

HIMYM EPISODE 710

“Mystery vs. History”

By Chuck Tatham

5/5/11

USER’S MANUAL FOR THIS OUTLINE: This episode will be 710, so a little background info: In early November sweeps, Barney and Robin will have an impulsive, illogical (but super hot) one-night-fling, timed just as things were going great with Nora and Robin’s New Love Interest TBD. Robin and Barney will both feel terrible guilt, but have different reactions. Barney ends things with Nora, planning a sweet, earnest, romantic attempt to get back together with Robin. Robin, however, sweeps the fling under the rug, committing herself to this new love interest. Barney doesn’t know this until he prepares to confess his feelings for Robin, only to realize she’s doubled down with this guy. So by the start of “Mystery vs. History,” Barney is heartbroken-but-hiding-it while Robin thinks they’ve agreed the fling was a big mistake, to be kept a big secret...

ACT ONE

EXT. NEW YORK CITY

New Yorkers are walking up and down the sidewalk – typical city scene. The Narrator tells us that in 2011, a lot of the intrigue had gone out of life because of the Internet: “We could find out whatever we wanted about someone just by clicking a button.” CLICK! All of a sudden, everyone’s Facebook “wall” begins to assemble -- thank you, Gunslinger – the person’s profile, their photos, their comments, everything begins “pop, pop, popping!” in front of them, quickly stacking up so that in seconds, the person is hidden behind their “wall.” Narrator: “Yup, technology took the mystery out of almost everything. Including a great American tradition, the bar-room debate.”

INT. BAR - 2005

Chyron: 2005 - Ted: “The most popular food in America, no question: the cheeseburger.” Everyone disagrees immediately and offers their opinions at the top of their lungs (Lily: “It’s pizza, and if I’m wrong I’ll show you my boobs!” Barney: “You are SO wrong!”) The gang has great fun hollering at each other. NARRATOR: “Yes, before the information superhighway took over, we had fun. But now...” **FLIP TO:**

INT. BAR - 2011

Chyron: 2011 – Each member of the gang silently types on their cellphone. Suddenly, Robin says: “Hot dogs. Hot dogs are the most popular food in America.” Ted: “Oh, okay.” Silence. Everyone sighs and goes back to silently tapping on their smartphone. NARRATOR: “The barroom debate was dead, but we still had one big mystery...” To break the silence, Lily volunteers: “Today I had a full work-up at my OB-GYN. No surprises, the baby’s looking great, but the doctor gave us this. Inside it says whether we’re having a boy or a girl.” Ted, Barney and Robin are delighted – “So? What is it? A boy or a girl?” Marshall and Lily: “We’re not opening it.” Off the gang’s confusion...

MAIN TITLES

INT. BAR – CONTINUOUS

Marshall and Lily explain themselves. They want the baby's gender to be a mystery. "We're going to find out when the fates tell us it's time!" Robin and Barney think this is madness: "If there's information to get, get it!" Lily: "Why burden our little angel with all kinds of gender specific expectations? Boys can do ballet and girls can play football." Marshall: "Hell, the Green Bay Packers have been proving that for years." Silence. "That would've gotten a big laugh in a sports bar." Marshall and Lily explain their plan to paint their "gender-neutral" baby room this weekend, and ask for volunteers to help. Robin says Lily's full of crap; you have to lay down solid gender roles or you have a childhood like hers... "My father raised me as a boy! All my girlfriends had pretty dresses and a big cake for their 14th birthday, but me??..." **FLASHBACK:**

INT. HELICOPTER – FLASHBACK - 1992

A mid-teen butch-looking Robin sits in an open helicopter, wearing a parachute, with her stern father as they fly above the British Columbia wilderness. Robin: "I wanna go home, Daddy." Father: "Not until we celebrate your 14th birthday the way I celebrated my 14th birthday, and every Scherbatsky boy before me." Father gives Robin a Swiss army knife – he points out the window. Father: "That direction is nothing but wolves... And 40 kilometers that way is the mining town of Smithers. I'd take my chances with the wolves." With that, Father starts to shove Robin out the door. Robin: "Wait – what am I supposed to eat?" Father: "You've got a knife, the forest is full of animals – what do you want, a buffet?" As he shoves Robin out the door and yells, "We'll be back to pick you up in three days, son – happy birthdaaaaaaay...!" **FLIP BACK TO:**

