MAGGIE'S PLAN

by

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Based on a story by Karen Rinaldi
EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET - DAY

MAGGIE: We see the back of her blonde head. It’s a beautiful winter day. Now we see her from across the street. We see her feet making determined strides. This is a young woman who knows where she is going.

Wide shot: A blind man is tentatively making ready to cross the street.

Among the handful of pedestrians about to cross, Maggie is the only one to notice, and helps the man across.

EXT. PRODUCE MARKET - DAY

TONY, Maggie’s best friend, looks a little like Art Garfunkel as a young man: fluffy hair, glasses, dressed in a suit jacket and baggy chinos. He’s pushing a stroller with a reading, fluffy-haired, bespectacled four year old boy in it, wearing a t-shirt with “IMAGINE THERE’S NO FRACKING” written on the front. This boy is too big to be in a stroller, and too young to be reading. Maggie rushes to them.

MAGGIE
Sorry! Sorry I’m late... Hi! Hi Max!

She snuffles the little boy’s neck.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
You still have one little corner of baby smell. Right (sniff) there.

Max giggles and pushes her away so he can get back to his reading. Maggie straightens up.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Ach, I need a baby!

She bites her fist.

TONY
You need a baby? You’re such an impatient little fuss-budget.

MAGGIE
I just don’t see why I should wait.

TONY
For a father, perhaps?

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
Let’s face it. I’ve never been in a serious relationship that lasted longer than six months.

TONY
(paying)
We were together for two years.

They walk.

MAGGIE
In college. And we made each other miserable for the rest of the time.

TONY
I admit it. We were miserable. But we were also happy.

MAGGIE
Yeah.

They reach a stand of homemade jams. Tony picks one up.

TONY
Just so you know. I have little sperm tucked away in a facility uptown, if you’re in a pinch.

MAGGIE
What?! Why? I thought Felicia didn’t want any more kids.

TONY
Felicia does not want any more kids. I froze it in case I ever meet anybody nice.

MAGGIE
No, you didn’t.

TONY
I didn’t. But I might, you know, save it, like ‘mad money’-style?

Maggie has something to tell Tony, and she wants to get it over with fast.

MAGGIE
(rushing this part)
Do you remember Guy Childers, from college?

(CONTINUED)
A moment as Tony searches for the name in his mind.

TONY
Wasn’t he the Guy...he’s a pickle salesman?

MAGGIE
He’s a pickle entrepreneur. And--
he’s agreed to make a donation, so
I can inseminate myself.

TONY
But he has no sense of personal
space!

MAGGIE
So what? He was a math major.
Anyway, I’m not marrying him, I’m
borrowing his genes.

TONY
But not his personality I hope. Guy
Childers...?

MAGGIE
(shrugs)
Everybody has something a little
wrong with them. You think
everybody’s honest who fills out
those questionnaires at the sperm
bank?

TONY
I can’t believe you’ve been cooking
this up all this time and you
didn’t even tell me.

MAGGIE
I knew that you’d yell at me.

TONY
I’m not yelling at you! Isn’t this
sort of thing for women who are
like forty-nine and desperate?

MAGGIE
I don’t want it to be a last
resort, I want it to be a choice.
(MORE)
Because I’m ready to be a mother, and I don’t believe I’ll find a man who I can stay in love with—or who can stay in love with me—for more than six months. I’m just facing the truth about myself.

Tony is morose at this news, but he accepts it.

TONY
So when’s the insemination? Are we gonna have a party?

MAGGIE
In four months.

As they walk away from camera:

TONY
Do I have bad breath?

He breathes into the air near her mouth. She sniffs.

MAGGIE
No. Do I?

She breathes into his mouth.

TONY
No.

And they walk off. Good friends; unusual friends...

INT. GUY CHILDERS’ BROOKLYN PICKLE FACTORY – DAY

Hipsters in hats and Mexican technicians are creating pickles in huge vats. GUY is walking Maggie through aisle after aisle of pickles. Guy is wearing a Peruvian hat with flaps, shorts, and clogs.

GUY
I started production in my apartment three years ago. Now I have twelve employees, and I just got an order from Whole Foods. If that works out we’re taking off. But I’m still very hands on. Every pickle has my stamp of approval on it.

He withdraws a pickle from a vat.
GUY (CONT’D)
Here, try this one.

MAGGIE
I love this!

GUY
That’s the Bavarian. Classic.

MAGGIE
This is the best pickle I’ve ever had.

Guy looks at her, beaming.

Jump cut:

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

Guy and Maggie are at the front desk of Brooklyn Brine. Guy takes off his gloves as Maggie notices a pair of hockey skates hanging from a coat stand.

MAGGIE
You skate?

GUY
Every Sunday. I grew up on the ice.

MAGGIE
Oh right. You were on the ice hockey team.

GUY
Yeah.

MAGGIE
I used to skate a lot when I was little.

A moment of awkwardness.

GUY
So, regarding our plan. Here... is my bill of health.

With an air of pride, he spreads his blood test results across the desk.

GUY (CONT’D)
Read it.
MAGGIE (scanning the results)
That’s great.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Oh! I have for you:

Maggie takes an empty plastic specimen jar out of her purse.

GUY
Ah.

He takes it and looks into it, as if for an answer.

MAGGIE
You need to keep it warm, when you...so just put it next to your body underneath your shirt...and you can come right over.

GUY
Okay...

Guy places the jar on the desk. They look at it together.

GUY (CONT’D)
So when do you want to do this?

MAGGIE
March...twenty third?

Guy thinks about his schedule. No conflicts come to mind.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
I just want to build up some more savings.

Guy pulls out a stool for Maggie solicitously, in anticipation, perhaps, of her pregnancy.

GUY
That’s smart.

MAGGIE
I have insurance and everything. So, I guess the question is, how much involvement do you want? I was going to suggest none, but I’m open to negotiation.

A beat as Guy digests this.
GUY
None is...so cool. It kind of takes
the pressure off, doesn’t it?

He takes a seat and leans back against the refrigerator,
beside a large circulating fan.

GUY (CONT’D)
I can just relax, and build my
empire.

The fan blows Guy’s STD bloodtest result paper across his
desk; they both move to stop it, and their fingers touch.

INT. MAGGIE’S BUILDING – DAY

Close up of a mailbox being opened with a key.

Maggie draws out two identical white envelopes. Puzzled, she
opens one, then the other.

A3 EXT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET – DAY

Maggie walks outside.

4 INT./EXT. NEW SCHOOL – DAY

Maggie enters the big glass doors.

5 INT. NEW SCHOOL – BURSAR’S OFFICE – DAY

A large woman with close-cropped hair and a neck brace sits
behind the desk with the air of a sage.

MAGGIE
Hi Beverly. I got two checks this
month. Not that I’m complaining.

BEVERLY
You sure they’re not for two
different payments?

MAGGIE
I would love to think that... but
they have the same date on them and
I was paid last month.

JOHN
Excuse me...

(CONTINUED)
The camera pans right to include a shambolic, sleep-deprived, edgy man.

JOHN (CONT’D)  
I couldn’t help but overhear this young woman got two checks. And I don’t have any.

Beverly looks up at him, displeased at this complication.

BEVERLY  
What’s your name?

JOHN  
John Harding.

MAGGIE  
Oh well my name is Johanna Hardin, I mean my name is Maggie... but on the check it’s Johanna Margaret Hardin. So maybe there was a mix-up.

Beverly is on the computer. She looks a little put out. She hates this kind of thing.

BEVERLY  
Yep. And it’s gonna take a minute to figure this out.

JOHN  
It would be great if it could be resolved soon.

Beverly looks up at him with her final answer.

BEVERLY  
We’ll get back to you.

INT. NEW SCHOOL – BRIDGE HALLWAY – DAY

Maggie and John walk down the hallway.

JOHN  
Damn. That woman could guard hell, if Cerberus ever needs to go to the vet.

MAGGIE  
Everyone’s scared of Beverly. What do you teach?
JOHN
Ficto-critical Perspectives in
Family Dynamics, and Masks in the
Modern Family, Victorian Times to
the present day.

MAGGIE
Psychology department?

JOHN
Anthropology.

MAGGIE
(scrutinizing him)
I don’t know any anthropologists.

JOHN
What about you?

MAGGIE
I’m the Director of Business
Development and Outreach for the
art and design students.

JOHN
What’s that?

MAGGIE
I help graduate students strategize
for success in the art and design
world. Sort of a bridge between art
and commerce. I help them sell
their souls. And eat.

JOHN
Are you old enough to do that job?

MAGGIE
I have a master’s degree in arts
management.

They exit frame as the camera, with a will of its own, pans
down to look through the glass wall at the courtyard below,
and a round metal bench with a phallic center.

JOHN
(os)
Good to know. See you later.

MAGGIE
(os)
Good luck with getting paid!
Several days later, Maggie is in line with FELICIA, Tony’s wife. Felicia is wearing a t-shirt with “What would Jesus Buy?” Written on it. She and Felicia are mid-conversation when John calls out. The camera pans over to him.

JOHN
Felicia -- when is that -- that Pike fellowship meeting?

FELICIA
Thursday at seven.

JOHN
(sighing)
Great, thanks.

The women sit.

MAGGIE
That’s so funny that you know John Harding.

FELICIA
(eating her soup)
We’re on a committee together. He’s a real panty melter. Why?

MAGGIE
No, we just -- had a check mix-up recently -- because of our names-- Hardin/Harding.

FELICIA
He’s one of the bad-boys of Fictocritical Anthropology. Apparently, he was a big deal in Chicago. And now he just does adjunct work here, but they’re really salivating for him to teach full-time.

MAGGIE
Why won’t he?

FELICIA
I don’t know. I think it has something to do with his wife. She’s some kind of monster apparently.

MAGGIE
Where did you hear this?

(CONTINUED)
FELICIA
(shrugging)
Around. She’s got tenure at Columbia. Georgette Nørgaard. The words ‘Glacial’ and ‘Terrifying’ have been bandied about. Then again I’ve heard myself described as a psychotic bitch, but I think I’m actually pretty nice, so... you can’t believe everything you hear.

Maggie is distracted by John’s voice.

JOHN
-if you say ‘she was, like, terrified’, it’s nothing compared to saying ‘she was terrified’. “Like” is a language condom. Trust me.

Maggie looks back at John, now a far more mysterious character.

FELICIA
(searching in her salad)
Where the fuck is my chicken?

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - FOUNTAIN - DAY

John is nursing a coffee, sitting on a bench, reading the paper, when he notices Maggie, who is circling the fountain with vigorous, calisthenic strides. He watches her circle a couple times. Calls out:

JOHN
Hey, Hardin?

MAGGIE
Oh, hi!

JOHN
What are you doing?

MAGGIE
I’m taking a little constitutional before my next meeting.

John gets up and walks over to her.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Did you get paid yet?
JOHN
No.

MAGGIE
You’re kidding.

JOHN
Beverly tells me the check is coming any day now.

Maggie and John walk past a man in a fancy suit kneeling to scoop up his dog’s turd.

JOHN (CONT’D)
I knew this Masai from Tanzania. He was here to run in the Marathon. He took everything in New York City in complete stride. Nothing fazed him until he saw a grown man following his dog, picking up its shit. He started laughing so hard, he wept.

MAGGIE
I guess that-- custom-- would be strange, like, out of context. Whoops!

JOHN
What?

MAGGIE
I overheard part of your conversation. About ‘like’ being a -- language prophylactic.

He’s trying to remember saying that.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
What is ficto-critical anthropology, anyway?

JOHN
It’s a way of writing about anthropology that blends ethnographic observation, story telling and, like, theory.

A beat. Two smiles.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN (CONT’D)
Do we have to walk in a circle, or are we allowed walk around the park?

MAGGIE
We’re allowed.

They begin to meander.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(curious about him)
It’s so hard to find a full-time position.

JOHN
When my wife, Georgette, was offered a tenured position at Columbia, I decided to put off a job search, just teach a few classes and finally try to write this novel I’ve had in my head for years.

They pass two bomb squad-looking men sharing a joke.

MAGGIE
(intrigued)
So, are you getting a lot of work done, on your novel?

JOHN
They say every relationship has a gardener, and a rose. Georgette is definitely the rose.

MAGGIE
And you’re the gardener.

JOHN
And I don’t have a green thumb.

MAGGIE
Maybe you’re a rose in disguise.

JOHN
It would be a very good disguise.

They walk along for a moment.

JOHN (CONT’D)
She’s wonderful. It’s just she’s kind of destroying my life.

(CONTINUED)
Maggie isn’t sure how to respond to this remark, dropped as a kind of aside as John ambles along.

MAGGIE
?

JOHN
No, no. It’s just been a bad week.
(looking up at the sky) It’s turning into a beautiful day.

They come to a man performing Shakespearean soliloquies for donations.

ACTOR
Content with Hermia? No! I do repent/The tedious minutes I with her have spent. Not Hermia, but Helena I love./Who would not change a raven for a dove?

John gives him a dollar.

ACTOR (CONT’D)
Thanks, man.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK – BENCH – MINUTES LATER

A few minutes later. They have cupcakes and are sitting on the same bench John was on earlier. They are mid-conversation.

JOHN
We have two of those. Best part of my life. Who’s your guy?

