

Everybody Wants Everything

by
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INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - FRIDAY

FREEZE ON: Managing Editor THEO (40, handsome, sharp, mildly tortured: a man at a crossroads). He eyes the design-significant wall clock, which reads "5:59".

STORYTELLER

Theo enjoys structure, good planning.

The image UN-FREEZES as Theo hears:

ETHAN (O.S.)

At least pretend not to look at the clock while I'm talking.

Theo looks to his Editor-in-Chief ETHAN (late 40s - a tough, proud playboy who possesses bits of laziness and sadism) and a room full of STAFFERS, including REID (20s, hipster).

THEO

Sorry, you said we'd be done by six on Friday, and it's 5:59, so... And aren't we done? You asked my opinion, I said it's bad for the magazine, you called me a wuss and reminded me you're in charge.

REID

I actually like the idea.

THEO

Way to stick your neck out, Reid, agreeing with the boss. Brave.

ETHAN

The sooner you hear me out, the sooner you can go.

Theo waits. Ethan just stares off. For a while.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I'm collecting my thoughts.

He's not. He's taunting Theo, whose eyes dart to the clock.

STORYTELLER

Structure affords Theo a balance in life that has lately become extremely important to him.

INT. THEO'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK

Theo gets out of bed and walks uncomfortably to the bathroom.

STORYTELLER

He recently discovered that his feet hurt every morning when he wakes up.

THEO
Jesus Christ.

INT. THEO'S BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK

Theo stands in front of a mirror.

STORYTELLER
Then came the single gray hair that
sprouted from his scrotum.

Theo makes eye contact with himself in the mirror, just sick.

INT. JAMES' NEW JERSEY HOME - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Theo's listens as his father JAMES (60s, ex-engineer, man's man) tells him a story.

STORYTELLER
And the fact that his father now
looks exactly like his dead
grandfather wasn't helping at all.

James notices Theo's uneasy eyes drifting to a framed black and white photo of an OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN.

JAMES
Do not say I look like my dad again.

THEO
But you do.

JAMES
I'm old, you shit! So are you!

THEO
Shut up!

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Theo is with his mother LUCY (60s, naturally beautiful, confident, urban therapist with no filter). A CAB DRIVER loads suitcases into the trunk.

STORYTELLER
Nor did he love his mother's decision
to move to Florida.

THEO
People only move to Florida to rig
elections, or die.

LUCY
Then I'll rig an election because I
intend to outlive all of you.

THEO

Kind of a rough thing to say to your son, no?

LUCY

(squeezes his cheek)
So sensitive.

EXT. HUDSON RIVER PARK - DOWNTOWN - MORNING

CLOSE-ON Theo as he goes for a run.

STORYTELLER

All of this was causing him some anxiety.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: while he runs in REAL-TIME, the WORLD SPINS WILDLY around him -- cars whiz by in streaks of color, clouds sail by overhead, people rush here and there in hyper fast-motion. He looks around, a little overwhelmed. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. Then opens his eyes again. Still spinning. Shit. Why is this happening?

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

Theo walks with BECKI-- his chic, 20-something assistant.

STORYTELLER

The upside was that it gave Theo a new perspective on life.

THEO

Create a folder: books I should read, places I should visit, set-up tennis lessons -- my college roommate's gonna teach me in exchange for swag from the magazine. Ooh! I want to shoot a gun! I never have.

INT. THEO'S OFFICE - BACK TO PRESENT - MINUTES LATER

Theo's listens anxiously as Ethan babbles on.

STORYTELLER

Point being, Theo was determined to keep to his schedule.

ETHAN

... and here we are, an actual magazine, plugging along while the Internet nips at our asses like a rabid dog. I don't have to get you on board, Theo, but I'm giving you this opportunity so you're on the right side of history when the issue flies off the shelves and everybody gets to keep their jobs.

The entire room of Staffers looks at Theo. Waits.

THEO

Okay, then. I guess that makes sense.

ETHAN

Glad you agree. See ya' Monday.

Theo turns to go.

STORYTELLER

Theo knew he should leave it alone.

Theo re-enters.

THEO

This magazine is about aspiration, Ethan. A "reality star" - whatever that is - is not an aspirational figure. He's earned his notoriety by being a fame-hungry trainwreck. Doing a cover on him makes us look as desperate as he is. And I think a part of you knows that, which is why you want me on board.

Ethan crosses to Theo, puts his arm around him as they exit.

ETHAN

Nope. Just enjoying making you late.
(off Theo's look)
So, where you headed? Big plans?

THEO

Not really, no.