INT. BAR – BACK TO PRESENT

Robin: "Find out the gender now, and stick with it!" Marshall and Lily stand by "keeping things a mystery." Ted returns with the next round, excited. "See that cute girl up there? Her name's Janet, just got her number, we're going out Saturday!" Robin and Barney bust out their phones: "We're on it! What's her last name?!" Ted: "It's... No, wait a second. Maybe Marshall and Lily are onto something with this 'mystery' thing." Ted says he's beginning to question the helpfulness of "googling" each new prospective love interest. Narrator: "Over the last couple years, a sort of 'background check' procedure had emerged, at first by accident..." **FLIP TO** montage of Ted's dates:

EXT. BROWNSTONE STOOP – ONE YEAR AGO

Ted politely kisses his date good night and walks off, happily dialing his phone. Ted: "Just calling to say that was the best date in a long time. Her name's Lisa Henderson, she's a lawyer, she lives on 56th Street, and I think I'm in love!" **CUT TO:**

INT. APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Barney on the other end, with Robin. They decide to look her up on a laptop. Robin: "Ted, before you get too excited, I'm doing a little Internet recon on your Lisa Henderson." Ted (innocently): "That's not necessary. She's a wonderful—" Robin (re: laptop): "She has two kids in Florida." Barney (re: laptop): "Where she lived after she got

out of prison.” Robin: “Stick a fork in her, she’s done.” Ted deflates, a little wiser. Narrator: “After that, it became standard procedure...” **CUT TO:**

INT. BAR - ONE MONTH AGO

A more jaded Ted chats up an attractive woman at the bar. She goes to the bathroom; Ted whips out his phone, all urgent spy movie. Ted: “Sheila Louise O’Neill. Photographer, went to Penn State, claims to love The Decemberists, go!” **FLIP TO:**

INT. APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Robin and Barney on speakerphone, now grizzled veterans. The desk is covered with coffee cups and cluttered papers, “Law and Order”-style. They furiously type on their laptops. Robin: “That’s all legit but... Oh no.” Ted: “What?” Robin: “She posted a negative comment on Internet Movie Database about... Annie Hall.” Ted gasps: “What did she say?” Barney (gravely): ““Slow and over-rated. Thumbs down.”” Ted gasps again. Robin: “Get out, get out, get out!” As Ted scurries away, we **CUT BACK TO:**

INT. BAR – PRESENT DAY

Barney: “That was all good information, Ted!” Robin: “We saved your ass! And we’re gonna do it again!” Robin reaches for Janet’s name and number, Ted stops her. Ted: “No! Aren’t we losing something with all this? The joy of discovery? It’s gotten to the point where I don’t even need to go on the date anymore!” **FLASHBACK TO:**

INT. APARTMENT – TWO WEEKS AGO

Ted is getting ready for a date, as Barney and Robin work on their laptops. Ted proceeds to have the entire relationship online in about thirty seconds: hope (“Her friends seem nice!”), their first fight (“She hates baseball?!”), makeup sex (a hot bikini pic from a Hawaiian vacation), culminating in Ted “meeting the family” (her dad’s a super right wing deer-hunter, her mom looks exactly like her but is 600 pounds.). Robin: “I think we’re done here.” Ted sighs, removes his tie. **BACK TO:**

INT. BAR – BACK TO PRESENT

Ted: “You two got me addicted to this “information” crap and it’s ruining my love life! Perfectly good relationships are finished before they even start -- what if Romeo had googled Juliet?” Robin: “Um, they wouldn’t have killed themselves?” Marshall agrees with Ted; he and Lily might never have connected if they’d been able to google their respective “histories” back in the mid-90’s... **FLASHBACK:**

INT. DORM HALLWAY – 1996

The magical moment when Lily first knocked on Marshall’s door, as we’ve already seen it on the show. Lily (love at first sight): “Hi. I’m Lily.” Marshall (love at first sight): “I’m Marshall.” A beat. Suddenly, they each turn their backs on each other and start furiously typing on a smartphone. They are each aghast at the weird details they find out about each other. Lily’s inner thoughts: “How many Loch Ness Monster websites has this guy posted on?!” Marshall’s inner thoughts: “Man, that’s some bad poetry!” Lily (coldly): “Nice to meet you.” Marshall: “Yup.” He closes the door. **BACK TO:**