MAGGIE
No guy. Actually, the man I’ve asked to be the father is named Guy, coincidentally.

John tears a bite off.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(laughing)
You eat like Mr. Fox!

JOHN
...

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
There was a Roald Dahl book? And then it was a movie--

JOHN
Oh yeah. My kids loved that movie.

Maggie looks at her watch.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I really like what you’re doing, though--having a baby by yourself. Not that it won’t be hard, because it’s gonna be fucking hard. But, I admire your courage. And I love babies.

MAGGIE
I just don’t like leaving my destiny...

JOHN
To destiny?

MAGGIE
Right.

The Shakespearean actor from the park walks by them, still in his ruff. He is with another man who is silent, furious.

ACTOR
(tearful)
But where will I go?

The other man shrugs. The Actor runs after his lover.

ACTOR (CONT’D)
You can’t just kick me out of our house...

JOHN (to Maggie)
I have a question for you.

MAGGIE
Yes?

JOHN
Would you consider reading a chapter of my novel?

MAGGIE
Sure.
JOHN
I know that’s weird. I really want the first reader to be like...You know how you said you’re a bridge between art and commerce? Well, I need a bridge.

MAGGIE
Perfect. Give it to me. I’ll read it.

John reaches into his backpack and pulls out about fifty pages of a novel.

JOHN
You really will? I really would appreciate it.

Maggie takes it.

MAGGIE
I don’t mind at all.

She looks at her watch.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
I gotta go. Shoot.

John looks at his watch.

JOHN
(panicked)
Oh shit! Shit! Shit! I gotta go. I gotta go!

MAGGIE
Oh--

He grabs his bag and runs off.

JOHN
I’ll see you later. Thank you!

MAGGIE
(baffled, calling after him)
Okay, Bye!

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY

John rushes to the wings and into a big close up as he looks out at the stage with trepidation.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN  
(under his breath)  
Fuck.

KLIEGLER  
(os)  
What do you make of the use of masks in the Occupy movement?

High shot: see John stride onto the stage. GEORGETTE, John’s beautiful Danish wife, and a moderator, KLIEGLER, have started this panel on MASKS IN POLITICS without him. His seat is rudely empty. As John does his walk of shame across the stage, Georgette speaks in a clipped Danish accent.

GEORGETTE  
The masked revolutionary is a direct inversion of the face of the demagogue— the essentially fascist ideal of the magnetic individual...

As John passes, Georgette gives him an extremely dirty look.

JOHN  
(into the mic)  
Sorry I’m late.

Laughter, because he’s so damn charismatic. Georgette isn’t laughing.

KLIEGLER  
(holding up John’s book)  
John Harding, author of many books, most recently, “Rituals of Commodity Fetishism at the Tail End of the Empire”.

Applause. He’s popular.

KLIEGLER (CONT’D)  
So John, of course we have been discussing the Occupy movement——

GEORGETTE  
I can’t help mentioning the irony that Warner Brothers owns the copyright on the V for Vendetta mask that became the face of the Occupy movement.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
Like it or not, in this country, the most potent, totemic symbols are cinematic or television-based; so it only makes sense that a radical, popular movement would try to subvert them.

GEORGETTE
Nevertheless, the reality of Occupy is to be found within the capitalist narrative, as a kind of subplot.

JOHN
This sweeping cynicism of yours--

GEORGETTE
If by sweeping cynicism you mean not living in a dream, then shoot me now.

KLIEGLER
Maybe the way we--

JOHN
Nobody ever thinks a revolution is going to happen until three days after it’s happened. This was a leaderless movement. It wasn’t going to happen on a schedule. This was a genuine populist uprising.

Applause.

KLIEGLER
Yes! Because--

GEORGETTE
Absolutely. But to return to the use of masks in politics. I am more interested in the possibility of anonymity and group affiliation -- the “I am Spartacus” maneuver -- which has been the primary tactical explanation of the use of masks among various 20th and 21st century protest movements. Including the Zapatistas, the black blocs of the anti-globalization movement, and, of course, Pussy Riot.

(CONTINUED)
As her speech wears on, we see John wilting like a daisy in a sauna. He radiates resentment and defeat.

INT. JOHN AND GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT - EVENING

Close up of Georgette’s manicured hand, texting. We go wide to reveal a family dinner. John is standing, serving Georgette pasta.

JOHN
You don’t need to help, but could you please put that down?

GEORGETTE
(texting)
One moment.

She puts the phone down.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
Okay.

John sits. JUSTINE, 13, in a school uniform, sits beside her dreamy brother, PAUL, 7.

JUSTINE
I don’t get why you say the same thing in the concluding paragraph as you do in the opening paragraph.

GEORGETTE
You’re repeating your thesis but in a more developed form.

JUSTINE
What’s the point of that?

GEORGETTE
By the time you get to the conclusion you’ve proven your thesis.

JUSTINE
So it’s basically just gloating.

JOHN
(amused)
It is a form of gloating, yes.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
(To John:)
They have fleas in Paul’s class again.

JOHN
They don’t have fleas. They have lice.

GEORGETTE
Okay, lice.

JOHN
(to Paul)
Let me check your head.

Paul walks over to John. John checks his head.

JOHN (CONT’D)
You don’t have lice.

Georgette catches Justine texting.

GEORGETTE
No texting at the table.

JOHN
I wonder where she gets it.

GEORGETTE
I use my phone for work.

JOHN
Sometimes I’d like to smash it with a hammer.

GEORGETTE
Ha-ha.

Georgette’s phone rings. She is dying to answer. The kids both watch their mother restrain herself as John fumes. The phone rings out as Justine speaks.

JUSTINE
Way to go Mom.

GEORGETTE
Salad?

As Georgette serves, her phone pings: a text! She glances at the text and sucks in air, shocked.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
What is it?

GEORGETTE
(flushed with excitement)
They’ve asked me to chair the department at Columbia!

JOHN
Congratulations. That’s great.

GEORGETTE
It’d be a huge time commitment.

JOHN
Still, it’s a high-class problem.

GEORGETTE
When will I ever get my writing done? I’ve promised to deliver that book by December.

Georgette checks her reddening breast bone.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
Come on. You’ll get a big bump in salary--

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
Look -- I’m already breaking out in a rash!

JOHN
I’ve got an idea. Why don’t you call Caleb back and discuss it.

GEORGETTE
I have to.

JOHN
Justine, you want to text your friend.

Justine nods, mystified by this change in policy.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Paul, you want to play Ninja Revinja on your iPad? Go.

Paul jumps up to get the iPad. John pulls out a flip phone.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN (CONT'D)
I myself even have a minor text I
would like to respond to. We can
skip the pretence of having a close-
knit family dinner. (looking down
at his phone)
And we can return to the bullshit
later.

Justine texts. Georgette is on the phone. Close on his text
from Maggie: “finished the first chapter!”

GEORGETTE
(os)
What is it?

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK BENCH – DAY

Close on John’s manuscript.

MAGGIE
The tone is so unusual – sort of
screwball-surreal. Is that right?

JOHN
That sounds right. Screwball-
surreal. That’s it exactly!

They are both freezing, huddled on their bench.

MAGGIE
And oh my God the characters!
Martin Neems the colorless postal
worker in 1950’s Connecticut and
he’s married to this crazy
Brazilian woman who keeps breaking
out in rashes! It’s hilarious.

JOHN
(drinking in her praise)
Really? Really?

MAGGIE
Oh, and the description of the
musical collection!

JOHN
Oh, yeah, his records you mean?

MAGGIE
Yes. Oh, that is so great.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
It’s funny, right?

MAGGIE
Oh, it’s great. I’m sorry. I am very, very cold. I feel like I’m welded to the bench. Is it okay if we go get some coffee?

The camera moves left, to a westward path, as if it knows what’s going to happen next.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(os)
Actually, my apartment is like three blocks from here. I just need to get another sweater. I’m deathly cold.

They walk into shot and walk down the path through the frigid wind.

JOHN
I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you doing this.

MAGGIE
Oh it was so much fun to read.

JOHN
Really? Did you think the boil was gross or funny?

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET – AFTERNOON

Maggie and John enter, gasping with cold. The tiny living room is absolutely crammed with books.

MAGGIE
I sublet from a poet.

John looks around him at this charming apartment.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
You want some tea? Or...I guess that’s his wine, or...I have whiskey. It’s a little early.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
We could make a hot whiskey. Do you have some honey and lemon?

Maggie looks into the fridge.

MAGGIE
I have half a lemon. And... honey.

JOHN
I’ll make it for you.

Maggie walks to her closet and puts away her coat.

MAGGIE
Okay, great.

JOHN
(os)
You’re clearly a reader.

MAGGIE
Actually most of these books are his.

Maggie looks in the mirror for a moment.

TIME CUT

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - AFTERNOON

Close on a pair of glass mugs filled with hot whiskey.

JOHN
Hot whiskey.

MAGGIE
Oh, thank you.

She takes a sip.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Oh it’s so good.

Medium wide: they sit in silence for a moment.

JOHN
So. Tell me. I’m curious about you.

Maggie looks up at him.
MAGGIE
What about me? What aspect of me?

JOHN
Every aspect.

MAGGIE
I don’t know where to start.

JOHN
How about the beginning?

He stands, takes off his jacket.

JOHN (CONT’D)
I’m hot.

MAGGIE
Oh, I know.

John sits down again.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(drinks)
Well, I had a... kind of unusual start.

JOHN
...?

MAGGIE
My parents were married fairly young and they never had kids. They were academics at the University of Wisconsin. Then eventually they got divorced, my Dad moved away... but then later, years later, they ran into each other at a party. And they... they got together that night. And that’s how I was conceived. On the bed with all the coats. My mom always says that it’s because I needed to be born.

JOHN
I love that idea. That our unborn children are the real gods, dictating the fates of us poor, clueless mortals. Did they...they got together after that?
MAGGIE
No. My mother raised me on her own in Madison. She was a professor of nineteenth century British poetry. She wasn’t very practical. So I ended up doing all the day-to-day stuff. I was organizing the bills by the time I was twelve. She came from a Quaker family... so she used to take me to Quaker meetings with her. I still go, sometimes.

JOHN
A Quaker.

MAGGIE
We had a nice life. And then when I was sixteen, she died.

Saying it still shocks Maggie, and tears glimmer in her eyes.

JOHN
...

MAGGIE
(matter of fact)
So I moved in with my Dad in Philly.

Maggie is surprised to feel that she’s crying.

JOHN
How was that?

MAGGIE
Um... cordial. And quiet.

JOHN
Sounds lonely.

MAGGIE
Yes.

He finds her so touching.

JOHN
I grew up in a house... where nobody ever stopped yelling at each other.

MAGGIE
(recovering, laughing)
Heaven!

(CONTINUED)
...  

MAGGIE  
(trying to be positive)  
My dad is a kind man. And he made  
the best of it. We both did.

A moment. The atmosphere has changed.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)  
So what about you? Tell me about  
you. Background-wise.

JOHN  
My father worked at a blackjack  
table in Atlantic City. But it’s a  
really long story. And I have to  
get back to my dysfunction.

He stands back up. Puts on his coat. Looks down at her  
sitting on the couch.

JOHN (CONT’D)  
I believe it.

MAGGIE  
What?

JOHN  
That you had to be born.

He rushes out the door. As it shuts, the ‘reading, writing,  
falling in love’ montage (improvised dialogue) begins:

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET – DAY  
Maggie reads John’s book. This image is intercut with:

B22 INT. JOHN & GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT – DAY OR NIGHT  
John writing at his dining room table. (We hear his voice  
over the montage.)

JOHN (V.O.)  
Martin Neem dreamed the same thing  
every night, but he could never  
remember what it was. His wife,  
Talia, slept like a stone. Talia  
was a small woman.

(MORE)  

(CONTINUED)
A small, beautiful woman with hair like a river of snakes and the temper of an angry mink.

INT. NEW SCHOOL - BRIDGE HALLWAY - DAY

John is walking away from us; Maggie toward us. They meet in the middle of the hallway, greet each other, then John turns and goes off with Maggie, toward camera. He can’t resist talking about the new chapter she just read.

EXT. SKATING RINK-DAY

Maggie skating.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

John and Maggie discuss his book on their bench in Washington Square Park, eating dosai.

EXT. NEW SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

New School courtyard (seen from above on the round bench we saw earlier): Maggie and John, still talking about the text:

JOHN
Do you think this is overwritten?

MAGGIE
(OS)
I think John’s book is a novella.

INT. FELICIA AND TONY’S APARTMENT - DAY

Maggie, looking a little tired, but lovely in a tweed skirt and sweater, is eating a carrot as Tony tries to assemble a piece of IKEA furniture.

MAGGIE
It’s short and very strange. It might even be an allegory. I like everything I’ve read. He’s asking me for suggestions.

TONY
Oh? What does his wife think about that?

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
She doesn’t know about it. To be honest, I don’t think she pays much attention to what he does. She’s very self-absorbed. She might even be a narcissist.

TONY
Of course she is.

MAGGIE
Why of course? He’s basically a psychiatric nurse. He can’t write his novel under those conditions -- I think their marriage fell apart after the second child was born. And now he’s trapped in it.