Theo crosses away during:

STORYTELLER

Of course Theo had plans, he always had plans. But he didn't much like Ethan and it was already 6:05.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY GYM - SAME TIME

FREEZE-FRAME: JESSE (32, pretty came later in life so she benefits from some charming neurosis) stands with a FEMALE GYM WORKER (ANA) who's about to blow her nose.

STORYTELLER

Jesse has a need to save people.

The ACTION BEGINS as Ana blows her nose and Jesse tells her:

JESSE

Listen to me.
(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

Slice some lemons and put them on the bottoms of your feet, inside your socks. Turn up the heat, throw on a bunch of clothes and sweat buckets. The lemons will drain the toxins out of your body, I swear.

ANA

(uninterested)

Lemons in my socks. Got it. What's your I.D. number, ma'am?

JESSE

Six-five-three-one-nine.

STORYTELLER

She also has trouble with boundaries.

Ana buzzes Jesse through the gym gate.

ANA

(under breath)

See ya', Miss Bat-shit Crazy.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK / DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - LATER

Jesse rushes up to a brownstone door.

STORYTELLER

But she's working on it.

A Placard reads: DR. HAROLD GREGORY, FAMILY THERAPIST.

INT. DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - FORTY MINUTES LATER

DR. GREGORY (50s, his best days are behind him) listens as a vulnerable Jesse shares.

JESSE

I'm, like, "Mom, I left a message and a text telling you I need to talk and you don't call me back for six days?!"

DR. GREGORY

You said that to her?

JESSE

(ashamed)

No, of course not. Because I'm a pussy who can't confront her mommy.

DR. GREGORY

Ha! You do make me laugh, Jesse.

Jesse smiles, a little uneasy, as Dr. Gregory chuckles.

STORYTELLER

Jesse had lately begun to worry that her therapist is attracted to her.

DR. GREGORY

Alright, we only have a few minutes. How is your sex life? Anything we should talk about there?

JESSE

Actually, Dr. Gregory, it... makes me a little uncomfortable when you bring up my sex life.

Giant pause. Dr. Gregory puts on a brave face.

DR. GREGORY

Oh. Well... I apologize. But I guess this is progress. You seem to have no problem confronting me.

JESSE

This is easy. I just can't confront the people I care about.

He's stung, so stung. She realizes what she's done.

JESSE (CONT'D)

That's not what I-- It's just, the problem is with people I love, not people like y...

Jesse stops herself. Shit. Dr. Gregory "smiles" bravely.

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK / DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Jesse exits the building, typing on her phone.

INSERT SHOT: "excited to see you. what train stop again?"

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - EARLY EVENING

Theo bounces the ball, preps to serve. His coach, COLEMAN (39, black, fit) waits to return. A hip new coffee maker (in its box) sits on the bench with their bags.

COLEMAN

Relax your arm, toss in front, eye on the ball, brush left to right.

Theo preps, tosses the ball up, and--

SFX: DING! Theo's phone in his bag.

-- Theo continues swinging at the ball but smashes it down on his own side of the court. It's ugly.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

Oof. You see? This is why I tell you to turn your phone off.

THEO

I can't just disappear from the world.

COLEMAN

You work at a fashion magazine, not a cancer center.

THEO

It's not just fashion. And don't be a dick.

(gestures to bench)

I just brought you one of the five best coffee makers on the market --

COLEMAN

In exchange for my expertise, which you're flat-out ignoring.

THEO

No more talking, we're wasting time.

Theo preps to serve again. This time, he hits the ball long, and right at Coleman, who jumps out of the way.

COLEMAN

Hey, now! Was that intentional?

THEO

(he wishes)

Maybe!

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT -- LATER

A modest, well-appointed space. Jesse, fresh from the shower, checks her phone. Nothing. Damn it. She's concerned.

INT. THEO'S BATHROOM - SAME

A slightly nicer bathroom than Jesse's. Modern. Theo trims his beard in the mirror. Then realizes something:

THEO

Shit!

THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He rushes in, hitting his face on some DRY-CLEANING that hangs in the DOORWAY. He searches his tennis bag and produces his PHONE, SEES JESSE'S TEXT. As he types, he crosses back to the bathroom, hitting his face on the DRY-CLEANING again.

INT. JESSE'S BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jesse faces the mirror, plucking her eyebrows. She stops, looks herself dead in the eye.

JESSE

Yes, dumbass, he's standing you up.
What'd you think was gonna happ--

Her PHONE PINGS. She grabs it, smiles at a NEW TEXT from Theo. She looks in the mirror, relieved and excited.