INT. BAR – BACK TO PRESENT

Ted: “What amazing possibilities is all this precious ‘knowledge’ ruling out?” He looks at Janet’s number: “This has to stop.” He crosses to Janet, who’s leaving with her friends. Ted: “I hope this doesn’t sound creepy, but would you be interested in keeping this an old-fashioned ‘let’s get to know each other as human beings with no history’ kind of date? Meaning no prior Internet research on each other?” Janet (coy): “What? I’d never do that!” She then “subtly” stops her friend from typing on her phone. Ted laughs. She’s charmed and immediately on board. Janet and Ted shake on it, she exits.

Elated, Ted tells the gang: “Neither of us is gonna look the other up!” Robin: “And she was totally on board with this plan?” Ted: “Totally!” Barney: “She’s hiding something.” As Ted has a flicker of doubt and Barney and Robin continue to type...

ACT TWO**INT. APARTMENT – THE NEXT NIGHT**

Robin and Barney are on their laptops, remembering what clues “Janet” offered (“She had a backpack from Fordham... She was drinking Italian beer, which generally indicates connections with organized crime...”) but Ted doesn’t want to hear any of it. Ted: “I don’t want this, I don’t need this, stop it, forget it, let me get to know Janet!” Ted exits, off to an appropriately retro (in keeping with their “No smartphones allowed” rule) martini bar to meet Janet...

It’s a moot point, because Barney and Robin have hit a wall – they know her name is Janet McDonnell, but there are ninety-three Janet McDonnell’s in New York. Marshall and Lily remind Robin and Barney they agreed to help paint the new baby room tonight.

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY’S NEW BABY ROOM - NIGHT

It’s an empty room, sheets on the floor, cans of yellow paint, etc. Lily starts painting the white walls. Lily (immediate second thoughts): “Wow, that’s really even more yellow than I expected.” Barney and Robin mock the “gender neutral” color. Plus, what kind of gifts do they expect to get at their baby shower? Barney opens his briefcase to reveal some visual aids he brought to support his argument. He whips out the most adorable little baby baseball player outfit. Marshall and Lily (pure reflex): “Awww...” Barney says if they knew they were having a boy, they’d get adorable gifts like this. “Or, if it were a girl...” Barney takes out an even more adorable little fairy princess outfit. Marshall and Lily (pure reflex): “Awww...” Barney: “But no. At your baby shower, where you’ll get enough gifts to last you for the first two years of your baby’s life... this is what you’re gonna get.” Barney holds up a very unthrilling plain yellow onesie: “Your baby will be a jaundiced, fashion-backward, androgynous blob.”

We can tell this argument has shaken Marshall and Lily, but they remain resolved. And Lily sees the underlying issue here: “You’re really looking forward to buying clothes for our baby, aren’t you, Barney?” Barney (blurting): “I have Tim Gunn standing by to make an Italian Merino Wool baby suit, but I need to know what color!”

Meanwhile, Robin's continued tapping away at a laptop, looking for "Janet McDonnell" clues. Suddenly, she perks up: "Wait! Ted says she lives right near a retro martini place!" She searches for this. **CUT TO:**

INT. MAXIE'S MARTINI BAR – LATER

The place is a real throwback -- guys in jackets and ties, martinis, a trio playing American classics, etc. It looks and feels like a date from the past, which is exactly what Ted wanted. But things start out shaky because Ted and Janet know nothing about each other.

Silence. We hear Ted's thoughts: "Dammit! My 'get to know someone' muscles have completely atrophied! Say something, anything!" Ted (re: jazz combo): "Did Cole Porter write this song?" Janet: "I think it was Johnny Mercer." Ted: "Pretty sure it was Cole Porter." Ted and Janet playfully argue the point, sharing a smile – it's an old fashioned bar-room debate and, with no way to solve it, they're connecting!