TONY
That’s what he’s telling you.

MAGGIE
Why would he lie?

TONY
To get in your pants!

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - LATE AFTERNOON

It’s March twenty-third. Guy is taking off his jacket. Maggie looks to see if the pockets are bulging. He reaches into a large pocket and produces a small, mashed bouquet.

MAGGIE
Oh! Thank you.

She puts the flowers in a glass, then turns expectantly.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Did you... bring it?

GUY
Oh! Fuck... I’m sorry.

MAGGIE
That’s why I gave you the little... container?

GUY
Where’s your bathroom?
MAGGIE

Um...

Guy looks around the room.

GUY

So what do I deposit my genetic gold mine into?

Maggie rushes over to her cupboard and takes out a little plastic jar like the first one she gave him.

MAGGIE

(handing it to him)

It’s sterile.

Guy holds it between his thumb and forefinger. He takes a step to the bathroom, then turns back.

GUY

Listen. I feel it behooves me, to, ah, offer to do this the old fashioned way. Given the extreme state of your beauty and my totally free afternoon.

A moment as the absolute awkwardness of this offer sinks in.

MAGGIE

No... no thank you, Guy. I just think that would be too complicated.

GUY

No sweat, just being polite.

MAGGIE

Should I go out for a while?

GUY

Nah, just read something. I’ll be back in a jiff with the jizz.

He marches to the bathroom.

MAGGIE

Guy?

GUY

Hm?
MAGGIE
Why didn’t you end up becoming a mathematician?

GUY
I liked math because it was beautiful, that’s all. I never wanted to be a mathematician.

MAGGIE
(encouraged)
Really? You think math is beautiful?

GUY
I don’t think. I know. Anyone who has touched even a hem of that garment knows it’s beautiful. For me, the hem was enough. I couldn’t have taken the frustration.

MAGGIE
What do you mean?

GUY
Of never seeing the whole thing. Of always just getting little glimpses of the whole picture. Spending my whole life hunting for scraps of truth.

Embarrassed by his own candor, Guy turns and shuts the door to the bathroom, leaving Maggie bemused and oddly charmed by this unique character. Hearing the water run in the bathroom, she turns some Ska music up high on the iPod as a sound buffer. She is so happy, she does a solitary dance. After a few beats, Guy appears with the plastic jar Maggie gave him, a little cloudy something at the bottom. He watches her dance for a moment. We can see how much he likes her. Seeing him, Maggie stops dancing, embarrassed.

MAGGIE
Wow. Swift.

She tries to take the jar, but Guy swoops it away from her and washes it off in the kitchen sink, then swaddles it in a tea towel like a newborn.

GUY
Of course when there’s an actual lady involved, it’s a different story. I made you extra...just in case you spill some.
He hands her the bundle gently, as if it were already a baby.

MAGGIE
Thank you, Guy. This is really great.

GUY
Super.

He just stands there. Now what? He fishes his phone out of his pocket and turns the lens on himself, Maggie, and the container, which he gets her to hold up. Maggie is embarrassed and confused.

GUY (CONT’D)
Selfie.

Click!

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Insert close up: Maggie, wearing blue surgical gloves, fills a plastic syringe with Guy’s sperm.

CUT TO:

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - BATHROOM - LATER

Maggie has a thermometer in her mouth, syringe in one hand. She takes out the thermometer, reads her temperature, then punches the number into her phone. A voice calls out of the phone: “you have a: seventy-one percent chance of being fertile right now”. The phone rings. Maggie puts it on speaker phone.

INT. TONY AND FELICIA’S KITCHEN - INTERCUT

TONY
Did you do it yet?

MAGGIE
My apps are giving me contradictory information. Maybe I should wait.

TONY
I would wait. For like five years.

MAGGIE
Let me talk to Felicia.

(CONTINUED)
Felicia takes the phone.

FELICIA
Don’t listen to him. He’s losing his mind.

MAGGIE
(OS)
Yeah, he seems a little on edge.

FELICIA
You think so? He’s driving me crazy with theories of mental illness in Guy Childers’ family.

TONY
(in BG, grating parmesan)
I met his mother once. She had a face like a hatchet and she never stopped sighing. And she DRANK.

FELICIA
Tony just loves you too much. He wants to keep you for himself.

MAGGIE
What are you talking about? You know that’s not true.

FELICIA
He doesn’t want you to move on to the next step in your life because then he, too, might actually have to grow up.

TONY
(from back of the kitchen)
Will you shut the fuck up?

Felicia smiles, giving Tony a semi-jovial middle finger.

MAGGIE
(thermometer in her mouth)
How high does your temperature have to be?

FELICIA (O.S.)
I think just slightly elevated.

TONY (O.S.)
Are you talking about the temperature?
(MORE)
(yelling) A hundred and one! It has to be a hundred and one degrees!

FELICIA
(to Tony)
When was the last time you ovulated?

TONY
I read about it.

Back at Maggie’s apartment, the camera leaves Maggie, begins to move through Maggie’s living room, toward the buzzer, like a curious animal with a will of its own.

FELICIA
(OS)
You know it doesn’t usually work the first time anyway... My girl friend, Odette...

TONY
(OS)
Odette? That woman is nuts!

FELICIA
(OS)
You just hate her cause she’s a performance artist.

Close on the buzzer, which buzzes, LOUD.

MAGGIE
(OS)
Wait! Hold on. Wait!

The doorbell goes off again, for a really long time. Someone wants in.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(to Felicia, OS)
Bye!

INT. TONY AND FELICIA’S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Tony is still grating parmesan.
TONY
You had her speak at Max’s class, and she said the words “MY VAGINA” three times.

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET – NIGHT

Maggie is wiggling along the floor on her back, pelvis up wearing surgical gloves and her night gown. The buzzer rings again.

MAGGIE
I’m coming!

FELICIA
(OS)
Maggie have you done it yet?

TONY
(OS)
Have you done it?

Finally Maggie reaches the door, reaches up with one leg, and answers the buzzer with her toe.

MAGGIE
(yelling)
Hello!?

JOHN
(os)
It’s John.

Reflexively, she jumps to her feet, looks down.

MAGGIE
Oh, shoot!

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Wait a minute! I just need a minute!

Maggie runs into the bathroom.

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET – BATHROOM – NIGHT

Jump Cut: Maggie takes a quick shower -- see her from outside the shower reaching for the soap with a surgical-gloved hand.
John waiting. He looks like a man about to go into the ring.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maggie pulls on another nearly identical night gown, but this one has sleeves.

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - NIGHT

Maggie streaks into the kitchen holding the jar with the remains of the sperm in it, sticks it in the freezer. Back to the buzzer with paper towels and sterilizing spray, she mops up the mess. At last, having tidied up all evidence, she presses the buzzer.

MAGGIE
John? Are you still there?

JOHN
Yeah?

Maggie buzzes him in.

INT./EXT. MAGGIE’S BUILDING - VESTIBULE - NIGHT

John comes through the metal gate and approaches the front door.

INT. MAGGIE’S SUBLET - NIGHT

He comes in. He’s very tense, seems upset. They talk in the doorway.

MAGGIE
Are you okay?

JOHN
I got locked out. Georgette is in Pennsylvania with the kids...

MAGGIE
Oh! Do you want to stay on the couch?

John looks at the couch.
JOHN
Not really.

He walks in. Sits on the couch. Maggie, thrown by his presence, starts making conversation.

MAGGIE
So I’m on chapter five. Now I think Mrs. Jeffries is my favorite character. She’s so pallid and reliable but he finds her so attractive, in spite of her moustache. I just wonder...

JOHN
What?

MAGGIE
If maybe the wife’s behavior is getting a little... large?

JOHN
You should come over to my house. That book is like a documentary. No, I’m sure you’re right. I’m sure I’m exaggerating her behavior.

His face is filled with distress. He gets up and paces.

MAGGIE
No it’s really funny! I don’t want you to change it. Maybe it’s more about, like how much of it you do. I--

JOHN
Ah, fuck it!

He suddenly falls to his knees at Maggie’s feet and clings to the hem of her long night gown. Maggie is astonished. John looks up at her.

JOHN (CONT’D)
I’m in love with you.

MAGGIE
...

JOHN
I’m genuinely locked out of my apartment. But I’m also in love with you.

(MORE)
And I don’t want to be married to Georgette anymore. And please could I stay in your bed?

She doesn’t say anything, doesn’t move. It is only now really hitting her how she feels about this man. She is finally admitting it to herself. He unbuttons the lowest button of her long night gown. She looks down at him, desire blooming. Another button. Another. All the way up, until we glimpse her naked breasts between the crack in the cloth. They are face to face. He whispers.

JOHN
I don’t want you to have a baby with the pickle man.

MAGGIE
...

JOHN
I want you to have a baby with me...

She wants him terribly but she just has to be honest.

MAGGIE
I need to tell you something. I...tried already.

JOHN
When?

MAGGIE
Recently...

JOHN
What happened?

MAGGIE
It didn’t work! It didn’t work. I just had to tell you because...

JOHN
Because why?

MAGGIE
Because I love you. I’m in love with you.

They look at one another, and they kiss. They move onto the bed. Maggie looks up at John with open, frank sexuality. She has never felt this way before. He leans down to kiss her.
There is a flare of light from the bedside lamp which obscures the image.

EXT. QUEENS - DAY

Buttery sunlight flares in the lens. Gradually through the flare we see Maggie from behind carrying her 2 1/2 year old daughter, Lily, on her hip. A long dolly shot: She walks to the mailbox at the end of the street and lets Lily mail a bill. Then they walk back and we see them from the front. Bliss.

EXT. QUEENS LOFT - DAY

Maggie carries Lily to their storefront loft, opens the big metal door...

INT. QUEENS LOFT - DAY

John types in his glassed-in office. “Dancing in the Dark” by Bruce Springsteen is blasting. Maggie walks in with Lily on her hip and turns down the music after a panicked moment of looking for the ipad. Lily stomps in and jumps up and down.

    LILY
    Daddy!

Lily goes off to play.

John comes out of his office.

    JOHN
    You turned down my song.

    MAGGIE
    It was very loud.

    JOHN
    That’s the point.

    MAGGIE
    I’m sorry, shall I turn it up again?

    JOHN
    You really are from Wisconsin, aren’t you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MAGGIE
Yes I am.

They kiss.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - LATER

The three of them are eating soup. Happy.

MAGGIE
Can you watch her for an hour, I have a conference call.

JOHN
Ah-- I was going to keep writing, but sure.

Maggie stands and hands Lily over to John.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Come on, girl, let’s make a big mess.

LILY
Can I bring Froggy?

JOHN
Sure. Bring Froggy.

Lily clutches a little plastic green frog as John carries her into the kitchen. They begin to play.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - MAGGIE’S WORK SPACE - DAY

Maggie is on her call.

MAGGIE
Yes. The last time we spoke you wanted to do something with skateboarding and architecture. Is that still what you’re thinking?

HIGGS (O.S.)
Absolutely. I want to be a fragile little human, scaling some big architectural monolith -- asserting my value even as I glide along the surface of some priceless building...

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
(dreamy, searching)
Right. Like... skateboarding down
the ramp of the Guggenheim...

A phone rings OS.

HIGGS (O.S.)
Yeah! Exactly! That’s perfect.

MAGGIE
I didn’t mean the actual
Guggenheim.

HIGGS (O.S.)
Why not?

From across the loft Maggie hears:

LILY (O.S.)
Mommy!!! Mommy!!!

MAGGIE
Excuse me a minute.
(hitting ‘mute’)
John?!

No answer. Maggie gets up and walks toward the bathroom.

LILY
Froggy is drowning!

MAGGIE
JOHN?!

LILY
Froggy is drowning, Mommeee!!!!

John is on the phone. He looks toward the bathroom.

JOHN
(to Lily)
Hold on a second...

MAGGIE
(into phone)
Sorry about this but I have another
urgent call. I’ll be right back on.

Maggie rushes to the bathroom.
INT. QUEENS LOFT - BATHROOM - DAY

Lily is screaming, looking into the toilet. Maggie walks in.

LILY
Froggy fell in, and then he was hungry.

Maggie looks into the toilet. There is a box of Koala Crisps in the toilet, along with half the box of cereal.

MAGGIE
Wow, Lily. This is a big mess.

JOHN
(OS talking into the phone)
I could send you the next couple chapters...

MAGGIE
Where is Froggy?

LILY
Under there.

MAGGIE
Don’t worry. We’re gonna save him!

She retrieves the frog from the toilet and puts him in the sink.

LILY
Can I wash him, Mommy?

MAGGIE
Yeah, let’s wash him. Don’t touch him yet...

LILY
I wanna wash him...

MAGGIE
See, we saved him!

Lily peers over the side of the sink as Maggie washes the frog in hot water. Her little cheeks are tear stained.

LILY
(whispering)
Sorry Froggy.
Remembering her call, Maggie un-mutes the phone.

MAGGIE
Hello?

No one there. Great. John ends his call. He looks happy. They meet outside the bathroom.

INT. QUEENS LOFT KITCHEN - DAY

JOHN
Did you take care of Froggy?

MAGGIE
(keeping up her good humor)
Yeah, but why didn’t you?

JOHN
That guy from Parallel Press called.