INT. THEO'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Theo is naked in front of the sink. He holds a pair of tweezers in his right hand as he looks down (off-camera) searching his body hair for stray grays.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - HALF HOUR LATER

Jesse, looking great, rushes to the door. She bumps into an end table, knocking over a framed photo. SFX: BREAKING GLASS.

JESSE

Nice, Jesse. Nice.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM/LIVING ROOM - SAME

Theo, dressed magazine-casual-cool, rushes out of the bedroom to the living room. This time, he knocks the dry-cleaning to the ground. Exasperated, he picks it up, re-enters the bedroom, hangs it in the closet. He returns to the...

LIVING ROOM

... stops at a hip, vintage bar cart and takes a swig of tequila right from the bottle.

INT. NYC "4" EXPRESS SUBWAY CAR - LATER

Jesse, reading a novel, rides amongst a MOSTLY BLACK CROWD.

INT. NYC "3" EXPRESS SUBWAY CAR - SAME

Theo rides, headphones in, learning Spanish. Also MOSTLY BLACK CROWD. An OLDER WOMAN eyes him.

THEO

(off headphones)

Hola, mi nombre es ...

(off Woman's look)

Theo. Mi nombre es Theo. ¿Y tú?

She just turns away. Burn.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS SIDEWALK - MINUTES LATER

Jesse exits the subway station within a throng of BLACK COMMUTERS. She catches her reflection in a store window, stops, fixes her hair, adjusts her clothes. Then, she gives up -- it's good enough. Off she goes.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - CROWN HEIGHTS SIDEWALK - SAME

Theo exits a different station, also amongst a MOSTLY BLACK CROWD. He passes a HOMELESS GUY on the ground with a cup.

HOMELESS GUY

Hey, ladies' man, how you feelin'?

THEO

Kinda nervous, homeless man, thanks for asking.

Theo drops a dollar in the guy's cup, then rounds a corner and spots Jesse down the block. He watches, smiling, as she pets a DOG tied to a parking meter. A beat, he approaches.

THEO (CONT'D)

You brought your dog.

JESSE

No, I don't have a dog.
(then, realizing)
You were kidding.

THEO

I was.

Seeing each other, they can't help but smile. Then:

JESSE

This bugs me so much. Who ties their dog to a parking meter and just leaves it there? What if it gets loose? What if someone hurts him?

THEO

What if he hurts someone else? What if he gets freaked by, I don't know, strollers or something, and some unsuspecting mother strolls by and the dog goes ape-shit on the baby?

JESSE

Jesus, that didn't even occur to me.

THEO

Sorry, didn't realize how dark that was going to get. It just happened.

Jesse stares at the dog, worried. A little too long:

THEO (CONT'D)

So, should we grab dinner, or...?

JESSE

I'm sorry. I'm not present yet.

THEO

You're nervous.

JESSE

(freely owning it)

I am! You're not?

THEO

No. And if at some point you're like, "Theo's a dick, I want to go," you can go. I'll understand. But I'm not leaving unless you're mean, or chew with your mouth open. I'm being charming and you're not even listening to me anymore.

It's true. Jesse is staring down the street. Theo follows her concerned eyes to an approaching WOMAN WITH A STROLLER. As the woman passes, Jesse subtly places herself between the dog and the stroller. The dog couldn't care less. Once the stroller is gone, Jesse looks back to Theo.

THEO (CONT'D)

That was crazy cute.

JESSE

You freaked me out! Just get me wine. Why don't I have wine yet?!

THEO

Hey, I'm ready when you are.

Theo ushers her down the sidewalk. As they start to go, he TRIPS, but catches himself. She can't help but laugh.

THEO (CONT'D)

I tripped.

JESSE

(loves it, teasing)

You sure did. But you're not nervous.

THEO

No, I'm manly and cool. Accept it.

INT. CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT - MINUTES LATER

Casual spot. Again, Theo and Jesse are almost the only white people. They're talking, waiting for a table.

JESSE

Ten years old and I was a hooker for Halloween. A sex worker. Why was that okay with my parents?

THEO

Because they weren't paying attention. Our parents had their own problems.

(as "parents")

"How can I support this family? We haven't had sex in months and he has a Playboy in his closet?"

(back to normal)

Then you walk up with, "daddy, can I be a hooker for Halloween?" He says, "sure, honey," but what he's really doing is staring at the walls thinking, "that wallpaper was too damn expensive, I hate your mother."

JESSE

(teasing)

Wow, such a romantic view of things.

THEO

It's my goal to not be like that, so... that's something, right?