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY'S BABY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Marshall and Lily continue to paint the room yellow (and try to convince themselves they're loving it), Barney and Robin are now hot on the trail of Janet McDonnell. Robin (re: laptop): "Found a Janet McDonnell who lives one block from a Maxie's Martini Bar!" Barney: "That's her! Which means this is her Wikipedia page..." Robin: "Which means..." Barney and Robin stare at the screen in disbelief: "Oh... my.... God...."

INT. MAXIE'S MARTINI BAR – CONTINUOUS

Ted and Janet are having a fine time; Ted's phone buzzes. Breaking the rules, he sneaks a peak at it – INSERT TEXT: "You absolutely MUST click on this link about Janet McDonnell RIGHT NOW! Barney & Robin." Ted quickly texts Barney: "I'm not clicking on it, leave me alone!" Ted puts his phone away and returns to Janet.

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY'S BABY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Barney and Robin are staring at Barney's phone, aghast. Barney and Robin insist that Marshall and Lily look at the screen. They refuse – whatever is on there should remain a mystery. Barney: "Oh for the love of God, enough of this mystery crap! Just let me know the sex of the baby, I need to choose pocket square fabrics!" Marshall: "Fine!" Marshall gives Barney the envelope. Marshall: "If it'll shut you up, YOU look, find out, and don't tell us." Barney and Robin take a look. Then they both sit there looking at Marshall and Lily, completely deadpan. A long beat. It's clear Marshall and Lily are immediately tortured that their friends know but they don't...

Barney hands the baby gender envelope to Marshall. Barney: "Okay, now I know, I won't say a word. You want mystery, I'll let you have all the mystery you want. Won't hear a peep outta this guy."

Barney and Robin then proceed to torment Marshall and Lily by blurting out misleading things. Robin: "Boy!" Marshall and Lily look up expectantly. Robin: "...do I like babies." Lily and Marshall scowl. Barney: "Girl!" Marshall and Lily look up again. Barney: "...friend your hair looks fine." Robin: "Thanks!" Barney: "Twins!" Marshall

and Lily jerk up. Barney: "...was a fantastic movie." Marshall and Lily snap, "Okay, fine! We'll look in the envelope!!"

They open the envelope to discover the paper is ripped in half – it reads: "It's a ---" Barney tells Marshall and Lily he won't hand over the other half unless they look at the computer screen and see Janet's deep, dark secret. Marshall and Lily reluctantly look at the screen: "Oh... my... God..."

INT. MAXIE'S MARTINI BAR – CONTINUOUS

The date couldn't be going better – Ted is relaxed, charming, and sexy. Janet goes to the washroom and Ted's phone rings; it's Marshall and Lily. They tell him to click on the link that Barney and Robin sent earlier. Ted is rattled – it's one thing for Barney and Robin to harass him, but if Marshall and Lily say he should click on the link, it must be big. Ted swallows hard... and clicks on the link. He stares at his iPhone: "Oh...my...God..."

ACT THREE

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY'S APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Barney holds up his end of the deal and hands over the other half of the gender card. Marshall and Lily are about to look at it...when there's a knock at the door. Robin opens it to reveal: Robin's New Love Interest TBD (moving forward, "RNLI," because that's a really catchy abbreviation) there to pick her up for a late dinner (they've now been dating a few weeks and getting a lot closer). Barney is not happy to see this guy.

RNLI asks what everyone's all worked up about. Robin explains that Marshall and Lily are wrestling with whether to know their baby's gender, while Ted's wrestling with whether to find out a big mystery about this girl, Janet. RNLI immediately says he'd vote for "mystery" on both counts. He sweetly puts his arm around Robin and says: "Like with you, baby. I don't know everything about you. But that just means I have all this great stuff to discover..." It's a nice moment, but Robin immediately looks secretly stricken. Narrator: "And at that moment, Robin realized the not-so-slight hypocrisy in her 'know everything' argument...." **FLASHBACK TO:**

CLIP OF EPISODE 708: We again see Barney and Robin's illicit hook-up.