MAGGIE
Oh great, what did he say?

JOHN
He wants to meet me at four.

MAGGIE
But you were taking Lily this afternoon because I have a meeting with a student?

JOHN
Oh, shit. Sorry.

MAGGIE
Maybe I can push it.

John is hopeful.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
But who is going to pick up Paul and Justine?

JOHN
Oh, fuck. All right.

He starts for the phone.
MAGGIE
No--It’s okay -- I’ll reschedule my meeting.

JOHN
You don’t mind?

MAGGIE
No.

JOHN
Really?

MAGGIE
Yes.

JOHN
Thanks.

She goes back into the bathroom. John makes for his study. The phone rings again. John turns and answers.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Hello...he what??... All right, hang on.

John turns to Maggie, who is still in her rubber gloves.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Paul twisted his ankle in eurythmics. You’re gonna have to leave now.

Close on Maggie as she digests this.

EXT. DANISH-AMERICAN SCHOOL - DAY

This is a nice private school for Danes, nestled in a townhouse. Maggie, Lily on her hip, emerges from the school, opening the heavy door for Paul, who is now nine. He is on crutches and looks very sorry for himself.

PAUL
Where’s Dad?

MAGGIE
He’s in a meeting sweetie, but crutches! Wow. Does it hurt a lot?

Paul is upset.

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE (CONT’D)
We have a while before Justine gets out.

Maggie helps the kids into the car, walks to the driver’s side and loads in the crutches.

TIME CUT

INT. MINIVAN / DANISH-AMERICAN SCHOOL - DAY

Paul and Lily are laughing hysterically in the back seat. They are making a great deal of noise. Maggie has her eyes shut. The phone rings. Maggie has to answer this one.

MAGGIE
Hello? Oh thank you so much for calling me back. Excuse me--

Maggie puts her hand over the phone and talks to Paul in the back seat.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Paul can you check what’s taking Justine so long?

Paul hurries out of the car. As he enters the school, Maggie notices that he has forgotten his crutches and is running on his hurt foot.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Thanks for holding. I was hoping to schedule a meeting, we have a grad student -- A student at the New School, Komiko Krauss, just patented a toy we’d love to have a chance to present --Yes. The doll. Yes. Oh great. Ten on Wednesday is fine. Thank you. Bye!

As Maggie talks we see Justine helping Paul walk out of the school. He has remembered his injury and is hopping on one leg. Justine Gets in.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Hi!

JUSTINE
Hi.

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
Got caught up in the locker room?

JUSTINE
(quiet)
I couldn’t find my shoes.

MAGGIE
Well, we’re all here now!

JUSTINE
What’s for dinner?

MAGGIE
Good question. I’ll pick something up. Daddy’s at a meeting.

JUSTINE
When’s Mom coming home?

MAGGIE
I don’t know. But I bet there’s a plan!

The van drives off.

OMITTED

INT. QUEENS LOFT - JOHN’S STUDY NIGHT

John is on the corded phone with Georgette.

JOHN
Georgette. The advance is only five thousand more, so why would you not go to the house with the better editor? You keep talking in circles. Munroe is the better editor for this book... For all the reasons we’ve been talking about!

Maggie raps on the glass of his office and cheerfully holds up a bag of Take-Out. He waves at her, still immersed in his conversation.
INT. QUEENS LOFT - LATER

Chinese food cartons going in the garbage. Maggie is cleaning up the remains of take-out as John flops onto the couch, seemingly exhausted. Maggie sits down at the end of the couch.

MAGGIE
So how was the meeting at Parallel Press?

JOHN
I had to push it to Thursday. Georgette was having one of her crises. I couldn’t get her off the phone.

MAGGIE
What happened?

JOHN
She got offers from two different UK publishers for her new book and she couldn’t decide.

MAGGIE
Wow. She doesn’t have anyone else to talk to about something like this except her ex-husband? Especially since her new book is all about our affair and how it ruined her life?

JOHN
I’m sorry I messed up your day.

MAGGIE
Not just my day. Komiko -- my student. She’s a fragile person... and I had a meeting set up to discuss her meeting with the toy company. But I had to cancel that meeting because you had a meeting. And then you don’t even go to the meeting with the publisher because you were talking Georgette out of her tree! Why does nobody ever talk me out of my tree?!

JOHN
(with affection)
Because you’re never up a tree.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
And if you were, you would find your way back down all by yourself.

MAGGIE
Am I so, so capable that I don’t deserve any attention, is that it? Like, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and the cactus never gets watered?

Attempting to defuse her, John takes off one of Maggie’s socks and starts giving her a foot rub.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
You have to start thinking of yourself as indispensable, John.

JOHN
(removing the other long knee sock)
But I’m not. I’m totally dispensable. On a practical level, you’d be fine without me.

MAGGIE
Do you realize that Paul faked the ankle thing today just so you would pick him up from school, and then you didn’t even show.

JOHN
What do you mean?

MAGGIE
He ran on it when I asked him to go check on Justine. He forgot.

JOHN
That’s weird.

MAGGIE
No. It’s not weird. You want to know why? Because his mother is in Reykjavik right now, studying the maternal techniques of the Icelandic. He needs his father’s attention. So do I.

A beat.
JOHN
Let’s go away for a couple days
when Georgette gets back. Just the
two of us.

Maggie sighs, looks at him. She doesn’t really want to go
away just the two of them at this moment.

MAGGIE
I’m going to start pouting more.

JOHN
(relieved at this levity)
Georgette’ll give you a tutorial.
She’s good at that.

Close on Maggie. She smiles a sad, tired, alienated smile.

EXT- UNION SQUARE PRODUCE MARKET - DAY

Maggie walking beside Lily, who is pushing the stroller.

MAGGIE
Who did you sit with at snack?

LILY
Alison.

GUY
(OS)
Maggie?

Maggie turns as the camera pans to see Guy, the pickle
entrepreneur, near-father of her child, king of his booth.

MAGGIE
Oh hi! Hi, Guy! I haven’t seen you
for so long...

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(to Lily)
This is my friend Guy.

Guy comes out of his booth and kneels before Lily, gazing at
the little girl with something like reverence.

GUY
Is that...
MAGGIE
(blank at first, then
copping on to his
assumption)
? ... Oh, no -- this is Lily. I got
married. I should have told you. I
met my husband around the same time
you gave me the...sample.

An awkward moment.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
How are you?

GUY
Intense. I just found out Whole
Foods is going to be carrying my
pickles nationally. We have to
expand production, post-haste!

MAGGIE
That’s amazing.

GUY
I’m manning the stall to get away
from the chaos at the factory.

MAGGIE
(a sudden impulse)
Oh! Do you still have those
Bavarian pickles?

GUY
Sure do. Our most popular pickle.

MAGGIE
Can I buy a large jar please?

LILY
When are we gonna eat the pickles?

MAGGIE
(to Lily)
Let’s go get some pickles.

GUY
One large Bavarian.

He goes back to the booth and hands Maggie a huge jar of
pickles.

(Continued)
MAGGIE
That’s the biggest jar of pickles I’ve ever seen. How much do I owe you?

GUY
(glum)
Wedding present.

MAGGIE
Thank you. Bye!

Maggie picks up Lily and puts the jar of pickles in the stroller. Guy watches them go. He and Lily wave to one another. As Maggie and Lily walk off:

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Oh, wiglet. I’m so glad you’re you!

INT. QUEENS LOFT - KITCHEN- LATE AFTERNOON

Hear John’s dot matrix printer OS. Maggie is at the kitchen table, the huge jar of Guy’s pickles before her. She reaches in and takes out a pickle, chomps down. Yum. John walks in and hands her the latest pages from his manuscript. She takes them with an air of resignation.

MAGGIE
(touching the paper)
Wow. Still warm.

Maggie starts reading as John goes into the bedroom. He speaks through the open hatch.

JOHN
Georgette cancelled her trip.

Maggie nods, reading.

JOHN (CONT’D)
So she’s gonna want the kids next week after all.

Maggie is still reading. She stops.

MAGGIE
I’m Mrs. Jeffries, aren’t I?

JOHN
...?

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
I’m the colorless, efficient postal worker that you fell in love with because she makes your life so much easier.

JOHN
(put out)
I came up with Mrs. Jeffries before we even met.

MAGGIE
Yeah, well, you turned me into her then.

He makes a helpless, fed up gesture.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
At least I don’t have a moustache -- yet.

INT. QUEENS LOFT BEDROOM - MORNING

Maggie and John read in bed. Maggie reads a newspaper; John reads the Paris Review. Maggie smiles at something in the paper.

MAGGIE
Do you want to hear your horoscope?

JOHN
(immerged)
No.

Close on Maggie as she looks at him, a terrible thought going through her head.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
I’m terrified that I’m falling out of love with him. Really out of love.

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EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

Wide shot: Maggie is walking Lily in the stroller. Beside her walks Tony, who pushes Max, now six. Max is reading a thick book by the light of a tiny clamp light.

(CONTINUED)
TONY
Felicia and I fall in and out of love pretty much every week. You can’t be so idealistic.

MAGGIE
I wanted to help him become a fiction writer... and now all he does is write. The novel is like five hundred pages long and I don’t even think it’s half done.

TONY
Have you read it all?

MAGGIE
Most of it.

TONY
Still like it?

MAGGIE
It’s getting more and more... complicated. Is it possible to be too smart to be a novelist?

TONY
I haven’t heard of that.

MAGGIE
Do you think I have something wrong with me?

TONY
Wrong with you?

MAGGIE
Yeah, like I have a condition. Where I always fall out of love.

TONY
Maybe.

Maggie stops, and whacks Tony in the arm.

MAGGIE
Shut up! Really?

TONY
Yes! No!
MAGGIE
You seriously think I have a condition?!

TONY
No! I don’t know. Maybe. No. No, you don’t. Maybe you haven’t met the right guy yet. Ask Felicia. Don’t ask me. I’m not the right guy.

They keep walking. Maggie looks down at Max reading in his stroller.

MAGGIE
Does he ever walk?

TONY
(as if this explains it)
He’s gotta finish that book by Friday. ‘Does he ever walk’. He’s captain of the soccer team.

MAGGIE
What is it, stroller soccer?

TONY
You’re hilarious.

EXT. LOWER FIFTH AVENUE – DAY

We see the arch of Washington Square Park, pedestrians passing.

GEORGETTE
(OS)
I will be honest with you.

INT. BOOK STORE – DUSK

Georgette is reading from her book to a healthy crowd.

GEORGETTE
This book was born from pain. My husband, whom I am not ashamed to say I loved with all my heart, though we had a difficult relationship, had an affair with a younger woman, left me, and started a new family.

(CONTINUED)
As Georgette is baring her soul, Maggie and Felicia walk in at the back of the room. Hearing the text, Maggie immediately hides behind a book case and they both grab glasses of wine, peeking out to watch. Georgette has not noticed them.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
And what I gleaned from this exquisite torture are the thoughts which this act of betrayal to me as a woman provoked in me as an anthropologist. I must ask myself: is the contemporary obsession with exclusive possession ruining our chances of marital happiness?

TIME CUT

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The reading is over. People mill about, talking. Georgette is at the bar getting a glass of champagne when she spots Maggie, who is talking to Felicia.

GEORGETTE
Maggie?

MAGGIE
Yes!

Felicia sidles off to the other side of the room.

GEORGETTE
I recognized you from a picture on Justine’s phone.

MAGGIE
Oh. Yeah, I -- I wanted to hear your reading, it was really...

Maggie can’t find a word to describe it. Georgette looks at her intently.

GEORGETTE
I want to thank you. For taking such good care of the children, while I have been gone. I know it’s been a burden. I appreciate it.

MAGGIE
You’re -- you’re welcome. They’re wonderful kids.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
We should get together some time. I feel I have been rather childish about this. I have to face the fact that we are raising them together... the three of us.

Georgette has an imperious seductiveness which is impossible to resist.

MAGGIE
Oh yes. Yes. I would love to.

GEORGETTE
Call me some time. It’s easy to get my number!

Maggie is left standing there, besotted and shocked. She moves to the end of the signing line, beside Felicia, who has bought a copy of “Bring Back the Geisha”.

MAGGIE
You bought a book?

FELICIA
I couldn’t resist.

MAGGIE
Do we need to get it signed?

FELICIA
I think we do.

MAGGIE
Georgette is fascinating. She’s vulnerable, and powerful, and warm, and charming all at once... Now I get why he was so obsessed with her.

FELICIA
I don’t think ‘easy to live with’ is on that list, though.

MAGGIE
I like her. I actually like her! I’m such a blockhead. I always thought I was rescuing John from this monstrous egomaniac so he could finally write his book, and that I knew better how to run his life -- I was going to fix everything.

(MORE)
CONTINUED: (2)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
But he’s totally self-absorbed while I do every single practical thing and make the money. And on top of that, I... if it weren’t for Lily I’d say I’d made a terrible mistake.

FELICIA
(joking--with a glance at Georgette, signing books)
Too bad you can’t just give him back to his ex-wife.

Maggie looks over at Georgette with a laugh. But we move in closer and closer on her face until... she’s not smiling anymore. She’s thinking.

