said, “It’s more of a sad realization, as opposed to a full breakdown. Like: ‘Wow, I really can’t have anything normal.’”



Courtesy of Max

That idea runs throughout the episode, starting from the beginning—when Chase breaks up with his dream girl, Pam Snot, only to find out that she’s got to go live in the woods to escape misogynistic fans. Ann Dowd makes a delightful cameo in an informational video for forest-bound ex-girlfriends. (“She had a great time with it,” Gruet said. “She came in and grabbed those lines, fully understanding the insanity of the situation and the character.”) By the time we arrive at the Applebee’s, Chase is trying on awful persona after awful persona in an attempt to make his ex look better by comparison, thereby freeing her from a life in the woods. Understandably, Pat is dismayed.

And then there’s Cary, who now can’t go more than two minutes without checking Rotten Tomatoes to see how his project is faring compared to his best friend’s. Cary’s one-sided rivalry with Curtis is among the vilest developments in the series to date—both difficult to watch and all too realistic. Last week, Cary got egged (literally, by GLAAD) for promoting an “exclusively gay moment” in a Disney movie that never happened and then lying about it. Even by the end of that episode, when Cary blows Curtis off after a fiery movie premiere to “sleep,” his friend realizes he’s learned nothing when he spots Cary talking to the press right afterward.

“Cary’s the only one who’s really believing in this ascension that he’s on,” Gruet said. “So we’re all kind of watching him and we’re all waiting for him to tumble.”

Brooke might be driving photos of her brother’s armpit across the country, and their mom might be crashing through windows at a fake Applebee’s, but right now, Cary might be the most lost *Other Two* character of all. It’s going to take a lot more than chicken tenders to fix this.