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY'S APARTMENT – BACK TO PRESENT

Robin turns to Marshall and Lily: "You know what? Don't look at it." Robin looks over at RNLI, with a mixture of guilt and appreciation for him: "Like Ted says, who knows how much good stuff knowing everything might wind up ruling out?" (Barney is the only person in the room who knows exactly what Robin's saying.) Robin and RNLI exit to their dinner. Barney watches them go, hiding how much it hurts.

Marshall and Lily regain their resolve. Marshall: "Robin's right. We'll discover the gender of our baby when the fates tell us!" Lily: "And no sooner!" Marshall goes to the

window and flings the unread piece of the gender card out into the night. WE FOLLOW the piece of paper...

EXT. NEW YORK STREET – CONTINUOUS

...as it drifts down towards the street, swirling in the wind. Eventually, it lands on the sidewalk.

INT. MAXIE’S MARTINI BAR – CONTINUOUS

Ted is engrossed by what he’s reading on his iPhone. NARRATOR: “Janet McDonnell had a deep, dark secret...” **CUT TO:**

MONTAGE OF ALL THAT IS JANET: We see a flurry of awards and photos and news headlines that indicate Janet is the greatest person in the world! Highly educated, does charity work, extremely wealthy, fantastic body, climbed Everest, gave a kidney to someone she’s never met, etc. Narrator: “She was the most fantastic woman I had ever met! And she was into me!” **BACK TO SCENE:**

INT. MAXIE’S MARTINI BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ted is overjoyed – when Janet returns to the table he quietly puts away his phone. But then he comes to a horrible realization: he’s suddenly lost all his mojo with this woman. She’s simply too good, too intimidating. Ted starts to stammer nervously, trying to prove his worthy-ness. Ted: “You know, I may not have mentioned it, but I’m a big time architect. Got a building going up right here in New York.” Ted’s sudden bragging doesn’t impress Janet, who asks him, “Are you okay?” Ted: “I’m fine.”

But he’s not. Suddenly, Janet’s “wall” begins to appear. Pop, pop, popping in front of her, just like the people at the top of the show, Ted sees the awards and photos and news headlines until, in no time at all, it’s impossible for Ted to see Janet.

Janet: “Ted, when I was in the washroom, did you Google me?”

Ted admits that he did find out some things about her from the Internet, but it’s no big deal. Janet slumps in her seat: “Of course it’s a big deal, Ted. Now you find me intimidating. Just like every other guy I’ve dated. Why do you think I was so excited about you not knowing anything about me? Now you’ve ruined everything!” Ted: “No, I ain’t! I mean, no I never did that thing! What I mean is, you gooder than me no make difference.” Janet gets her coat and exits – this relationship is DEAD.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET – LATER

Ted sadly walks down the street, alone again, wishing he’d never bitten of the apple of knowledge. As heart-wrenching emo music comes up and under... Narrator: “That night I realized that we each had a wall of information about ourselves that we presented to the world, but like all walls, they have a way of getting in between things.”

INT. MARSHALL AND LILY'S APARTMENT – LATER

It's a bit later, Robin's back from her date, the gang hangs. Ted enters, bummed. Ted: "I should've waited." Ted informs them that he was reduced to a blubbing buffoon guess in the end. Ted: "I guess, in the end, it's mystery, not history." Marshall and Lily understand, having come back around to this, too. Lily: "That's why we're gonna wait until fate wants us to know the sex of our baby."

Sighing, Ted puts his feet on the coffee table – Marshall looks at the sole of Ted's shoe, dumbfounded. Marshall: "Lilypad..." Marshall points to the sole of Ted's shoe. There is half a torn piece of paper...with the word "boy" on it. Their faces light up. Marshall: "We're having a boy!" Lily: "We're having a boy!" Barney (taking a little suit out of his briefcase): "We're having a boy!"

Suddenly, the entire gang is on their feet, ecstatically happy and hugging, even Barney and Ted. **DISSOLVE TO:**

INT. BAR - A FEW DAYS LATER

Robin enters with a gift bag. She gives it to Lily, who opens it to reveal a tiny pair of hockey skates for the baby boy. Lily is overjoyed – Robin is oddly quiet. Lily: "What's wrong?" Robin: "I'm late."

Whoa. If Robin is pregnant, then Robin's new love interest is the father.

Unless the father is Barney.

But we'll get to that...

END OF SHOW