INT. QUEENS LOFT DINING AREA - NIGHT

John is sucking the grease off his fingers. Maggie stares at him, no longer charmed by his barbarous eating habits. The kids are speaking Danish.

JUSTINE
(in Danish)
I hate brussels sprouts.

PAUL
(in Danish)
They’re a little hard.

Maggie looks over at the kids, totally alienated from her own life.

EXT. QUEENS QUAKER MEETING HOUSE - DAY

Maggie walks along a Korea Town street, and into the gate of the 17th century Quaker meeting house. A battered sign reads, “Quaker Meeting. All Welcome.”

INT. QUEENS QUAKER MEETING HOUSE - DAY

High wide shot: the meeting house is empty, but for Maggie, who sits on a wooden bench. We move in closer as she waits for inspiration, some clue as to what to do about her existence. At the end of the push in, she looks up: she’s got it.
Maggie parks outside Georgette’s elegant Harlem brownstone. Justine and Paul get out of the van, Justine lugging a stuffed duffel bag.

JUSTINE
So now it suits the captors for the little prisoners to be moved.

PAUL
Aren’t you excited to see Mama?

JUSTINE
Of course I’m excited to see Mama. I’m just sick of never knowing which house any of my stuff is in. I can’t wait to be a grown up, so I can have kids and push them around.

Maggie, not hearing this, stands on the street scrutinizing the parking sign. Paul and Justine watch her, speaking Danish, their secret language.

JUSTINE (CONT’D)
(in Danish w subtitles)
Sometimes I wonder if she is a little dim-witted. What is she doing?

PAUL
(in Danish)
She’s nice.

JUSTINE
(in Danish)
You’re like a dog. You love whoever feeds you.

PAUL
(in Danish)
No I don’t!

JUSTINE
(in English, to Maggie)
Is there a problem?

MAGGIE
I just can’t believe I actually found a legal parking space right outside your mom’s building.
JUSTINE
You’re coming inside?

MAGGIE
Just to say hi.

INT. GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT – KITCHEN – DAY

Georgette opens her door.

GEORGETTE
Hi! Hi--oh, hello, Maggie.

MAGGIE
John had a meeting so he asked me to--

GEORGETTE
Come in.

The kids remove their shoes and greet their mother with great affection. Maggie watches this as she removes her penny loafers. Justine is very tender with her mother. Another person.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
(to the kids)
I made you a nice snack and you are allowed to watch one single episode of something ghastly while eating it. But no fighting about what it is, Paul. Justine gets to choose.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
The snacks are already in the den.

They run up the stairs. Georgette turns to Maggie, who is standing in her socks. Her demeanor is chillier than it was at the book store.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
I was about to make some coffee? Or tea?

MAGGIE
Coffee would be great. Thank you.
Maggie follows Georgette toward the kitchen. The living room is a symphony in taupe. Large photographs of Geishas from the 1920’s now dominate the walls.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Your place is really nice.

GEORGETTE
Columbia housing!

INT. GEORGETTE’S KITCHEN - DAY
Georgette puts brewed coffee in a blender and holds a stick of butter.

GEORGETTE
I put butter in mine. It nullifies afternoon sugar cravings.

MAGGIE
Great.

Plop goes the butter. Georgette throws the blender into high gear as Maggie backs out.

INT. GEORGETTE’S LIVINGROOM - DAY
While Georgette blends the butter next door, Maggie walks through the room, drawn to a beautiful black and white image of a younger John holding Justine. Maggie doesn’t notice Georgette coming up behind her.

GEORGETTE
That’s a lovely photo, don’t you think?

MAGGIE
(startled by her)
Yes. Thanks.

She sips the buttered coffee --ack! Georgette sips hers while maintaining eye contact with Maggie. A sort of “O.K. Corral” moment.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
It’s good to finally meet you.

GEORGETTE
I won’t pretend it doesn’t cost me something.

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
Of course.

GEORGETTE
I’m not into fakery.

MAGGIE
Me neither.

GEORGETTE
I detest the role of the spurned wife, I won’t play it--

MAGGIE
You’re not.

GEORGETTE
Am I not?

MAGGIE
You still -- have such a deep connection to John.

Georgette invites Maggie to sit down.

GEORGETTE
We have managed to remain friends, it’s true...

Georgette is looking at Maggie with surprise and a little suspicion.

MAGGIE
I mean, your phone calls...

GEORGETTE
Do you disapprove of them?

MAGGIE
No--

GEORGETTE
The marriage has dissolved, but we are still parenting together.

MAGGIE
Well, I mean, it’s more than just parenting, you guys are on the phone several times a day. Don’t get me wrong, I think it’s great. So...I...
Georgette is looking at her carefully. Maggie’s cheeks are going hot, her heart is speeding up.

GEORGETTE
Yes?

MAGGIE
Well, it’s obvious you’re still in love with him.

A moment of silence, of disbelief.

GEORGETTE
What the hell are you playing at?

Maggie decides to jump off the cliff.

MAGGIE
John and I are in trouble. And I don’t think he realizes how badly in trouble we are. Or he doesn’t want to know. And then, when I saw you at the reading...I realized--that there might be an opportunity, an opening...somehow...to get the two of you...back together.

GEORGETTE
I see. I see...

Maggie nods hopefully.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
So you’re tired of your little affair. You are all done with it. And now you want to make sure you don’t feel guilty, so you’re going to manipulate us all into some absurd happy ending!

Georgette stands, looking down at Maggie, who is shrinking by the second.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
I have met a lot of control freaks in my life, in fact I even thought I was one -- but you make me look like an amateur.

MAGGIE
I didn’t mean to insult you.
GEORGETTE
Have the decency to leave him and face the fact that you poisoned my life, and my children’s lives, and probably John’s life with your own selfishness. That’s your burden. You earned it.

MAGGIE
Excuse me. Wait a minute. If you had such a perfect marriage why was John miserable? You neglected him. You used him. You didn’t respect his talent!

GEORGETTE
If I am so awful, what the hell are you doing here trying to get him back together with me?

MAGGIE
I just think that actually, even though I do think you were pretty self-absorbed and extremely needy, he needs it -- it actually kept John in balance. Taking care of you made him think about someone other than himself.

GEORGETTE
Leave. Leave. Leave.

MAGGIE
What?

GEORGETTE
Leave my apartment.

MAGGIE
Oh! You want me to leave. Okay. I’m leaving.

Maggie gets out as fast as she possibly can.

EXT. GEORGETTE’S BROWNSTONE– DAY

The door shuts behind Maggie. She’s shaken, her shoes in her hand. Looks over at her van. There’s a parking ticket wedged under the wiper.
INT. TONY & FELICIA’S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

It’s already dark out. Maggie is lying on the couch as Tony shuttles in and out of the room cleaning up.

MAGGIE
I have never been so humiliated in my life. I’m in such deep oatmeal. What was I thinking?

TONY
Maybe you had a psychotic episode.

MAGGIE
But it’s a really good idea!

Tony emerges from the hallway looking rumpled and disgruntled.

TONY
Life doesn’t work that way, you dufus. You can’t stuff what’s already happened back in the box. God I really think you need help.

MAGGIE
Why are you being so hostile?

TONY
Because this pisses me off! The whole thing pisses me off.

MAGGIE
Why?

TONY
Why can’t you just leave your husband, like any normal human being?

MAGGIE
Because it would be such a waste.

TONY
A waste! You’re such a hall monitor. It’s not a waste. He’s not a paper product. Love is messy, okay? It’s illogical and wasteful and it’s messy. And it leaves these loose threads sticking out all over the place. But you! You like things neat and tidy and ethical.

(MORE)
TONY (CONT'D)
But you messed that up the minute you got with a married man.

MAGGIE
You’re not being my friend right now.

TONY
Oh yes I am. I am being your friend. This is being your friend. I’m being honest with you. Good intentions. You’re all about good intentions. Little Miss Quaker Two Shoes is gonna do the right thing. But you always somehow screw it up.

MAGGIE
(actually wounded now)
Screw you.

TONY
Yeah, screw me. Fine.

She stands up and starts putting on her coat as Tony tidies up the living room, muttering to himself. She is on her way to the door when she stops, filled up with emotion. She cries, suddenly, hard, and sits down helplessly. Tony notices and kneels beside her.

TONY (CONT’D)
Hey. Maggie. Hey. I’m sorry.

Maggie sits, sobbing.

TONY (CONT’D)
(gently)
What about Lily, huh? Fathers are a good thing too.

He wipes away a tear from her cheek.

MAGGIE
(through her tears)
I know that, I know that. But... I’m just as afraid of her growing up inside a dead marriage as growing up without her dad in the same house. Kids can tell when people are pretending.

TONY
I don’t know, Maggie. It’s a tough one.
She sits still for a long moment. That earnest little face. Trying to figure out the right thing to do again. Click. She’s decided. She wipes her tears.

MAGGIE
Okay. Okay, okay, okay, okay.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - JOHN’S STUDY - NIGHT

Maggie is sitting in John’s Central American hammock as he writes furiously. She looks at peace.

MAGGIE
Yes please.

JOHN
Yes please what.

MAGGIE
Yes please let’s do something, just us. If the offer’s still good.

He looks up at her, uncertain, but game.

JOHN
What do you have in mind?

MAGGIE
I don’t know. Maybe a local adventure.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

Traffic and lights strung up. A busy Chinatown street.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT/HOTEL- DAY

John walks in with Maggie. The restaurant is empty but for two waiters setting up tables. A young Chinese Woman looks at them quizzically from behind a high desk with a large CASH ONLY sign displayed.

He approaches the woman behind the counter. Maggie hangs back. He’s speaking very low.
JOHN
Hi. My name is Johnny Harding. I was hoping to speak to Wang. Is he downstairs?

The young woman looks doubtful, but eventually she walks up to one of the waiters and whispers in his ear. Maggie makes a move to join John but John tells her to stay where she is. The waiter walks up to John with an impassive expression. John puts his hand on his chest.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Johnny Harding.

The waiter nods. John gestures to Maggie to follow. They both follow the man down a set of stairs.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie and John follow the waiter through the kitchen. A cook is making dumplings with lightning speed. Maggie looks at him, totally confused.

INT. ILLEGAL GAMBLING DEN - DAY

Maggie and John emerge in a room furnished only with gambling tables and a TV on the wall playing a Chinese soap opera. Chinese men and a few women are playing Mahjong, poker, and blackjack. Everyone seems to be smoking. There are only a handful of non-Chinese players. The gamblers look up at these two new outsiders as they walk by.

JOHN
(to Maggie)
My dad used to take me to the owner’s old place.

The waiter leads them to a black jack table where he confers briefly with an older man, and then turns. John hands the waiter a role of bills, enough to be in the game. John and Maggie sit down.

A hostess places two tea cups full of clear liquid on the blackjack table and the older man starts dealing.

Maggie takes a sip of the liquid in the teacup and does a double take.

MAGGIE
What’s in this?
JOHN
Just drink it, ok?

The dealer deals out the cards. John plays a hand.

JOHN (CONT’D)
This is for all the marbles.

Maggie, who doesn’t know how to play, is watching the action, rapt. John wins. It takes her a second to realize it.

MAGGIE
We won! We won!

She kisses his cheek. She’s gone through a few cups of the “tea” the hostess keeps pouring in everyone’s cup, and she’s getting tipsy. She and John are flirting, having fun. The scene becomes a montage of gamblers, cards, music, drinking. Maggie taps her card with a little swagger.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Is that good? Right?

JOHN
No.

MAGGIE
No?

Their chips are swept away.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
(laughing)
No! Please no. Where did they go?

They are having fun. She is served a beer, takes a slug.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Drown my sorrows.

JOHN
(laughing)
Slow down on that.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT – DAY

Maggie and John eat. John is telling a story. Maggie is having a great time. She pulls a swig of beer from the bottle.
INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT/HOTEL – NIGHT

John and Maggie stagger up to the front desk.

JOHN
We’d like a room for the night.

MAGGIE
This is a hotel?

JOHN
It is a hotel if you know it’s a hotel.

MAGGIE
Oh-ho!

JOHN

Maggie is behind John. She shoves her hands in John’s pocket and fishes out some bills.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

They fall into the room, laughing on the floor. John drags off Maggie’s dress before he’s even closed the door. She bounds onto the bed in her slip.

JOHN
Take off your clothes!

She miaows like a cat, hisses, paws up.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Five! Four! Three! Two! One!

He leaps on her and drags off her tights as she screams with laughter.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Take off your fucking tights!

Close on her feet as she gives way to pleasure.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – DAY

The next morning. John is eating breakfast; Maggie is sitting in a pool of light on the bed.

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
(exploring-- not imploring)
Would you ever want another baby?

JOHN
(tossing it off)
I’ll never finish the book if I don’t knuckle down and concentrate. Four kids is a lot.

His reaction feels like a slap in the face.

MAGGIE
You wouldn’t notice. It’s just one more kid for you to ignore.

John stops.

JOHN
What kind of thing is that to say?

MAGGIE
It’s a true thing, John. You -- I -- I’m supporting you so you can write and that’s the deal and I accept it but -- I feel like I’m your intern. Or your nanny.

JOHN
For Christ’s sake. You set all this up! You took over, gave everybody a job. My job is to write my novel so that’s what I’m doing.

MAGGIE
I know that’s what you’re doing.

JOHN
You can’t get mad when we all play our parts to perfection.

A moment. This stings her.

MAGGIE
Do you even like me anymore?

JOHN
What are you trying to get me to tell you? Huh? Maybe I should be asking you that question.

He walks out and leaves her there.
EXT. CHINATOWN- DAY

John and Maggie walk beside each other in total alienation.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE- DAY

The arch reminds us of happier times between John and Maggie.

EXT. NEW SCHOOL COURTYARD- DAY

The phallic bench reminds us of happier times between John and Maggie.

EXT. NEW SCHOOL--DAY

Students and teachers flow in and out of the glass doors, creating liquid reflections on the glass.

INT. NEW SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Maggie is working on her computer.

GEORGETTE

May I sit down?

Maggie jumps.

MAGGIE

Sure.

Georgette looks around, as if for people she knows, then sits. A moment of silence. Maggie waits for the blow.

GEORGETTE

In December, I am attending a conference in Canada on Fictocritical Anthropology.

MAGGIE

...

GEORGETTE

Fictocritical Anthropology is John’s field.
MAGGIE
I know, but -- You mean...

GEORGETTE
(cold)
I’m in.

MAGGIE
...Really?

GEORGETTE
I have no reason to trust you. On the other hand, I have absolutely nothing to lose. I could easily arrange to have John invited to give a paper at the conference.

MAGGIE
Do you think he would accept?

GEORGETTE
Zizek is speaking. He loves Zizek.

Maggie takes this in. She can’t quite believe it’s happening.

Maggie is putting away dishes; John is fixing a lamp. He waits for a while to speak.

JOHN
I got invited to give a paper at a conference.

MAGGIE
Really? That’s great.

JOHN
Yeah--except it’s all the way up in Quebec. So I can’t go.

MAGGIE
No-- You have to go.

JOHN
Why?

MAGGIE
Because you... you would probably like a break.
JOHN
Yeah, but Georgette’s out of town that week, too. I can’t leave you alone with all the kids.

MAGGIE
Of course you can! I’ll be fine.

JOHN
Zizek is speaking...

MAGGIE
Oh you love Zizek!

JOHN
(baffled)
How do you know?

MAGGIE
I--I think I heard you mention him.

EXT. SKY - DAY
A Canadian Airlines plane flies through a sunny sky.

EXT. Quebec HOTEL - DAY
A stone building, rustic in aspect. A large sign reads:
A WARM QUEBEC WELCOME TO THE ASSOCIATION OF FICTO-CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS
John walks into the building. Snow has begun to fall.

OMITTED

INT. QUEBEC HOTEL - DINING AREA - DAY
John walks into the dining area. A sprinkling of academics. A young man in a baggy sweater comes up to him.

AL BENTWAITHE
Excuse me. John Harding?

JOHN
?

(CONTINUED)
AL BENTWAITHE
I--I’m reading “Rituals of Commodity Fetishism at the Tail End of the Empire”.

JOHN
How are you making out?

AL BENTWAITHE
It’s tremendous. We all came up here just to hear you speak. And Zizek, obviously.

JOHN
Obviously.

AL BENTWAITHE
This is a little fetish-y but-- Could you sign my book?

JOHN
Sure. What’s your name?

AL BENTWAITHE
Al.

As John signs the book, he spies Georgette from behind.

AL BENTWAITHE (CONT’D)
Thanks!

JOHN
Take care

John makes his way across the room, toward Georgette.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Fancy meeting you here.

GEORGETTE
What are you doing here?

JOHN
I’m giving a paper.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Did you write me you were coming here? I mean, I knew you’d be away...

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
I don’t know... I must have mentioned it. Are you sorry you came?

JOHN
Not at all. It’s big enough for the both of us. Isn’t it? You look really well.

GEORGETTE
I feel well. Beautiful here, ya?

JOHN
Yes. Great air... so far.

John looks at the empty seat beside her.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Do you mind? Or should we try not to co-mingle?

GEORGETTE
It’s fine, why not? We are friends. (introducing the woman next to her)
This is Debbie Wasserman. From Yale.

JOHN
Hi.

DEBBIE WASSERMAN
Nice to meet you.

After a brief, awkward smile that says she knows a lot about John and Georgette’s divorce, Debbie turns to the dining partner on her left.

GEORGETTE
(to John)
Did Maggie tell you we met?

JOHN
Yes. She enjoyed meeting you.

GEORGETTE
She’s an interesting person.

JOHN
You think so?

GEORGETTE
Yes, very surprising.
JOHN
How did you have time to be surprised?

GEORGETTE
You know how it is, we all concoct ideas of what our rival will be like. But she’s not my rival anymore.

JOHN
Good.

GEORGETTE
Paul told me Maggie taught him to do a figure eight when she took him ice skating the other day. He was very proud.

JOHN
She’s great with him.

GEORGETTE
She seems like a very capable person.

JOHN
She’s a natural mother.

Georgette looks like she’s been sucker-punched.

GEORGETTE
She sounds like a wonderful partner for you. I -- I need to make a phone call. I promised...

JOHN
Aren’t you going to eat?

GEORGETTE
I’m not really hungry. Oh and -- maybe you’re right, it’ll be a mistake if we co-mingle too much. We’ll only end up getting on each other’s nerves.

Georgette leaves, angry -- at herself, mostly. John looks after her, confused. The sound of the wind picks up.
INT. TOY COMPANY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The next morning, Maggie is having a meeting with Komiko, the Japanese design graduate student, and some poker-faced toy executives. Komiko demonstrates her patented doll, unzipping it to reveal a string of cloth intestines.

MAGGIE
Komiko has designed the first patented doll with removable internal organs.

KOMIKO
(whispery)
Sixty percent of children have fears about death.

MAGGIE
Komiko’s idea is, to relieve children’s fears about the body by helping them see what’s inside.

KOMIKO
/removing the intestine
They can draw on the organs.

MAGGIE
But all the elements are completely washable. So...We think this would appeal to parents interested in marriage-based toys. I mean, knowledge. Knowledge-based toys.

EXT. QUEBEC HOTEL - DAY

Snow is falling on the landscape. Whirling. The wind is ferocious.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - KITCHEN - DAY

In New York, it’s two hours later. Maggie is folding laundry with Justine.

JOHN
(os)
There’s no heat. The fucking internet doesn’t work.
QUEENS LOFT

John, depressed, is on his phone in a corner of the bar at the end of the dining room. There is a kerosene lamp beside him. It’s still snowing. Outside, all is white. Intercut with Maggie in the loft.

JOHN
The generator blew up. My batteries are about to die. And get this. Guess who’s here. Georgette.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - DAY

Maggie is painting Justine’s fingernails.

MAGGIE
Really? Wow. How is that?

JOHN
Her mood matches the weather.

MAGGIE
Oh. Sorry about that.

JOHN
How are you guys doing?

MAGGIE
Everyone’s fine.

JOHN (O.S.)
I can’t get any information about when the airport is opening up. So it looks like I’m stuck here! They’re breaking out the snowshoes, which, to me, is ominous.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - BATHROOM - DAY

Maggie is having a bubble bath with Lily. They are having fun, blowing bubbles through a little plastic ring. Lily dips the ring into the bottle of bubble stuff, blows a big one and watches it float through the air.

MAGGIE
Oh that’s a good one...
MAGGIE (CONT’D)
I love you so much.

LILY
How much? Wait, I know, twenty-five three hundred and sixty two!

MAGGIE
That’s exactly right!

They continue to blow bubbles.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
I want to live inside a bubble.

LILY
(watching the bubble float)
Me too.

... 

LILY
But I want my own bubble.

MAGGIE
Okay. We can each have a bubble.

LILY
And Daddy gets his own bubble too.

Maggie blows a huge bubble and looks inside it.

MAGGIE
I can see Daddy in his bubble.

Maggie looks inside the bubble. Slow dissolve into: A snowy landscape/ John and Georgette and a few others are on snowshoes...

EXT. QUEBEC MOUNTAINS - DAY

Low wide shot: John and Georgette walk in a line of academics on snowshoes. Georgette falls over, letting out a cry. John turns but she waves him off and continues.

Closer frontal shot: Georgette falls again. John can’t help stopping to help her up. She dusts herself off grumpily. They both look up the mountain to see the rest of the academics have trudged off without them.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
Typical.

JOHN
We can just follow their tracks back.

They snowshoe together in silence. Time passes.

SOME TIME LATER

CLOSE UP OF THEIR SNOWSHOES CUTTING INTO A VIRGIN DRIFT.

JOHN
Nothing really looks familiar. Does it?

MORE TIME PASSES

EXT. FORREST - DAY

They are trudging along, deep in conversation, totally lost. We see them through the trees.

JOHN
You know that talk you gave yesterday was just great. I didn’t even know you were working in that direction.

GEORGETTE
I guess you haven’t seen anything I’ve written for a while.

JOHN
No, I miss that.

GEORGETTE
You do?

JOHN
I used to like that. You know, I miss that, showing each other stuff.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
(encouraged, plunging in)
Forget me -- that talk you gave yesterday was the hit of the conference.

JOHN
It was just all the old ideas.

GEORGETTE
You altered that passage on de Tocqueville.

JOHN
Nothing gets by you!

GEORGETTE
Your work feels so fresh... No one unpacks commodity fetishism like you do.

JOHN
Aw, shucks.

A few exhausting steps through the snow, walking toward close up. Then:

GEORGETTE
Are you still working on that novel?

JOHN
Yeah.

GEORGETTE
How’s it coming?

JOHN
(brusque)
Fine.

He moves a little ahead. Doesn’t want to talk about it.

GEORGETTE
John.

JOHN
?

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
I don’t mean to be insulting about your fiction. It’s just that I am so proud of the academic work you’ve done. You see, here, how much people love it.

JOHN
I’m not abandoning anything. Come on. I don’t want you to get too cold.

Something about that little protective statement makes Georgette sad. She loves him so much. He turns.

JOHN (CONT’D)
What’s the matter?

GEORGETTE
I have something I want to tell you.

JOHN
What is it?

GEORGETTE
I’m sorry.

JOHN
For what?

GEORGETTE
For being so self-centered. For not listening to you, to what you needed, for not investing in your work--

JOHN
Hey, you don’t have to--

GEORGETTE
I think I was just so, so tied up in succeeding, in making a name for myself, I stopped paying attention to us, to you, to our marriage. And now, I have success, and it’s as if I’ve emerged from a tunnel. I hope... in the future, to be less self-absorbed. If I ever get another chance... at love.
JOHN
Of course you’ll get another chance.

GEORGETTE
You think so?

JOHN
I bet they’re lining up.

Georgette’s eyes fill with tears. This whole thing is too much for her. She sinks down into the snow and cries.

GEORGETTE
Are we going to die here?!

JOHN
No, God. (yelling) HELLO? HELLO?!

GEORGETTE
HELP!

JOHN
HEY, ALL YOU FRENCH CANADIAN PEOPLE! WE’RE FREEZING OUT HERE AND WE HAVE NO FUCKING IDEA WHERE WE ARE!!!

INT. QUEBEC HOTEL - DINING AREA - NIGHT

John and Georgette enter, covered in snow.

GEORGETTE
(to the waiter who opens the door)
We were lost.

They follow the waiter who holds a torch, walking toward raucous music. A Québécois acoustic duo, a man and a woman, is playing “Dancing in the Dark” by Bruce Springsteen on guitar and Harmonium on a makeshift stage. The male singer has a thick French Canadian accent. Georgette and John plop down on a couch, strip off their huge jackets, and take glasses of cognac offered to them. They sing along to “Dancing in the Dark”, laughing. This is an old favorite of theirs, from early times. Debbie Wasserman dances wildly. Al Bentwaith joins her. Something is happening between those two. Then, John can’t help it, he wants to dance.
He takes Georgette’s hand and they dance along with all the other tipsy academics. Georgette is radiant. They seem so happy and free.

LATER

INT. QUEBEC HOTEL - DINING AREA - NIGHT

John and Georgette are sitting together on the couch by the fire, drinking cognac. They are almost the only ones here. There is a striking intimacy between them.

JOHN
I’ve written myself so far up my own ass I can’t see my way out. The whole story bores me to death.

GEORGETTE
So stop writing it.

JOHN
I feel like if I don’t produce some kind of masterpiece, Maggie will give up on me. That book is a big part of what made her fall for me. But, Georgette. If I have learned one thing in the last three years...it’s that I’m not a novelist!

GEORGETTE
If she truly loves you... she’ll love you whether you are a novelist or a garbage collector.

A long pause as he looks at her.

JOHN
You did, didn’t you. You loved me that way.

She says nothing. A moment between them. Then, a little Old World shrug from Georgette. He looks at her. Falling for her. The lights come on. They blink in the glare.

Al Benthwaite walks in at the far end of the room.

(CONTINUED)
AL BENTWAITHE (O.S.)
They’ve opened the airport! We can go home tomorrow!

Debbie Wasserman hoots off-screen. John and Georgette sit, saddened by the news.

GEORGETTE
I better go pack...

She leaves him to think.

INT. QUEBEC HOTEL - GEORGETTE’S ROOM - NIGHT
Georgette is packing. The lights are on. There is a knock. It’s John.

JOHN
I don’t want to go back.

GEORGETTE
...

John looks up at her and it’s clear that he loves her.

JOHN
I don’t want to leave you.

GEORGETTE
(ushering him in)
John...

JOHN
I want you so badly. I can’t think about anything else. It’s like it never ended, like the past three years never happened. Or that I’m hallucinating.

GEORGETTE
But they did happen. It all happened.

JOHN
I know. I know!

GEORGETTE
We have to stay real. The snow is melting.

She is powerfully drawn to him -- and yet --
GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
John.

JOHN
?

GEORGETTE
There’s something you should know.

JOHN
What is it?

Georgette pauses, uncertain if she should break the mood by spilling the beans about Maggie’s offer. She sits beside him, looking at him.

JOHN (CONT’D)
?

She comes closer and closer... and...they kiss and fall out of frame.

INT. QUEENS LOFT BEDROOM - DAY

Maggie waits, lying on the bed, wondering if the plan is working...

INT. QUEBEC HOTEL - DINING AREA - MORNING

Meanwhile, John is tearing into his eggs while reading a book by Mick Taussig called, “What Color is the Sacred?” Georgette joins him, looking fragrant in a crisp white shirt.

GEORGETTE
(to waiter with two pots)
Coffee please.

The waiter pouring the coffee is the same man that rocked Springsteen last night. John half notices this, then looks at his ex-wife.

JOHN
Now what.

GEORGETTE
You regret it?

JOHN
We belong to each other. That’s it.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGETTE
Actually, for me, this was a one-night stand.

They are both so happy.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
But seriously. I’ve changed. I know I can live without you now. I just don’t want to.

JOHN
Good.

GEORGETTE
I would like to read your novel now.

JOHN
Really?

GEORGETTE
I know you have a copy because I saw you marking one up.

John reaches into his backpack and pulls out a massive manuscript.

JOHN
Be careful what you wish for.

INT. QUEENS LOFT – BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

Maggie is sitting on her bed, waiting. Waiting. Waiting. She hears John’s keys in the door. Fear in her belly.

MAGGIE
Hi.

JOHN
Hi.

He leans in and kisses her swiftly.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Where’s Lily?

MAGGIE
Felicia wanted to take her to that dance class.

(CONTINUED)
John sits on the bed.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
How did your talk go?

JOHN
Fine, I think. Well attended. I got a few laughs.

MAGGIE
Was it okay with Georgette?

JOHN
She eventually defrosted.

MAGGIE
Good.

John can’t bear the pressure of the lie.

JOHN
I should tell you something.

MAGGIE
Okay...

She sits waiting, her arms clamped around her legs. He sits down on the bed again, crushed by guilt, barely able to get the words out.

JOHN
You know we were snowed in?

MAGGIE
I know.

JOHN
So Georgette and I were thrown together for two whole days. And there was this... atmosphere of -- I don’t know, it was very strange. I found myself... unearthing things... old stuff...

MAGGIE
Good stuff or bad stuff?

JOHN
I don’t know. Emotional. Nostalgic - The same stuff.

MAGGIE
The same as what?

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
Yes. Fuck. I’m so sorry.

MAGGIE
What happened?

JOHN
Georgette and I slept together.

A long pause. This victory hurts.

John sits, his head drooping. Maggie begins to cry. Even if this was her idea, it hurts.

MAGGIE
Georgette was right.

JOHN
What do you mean?

MAGGIE
We should’ve just been an affair. You were having a rough spot in your marriage and I came along and...

JOHN
But then we wouldn’t have had Lily.

MAGGIE
That’s right.

JOHN
(genuinely torn)
It was real between us... all real. When I met you, I was lost. I was a fucking mess. I was so insecure and you...you saved me. You rescued me. I’m sorry. I don’t know what to do.

MAGGIE
You know what to do.

JOHN
No I don’t!

MAGGIE
You go back to Georgette. If you love her.

JOHN
You think?

(CONTINUED)
Maggie nods. She’s very sad, but she knows this is right.

John kisses her, then pulls away. He is, it seems, in love with two women at this moment.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Oh, shit. I don’t know what to do.

They sit together.

OMITTED

EXT. GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON
Establishing shot.

INT. GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON
Georgette, John, Justine, and Paul have dinner. Paul is going on about something that happened at school. Justine is staring at John.

JUSTINE
(not hostile, just curious)
What are you doing here?

JOHN
I accidentally ran into your mom at school cause we each thought it was our day to pick up Paul--

PAUL
Yeah, that was so funny!

JUSTINE
...

JOHN
And then your Mom graciously invited me over to dinner.

JUSTINE
You guys should learn to coordinate your schedules.

JOHN
There’s no harm in spending time together as a family.
JUSTINE
Except for -- isn’t that the point of a divorce? That you’re not a family anymore?

INT. GEORGETTE’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

We hear John saying goodbye to the kids off-screen. Georgette enters the bedroom, drawing John in with her. They fall on the bed and start fooling around, impatient as teenagers. A knock on the locked door. They freeze.

PAUL (OS)
Mom?

GEORGETTE
(calling out)
What is it Paul darling?

PAUL (OS)
I’m hungry.

GEORGETTE
But you just ate!

PAUL (OS)
What can I have?

GEORGETTE
You can have a plate of saltines, a cheese stick, and an apple.

Georgette starts frantically undoing John’s belt buckle.

PAUL (OS)
Can you cut up the apple?

GEORGETTE
Ask Justine.

PAUL (OS)
She’s busy. (pause) Mom?

John jumps off the bed.

JOHN
(whispering, cinching his belt)
This is ridiculous. I have to go.

(CONTINUED)
Where will you stay?

I don’t know. I’ll just call some friends—try to avoid a hotel. We’ve got to give them time to adjust.

They kiss. She slips out the door. John waits till she is gone a while, just stands there stock-still.

GEORGETTE
(os)
All right, Paul, here I come to cut up your apple!

John making calls, leaving a few messages with various friends he could stay with for the night. Jump cuts as he leaves messages. Then, finally:

Felicia! Thank God you’re home...ah, not so good.

Felicia and John have been talking for a while. Felicia is knitting.

So she already told you guys? She called you?

She called me. I don’t know about Tony, he’s been out all day.

What’d she say? Is she going to be okay?

You know Maggie. She’s been taking care of herself all her life. I mean, she’s emotional--

This whole thing feels so unreal.

(CONTINUED)
FELICIA
I know. I think it’s better to be honest. When you can.

JOHN
I’m just so surprised!

FELICIA
I know. I mean, I can imagine.

A fumbling at the lock. Singing. It’s Tony, in a rumpled suit. Three sheets to the wind.

TONY
John! Aren’t you in Canada?

FELICIA
No. He’s here.

Tony looks at Felicia. She glares at him to keep silent.

JOHN
So you won your case?

TONY
We trounced them.

JOHN
What was it about?

TONY
Tainted pudding.

JOHN
A lawsuit?

TONY
What else? Lawsuits keep my wife in post-modern choreography, and me in self-loathing. A good deal all round.

FELICIA
If you’re going to be in that kind of mood you should just go to bed.

Tony is fumbling around in a kitchen cabinet.

TONY
I’m craving one little nip of that vanilla whiskey you so lovingly gave me for Christmas, Fi.
FELICIA
Looks like you’ve had enough of something.

Tony holds up a bottle. Talks to John.

TONY
This stuff is like liquid crack. Have some?

JOHN
Just a finger. Thanks.

Tony sits down and grimaces in pain.

TONY
Aargh.

FELICIA
What is it?

TONY
I sat on my balls.

FELICIA
I think you should have your balls hemmed. Like that actor -- what’s his name?

JOHN
Are you serious?

FELICIA
Apparently it’s just a few stitches, and -- boop! A ball lift.

TONY
(adjusting his seat)
So. John. Any news?

John looks at Felicia, wondering how much Tony knows.

JOHN
You haven’t spoken to Maggie?

TONY
I’ve been knee-deep in pudding all day.

FELICIA
John and Maggie are...

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
We...

FELICIA
He and Georgette...

TONY
(unthinking, drunk)
You mean it worked?!

JOHN
What worked?

TONY
(a desperate attempt to recover)
Who said that drinks are like tits -- one is too few, three too many?

JOHN
What worked? What are you talking about?

TONY
(looking sick, pushes his drink away)
I’m not really much of a drinker.

FELICIA
No. You’re not.

John sits immobile as the terrible logic accrues in him.

JOHN
So this is what Georgette kept almost telling me. Oh, Jesus.

Tony and Felicia go into a frenzy of lame denial.

FELICIA
She might have been trying to tell you--

JOHN
You guys set me up?

FELICIA
No!

TONY
No!
The elevated train snakes across the tracks above the store front.

John walks into the room and turns on the light, starts taking his clothes out of the drawers. Maggie wakes up.

MAGGIE
John?

JOHN
Was it a test?

MAGGIE
...

JOHN
To see if I really was in love with Georgette, as you apparently suspected?

A pause. Maggie feels a little frightened.

JOHN (CONT’D)
You happy now?

MAGGIE
Happy isn’t the right word.

JOHN
I don’t even know what to say. I’m speechless.

MAGGIE
We were going to break up. I had a feeling you were still in love with Georgette. And you were, as it turns out.

JOHN
What about Lily? My daughter. Where does she fit into this plan of yours?

MAGGIE
If we’re going to break up it’s -- better to do it soon, for her sake. So that’s all she remembers.

(CONTINUED)
John flips.

JOHN
But I didn’t want to break up! Because, among other things, I was committed to you and we had a child together.

MAGGIE
Not because you wanted to be with me.

JOHN
(on a wave of his own thoughts--packing all the while)
So this is the fate you’ve picked out for me -- to just ricochet around the tri-state area, ruining one family after another? I don’t accept that. I didn’t choose this. I can’t believe I let you make me feel so -- so guilty about betraying you and wrecking our marriage, when you masterminded this whole thing, manipulated me into falling for my ex-wife, colluded with her to get me invited to that conference, to make me into some absurd patsy, a pawn in your revolting little narrative. Well guess what? Your puppet is cutting his strings. You can both fuck yourselves.

MAGGIE
You and Georgette never really stopped being together the whole time we were married.

JOHN
What?

MAGGIE
I mean, you thought it was over, but it never really was. This is the proof, isn’t it. It’s what you wanted. Be honest.

JOHN
I think the question really is what do you want? What do you want, Maggie Hardin?
MAGGIE
I want to live honestly.

JOHN
Well you’re not off to a very good start.

MAGGIE
I don’t want a marriage that’s a lie. I don’t want to tiptoe around our disconnection anymore. You deserve to be with someone who really -- gives herself over to you. I did what I thought was right.

JOHN
You’re very ethical.

MAGGIE
You’re the one who slept with someone else.

JOHN
(laughing in spite of himself)
Are you fucking kidding me?

John zips up his bag.

JOHN (CONT’D)
By the way, just out of curiosity -- did you ever love me?

MAGGIE
Of course I did.

JOHN
That’s nice.

MAGGIE
Where are you going?

JOHN
I have no idea.

MAGGIE
What about the kids?

JOHN
You and Georgette seem to be such good teammates, strategize with her.

(CONTINUED)
He leaves. Maggie stares at the door he’s walked out of.

INT. LILY’S ROOM – DAY

Maggie walks Lily’s room and lies on the bed. Lily stirs and looks over the railing of her bed.

LILY
What Mama?

MAGGIE
Oh wiglet. I did something really stupid. To fix something else I did that turned out wrong. And I thought it was going to end up wonderful. But I made a big mess.

LILY
(finally, something she can relate to)
You made a mess?

Maggie recovers somewhat. Laughs through her tears.

MAGGIE
Yes. But I don’t know how to clean it up.

LILY
(lying down again)
Use a sponge. Just forget about it.

Maggie can’t help smiling.

EXT. MINIVAN / QUEENS STREETS – AFTERNOON

Maggie is driving with Lily in the back.

INT. GEORGETTE’S KITCHEN – DAY

Maggie walks in. Georgette is at the table.

MAGGIE
He found out.

GEORGETTE
How?

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
Tony. My best friend. He was drunk. It slipped out.

Georgette sits down and takes this in.

GEORGETTE
It was inevitable. I almost told him myself several times.

MAGGIE
The tragic flaw in my plan.

GEORGETTE
Where is he?

MAGGIE
I don’t know. I think he’s just really sick of both of us. Mostly me.

A moment of silence.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Georgette. I don’t know what to say.

Georgette looks at her, deeply.

GEORGETTE
You’re a funny person. There is something very... pure about you and -- a little bit stupid. Or, no, it’s... a kind of innocence. You’re so -- unconscious. Yet. I can’t help it, I like you. I don’t blame you. I just shouldn’t have allowed him back in my life. I had decided against it, even in Canada. I wasn’t even going to let it happen. It was the snow. It was the cozy, cozy snow. Der Wassa Huchlich. We just... fell for each other again. I wanted my husband back.

MAGGIE
I don’t think you have to lose him.

GEORGETTE
(with a flash of anger)
You know what? If he does call you, tell him to screw off.

(MORE)
Tell him from me. (Seeing Justine enter) Hello darling!

MAGGIE
How about if I take all the kids for a few days.

GEORGETTE
Stop it. Stop trying to take care of everybody.

MAGGIE
It’s fine. They won’t mind, they’re used to me, right Justine?

JUSTINE
Could you please just tell me what’s going on?

Both women look at the child. She stares back at them solemnly.

MAGGIE
Your Dad and I had a big fight and he’s taking some time.

JUSTINE
(to Georgette)
Are you and him getting back together?

GEORGETTE
It’s a complex situation.

Justine: a disturbing thought is forming.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
Are you sad?

JUSTINE
No.

MAGGIE
Angry?

Justine looks at the women for a beat.

JUSTINE
You guys really have no idea what you’re doing, do you?

Maggie and Georgette stand unable to answer.
JUSTINE (CONT’D)
I mean, there is no plan, is there?

INT/EXT. MINIVAN / QUEENS STREETS - AFTERNOON

Maggie is driving Georgette, Justine, Paul, and Lily back to QUEENS. She looks dolefully at Georgette in the passenger seat. Georgette is staring, catatonic. Now Maggie will be taking care of her, too.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - JUSTINE’S ROOM / KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

School time! Maggie tiptoes down the hall and peeks into Justine’s room and sees Georgette asleep on an air mattress clutching John’s manuscript.

MAGGIE
(whispering)
Justine did you find your charger?

JUSTINE
(whispering)
Yes.

Justine exits her room as:

PAUL
(yelling from kitchen)
Where is my science book?!

MAGGIE
Sshshsh!

Maggie runs into kitchen, picks up Lily and puts her on her hip. Packing snacks, book bags, pencil cases, her own brief case, making oatmeal... the kitchen is a mess.

Georgette stalks into the room carrying John’s manuscript.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Did you sleep?

GEORGETTE
Maybe two hours.

MAGGIE
Go back to bed.

GEORGETTE
I’ll help, then go back later.

(Continued)
MAGGIE
It’s okay. Really.

GEORGETTE
I want to help.

Georgette, determined to help, squints to see the print on the dish washing liquid, then shrugs and puts some in the dishwasher, turns it on, then sits on the couch and starts reading again. She’s almost done.

MAGGIE
(to Justine)
What about your basketball uniform?
I washed it--

JUSTINE
Oh no.

MAGGIE
It’s okay, it’s all folded, just -- here -- it’s almost quarter after, we’re gonna be late if --

PAUL
I can’t find any socks.

MAGGIE
Just take some out of the laundry basket.

PAUL
(yelling from the other room)
They’re dirty!

MAGGIE
Wear them anyway, it’s fine. (to Justine) You have your pencil case?

Maggie grabs a canvas shopping bag and stuffs the gear into it.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Okay let’s go!

Paul is looking at something.

PAUL
Maggie...?
Maggie turns. There are suds foaming out of the dishwasher. A lot of suds. Maggie runs toward the suds and dives in to save the day.

**EXT. MINIVAN / QUEENS STREETS – DAY**

Maggie, a few residual suds in her hair, shepherds everyone into the car and leaves. Lily shouts out numbers.

**INT. QUEENS LOFT – DAY**

Georgette finishes the book, closes it, contemplates it furiously. She then gets up, takes a metal trash can, puts it on the coffee table, and lights the first page of the manuscript. It goes up in flames.

**EXT. QUEENS STREET – DAY**

Maggie’s van chugs along on the way in to Manhattan.

**EXT. NEW SCHOOL – DAY**

Maggie runs into the building.

**INT. QUEENS LOFT – DAY**

Georgette sets another page of John’s manuscript alight. A merry fire leaps up. Georgette watches it burn.

**EXT. NEW SCHOOL – AFTERNOON**

Maggie runs out of work at the end of the day. Still late.

**INT. QUEENS LOFT – AFTERNOON**

Maggie walks in, breathless, overwrought, Lily on one hip, groceries on the other.

    **LILY**
    Twenny five - twenny seven! Fitty two!

Justine and Paul tumble in behind her. Georgette is showered and dressed. She seems more collected.

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE

Hi!

Georgette takes the bag of groceries. Maggie puts Lily down and Lily runs to her corner to play.

Maggie sniffs.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Is something burning?

GEORGETTE
No.

MAGGIE
I’m thinking steamed carrots and pork chops.

GEORGETTE
I’ll make apple sauce.

Georgette peels an apple.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
Thank God it’s Friday.

MAGGIE
I think if we take them all skating tomorrow, then you go to the movie with Justine. It’ll scare Paul.

PAUL
No it won’t!

GEORGETTE
Yes it will.

JUSTINE
It’s rated PG-13 Paul. You can only handle G.

PAUL
That’s not fair.

JUSTINE
I’m not having you crawling in my bed for the next month.

MAGGIE
(to Paul)
I can take you and Lily to something else. Let’s look at what’s playing.

(CONTINUED)
PAUL
Is “Ice Maiden Adorable” still playing?

MAGGIE
You really want to see that again?

PAUL
Yes!

Justine makes a retching face as she gets a snack from the fridge.

GEORGETTE
We can’t do that to Maggie. That’s not fair.

MAGGIE
I don’t care, I’ll take a nap.

Maggie has started chopping carrots.

MAGGIE (CONT’D)
Ow!

Maggie’s nicked her finger and sucks the tip.

GEORGETTE
Maggie. Sit down. Where are the band-aids?

Maggie points to a shelf, sits. Georgette gets her a band-aid and puts it on Maggie’s trembling finger. Maggie is panicking.

MAGGIE
(to Georgette)
Have you heard from John?

JUSTINE
I did. He sold his car and bought a motorcycle. And he’s taking us to the Giants on Sunday.

GEORGETTE
Oh for God’s sake.

MAGGIE
Where is he living?

JUSTINE
I’ll ask him when we’re in the stands.

(Continued)
Georgette turns to Maggie, who is on the verge of a panic attack. She can’t breathe well and she’s almost in tears.

GEORGETTE
Justine can you take Paul in to watch TV?

Justine and Paul go.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
What is it?

MAGGIE
I’m sure if you see each other--

GEORGETTE
No more matchmaking ideas. No more ideas, period. You’ve had your thinking license revoked.

MAGGIE
I’ll never get involved with anyone else’s fate again -- not even my own. I’ll become a completely passive, non-interventional -- Buddhist. I just feel like you guys were so close to--

GEORGETTE
You have to let this go, Maggie. This story has its own momentum, apart from you. It always did.

MAGGIE
I’m so sorry. I thought I was going to do something really grand, like a coup... I’m so sick of being me.

GEORGETTE
You should really try the tapping.

MAGGIE
What tapping?

GEORGETTE
I went to a workshop on biofeedback. It’s amazing. What you do is, you figure out the essential thing you want to change, and you make a sort of dictum. Like, for you, “I am not controlling,” maybe. Or whatever you want to change.

(CONTINUED)
"I am not controlling" is good.

And you tap like this--

Georgette taps herself on the top of the head, between the eyebrows, under her nose, on her chin, her temple, behind the ear, and on the wrist, and Maggie imitates her, repeating after her, emotion building in her still and brimming over as she taps.

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
I am not controlling. (tap tap tap)

MAGGIE
I am not controlling. (tap tap tap)

GEORGETTE
(tapping)
I leave people to their own fate.

MAGGIE
(tapping)
I leave people to their own fate.

Etc...

EXT. QUEENS STREET - DAY
Georgette marches toward camera with great determination.

EXT. CAFE - DAY
Establishing shot.

INT. CAFE - DAY
Georgette waits, a coffee beside her. John sets his helmet on the table.

JOHN
So why did you want to see me?

He sits. They glare at each other.

GEORGETTE
I wanted to return your book.

(CONTINUED)
She takes a plastic baggie filled with ashes from her purse and puts it in front of him.

JOHN
Where shall I scatter these?

GEORGETTE
Anywhere is fine.

JOHN
I can’t believe you burned my fucking book, on top of everything else.

GEORGETTE
I burned a copy of your book.

JOHN
You probably didn’t even read it.

GEORGETTE
Of course I read it. That’s why I burned it! You cannibalized our marriage to write that story.

JOHN
You didn’t even bother to fictionalize us in yours.

GEORGETTE
I don’t write fiction!

JOHN
You think you painted a precise portrait of us in “Bring Back the Geisha?” I can’t believe you’re making me feel bad about the sins of my unpublished novel -- are we just going to gloss over your actual lies and manipulation?

GEORGETTE
I’m not a liar! You know I never lie. I lied now... I manipulated... I debased myself morally -- because... I loved you so terribly much. Maybe you could be flattered.

This reaches him a little. He knows what it costs her.
JOHN
If you love me so much, why not just -- tell me?

GEORGETTE
You were married.

JOHN
Oh, Georgette.

GEORGETTE
So you won’t take any responsibility for the state of your life? You’re just a victim of our plot?

JOHN
I’m not a victim. I’m just a man who has fucked his life up and is now trying to find an airbnb to live in.

GEORGETTE
There is nothing more to say in that case.

She starts putting on her coat; he makes ready to go. It’s over. Then, she stops. She’s making one more tactical military maneuver to conquer him:

GEORGETTE (CONT’D)
The reason your novel doesn’t work is: You put too much weight on the allegory. You’re trying to use fiction to prove a thesis. The text is crying out for passages of pure economic theory. Narrative blended with theory is your specialty. Make it into a John Harding book and it could be a phenomenon.

JOHN
You really think so?

GEORGETTE
I know it John. You just have to accept it’ll probably be published by Yale University Press, not Scribner’s. Mark my words: you’ll be shortlisted for a Bateson Prize. You might even get one.

He stares at her.
JOHN
Fuck. You did it again.

GEORGETTE
What?

JOHN
You know me better than I know me.

GEORGETTE
Sometimes I wish I didn’t.

He really sees her. The air is charged.

JOHN
You look very beautiful in that light.

GEORGETTE
I’ll seek out these lighting conditions whenever possible in that case.

JOHN
You do that.

He moves toward her. And then, they kiss, ravenously...

INT. QUEENS LOFT - BEDROOM - DAWN

Maggie wakes up from an unremembered dream, filled with a glorious intuition. Lily sleeps beside her.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. QUEENS LOFT - BEDROOM - DAY

Maggie is dressing Lily. They talk and laugh.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - ICE RINK

Maggie and Lily skate on the ice.

INT. QUEENS LOFT - BATHROOM - DAY

Lily and Maggie brush their teeth in their pyjamas.
INT. QUEENS LOFT - BEDROOM - DAY

Another day. Maggie and Lily play on the floor.

INT. QUEENS LOFT KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie and Lily eat their eggs. A sense of contentment. Absolute love.

EXT - PROSPECT PARK - ICE RINK - DAY

Three weeks later. One shot: Lily is skating between Maggie and John, each holding a little hand. She is wearing a pin that says “I’m Three!” on it. Maggie and John hand Lily to a skating instructor, flanked by Justine. The instructor escorts Lily to a clutch of little girls on skates.

LITTLE GIRLS
Happy Birthday, Lily!

This is Lily’s third birthday party. It’s a skating party. The skating instructor calls out cheerful commands. We follow John as he skates over to Georgette, who is holding onto the railing for dear life. She loses her balance. John catches her.

JOHN
Winter sports aren’t really your strong suit.

GEORGETTE
It’s not fair! On skates I’m not able to defend myself.

JOHN
I’m keeping you on ice for the rest of your life, in that case.

He pushes her on the ice as she screams in fear and joy. In the stands, Tony, Felicia, and Max watch this tender scene. Tony is lacing up Max’s skates. Maggie skates up to them and leans on the barrier.

TONY
(referring to Georgette and John)
Has it ever occurred to you that this might have all happened anyway? Even if you hadn’t played Titania and sprinkled fairy dust in everyone’s eyes?

(CONTINUED)
MAGGIE
Of course it’s occurred to me.

FELICIA
You’ll never know if it was you, or the Hand of Destiny.

MAGGIE
I’ve decided to embrace the mystery of the universe and stop bossing everyone around so much.

MAX
Good luck with that, bossy pants.

Max walks off, toward the ice. Maggie stares after him.

MAGGIE
He’s been listening to us this whole time?

Max is already walking to the skating rink.

TONY
One day he’s going to write a book about us all. And we are not going to look good.

Max skates off—he’s a demon skater. Felicia watches Lily skate by in the gaggle of little girls.

LILY
(shouting, to Justine) ...fifty-two a hundred!, fifty-three a hundred!, fifty-four...

FELICIA
What kind of three year old loves numbers that much?

TONY
Was John good at math? Because you certainly weren’t.

MAGGIE
I’m not sure...

Something is dawning on Felicia, and then it dawns on Tony.

But Maggie is skating away already.

Maggie backs up on the ice, alone, happy. Stay with her a moment. She’s a good skater.

(continues)
Then, she sees: walking over the crest of a hill, making his way toward the rink, skates slung over his broad shoulders, is Guy. The pickle entrepreneur. Who skates every Sunday. Glowing with idiosyncratic appeal. Backing up, Maggie stares at him in surprise, then thoughtfulness, then affection. She backs up till she hits the barrier of the rink. She can’t back up anymore. Move closer and closer to her watching Guy, until she is in a huge close up, on the very edge of her next move.

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