AT THE TABLE - LATER

They're now eating, drinking wine, totally engaged.

THEO

It's "Ray of Light".

JESSE

(totally amused)

You're bringing up a Madonna video right now? You are manly and cool.

THEO

Manly men know Madonna. Plus, gay brother, remember? Point is, it's like that video where the world is moving crazy fast all around her. You know? It's weird, but at some point, life started to feel like that to me. Like I can't keep up.

JESSE

I don't think that's good.

THEO

It's not.

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

One day it's fall, the next it's spring, I look up and think, "Jesus Christ, I'm going to die soon: am I doing what I really want to do, and is any of it worth a damn?"

Theo looks to Jesse, hoping she gets what he's saying. As an answer, she abruptly tears up.

THEO (CONT'D)

Jesse?

JESSE

(starting to cry)
I'm sorry. I get it, that's all. Things moving too fast. Which is part of this, but also it's...

She looks pointedly at him. Something shared between them. He gets it: offers a knowing, sympathetic smile. Then, on a dime, Jesse makes a choice to compose herself.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Enough! Stop. I'm good, all better.
(big breath, then)
Wow, I am totally bananas, huh?

THEO

It's okay. I like a wild ride.
(uh-oh)
Didn't mean that in a filthy way.
(can't help himself)
Although...

She laughs, clearly intrigued, but it *is* a first date.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS SIDEWALK - LATER

Theo and Jesse walk.

THEO

I've watched tennis forever, with my dad and brother. Which is why I'm learning how to play. I want to be able to whip a forehand winner down the line. You know what that is?

JESSE

Kinda. No, I lied. What is it?

THEO

(miming as he goes)
Guy hits the ball into the corner on your forehand side. You're on the run, trying to get to it.

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

You reach out and whip the ball straight down the outside line. It's so perfectly placed, and so fast, he can't even get a racket on it. Very cool shot.

JESSE

Sounds like it. Are you good at it?

THEO

Not at all.
(then, alarmed)
Shit.

Theo stops. Jesse follows his eyes -- just people walking.

JESSE

What? Did you see someone you know?

ETHAN (O.S.)

Theo?

THEO

Fuck.

Theo and Jesse turn to see Ethan walking toward them with a beautiful woman, ERIN (early 20s, mixed race). The IMAGE FREEZES on Theo and Jesse's concerned faces.

STORYTELLER

It was at this moment that Theo and Jesse started to question their decision to go on this date.

Suddenly, THE ACTION REWINDS, taking us BACKWARDS in FAST-MOTION through everything we've seen up to this point:

THEO AND JESSE WALK BACKWARDS DOWN THE STREET

THEO AND JESSE EAT (IN REVERSE) AT THE RESTAURANT

THEO AND JESSE ON THE CORNER WITH THE DOG

THEO AND JESSE ON THEIR RESPECTIVE SUBWAY RIDES

THEO AND JESSE IN THEIR APARTMENTS, GETTING READY

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

Because it was not a date that anyone knew about.

The action lands on two moments from earlier that night:

INT. THEO'S APT/JESSE'S APT - FLASHBACK - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

SPLIT-SCREEN: On one side, Theo knocks down the dry-cleaning in his apartment, picks it up and hangs it in the closet. From a new POV, we now see the contents of the closet - half women's clothing, half men's. INSERT: a Post-It on a shelf reads: "Don't forget dry-cleaning! Thanks, A. Ox"

ON THE OTHER SIDE: Jesse knocks down the framed photo. She picks it up and puts it back on the end table.

JESSE

Nice, Jesse. Nice.

This time, we see the photo: Jesse and a SMILING YOUNG MAN cuddled together on a sofa.

FREEZE ON THESE TWO IMAGES AS:

STORYTELLER

(re: Post-It)

The "A" is for Annette, Theo's wife...

INT. PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT STORE - DISPLAY WINDOW - NIGHT

ANNETTE (38, sharp, sexy, driven by something she doesn't understand) stands with her assistant ELAINE (20s, Asian, hip) surmising a "beach setting" with bikini-clad mannequins.

STORYTELLER

... who was out of town working.

ANNETTE

I hate it. It's not perfect.

ELAINE

Salvador Dali says, "Have no fear of perfection, you'll never reach it."

ANNETTE

He was mentally ill. And you're Asian, for Christ's sake, would you say that to your mother? I bet not.

INT. THEO'S APT/JESSE'S APT - FLASHBACK - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

Back to SPLIT-SCREEN, this time on Jesse's SHATTERED PHOTO:

STORYTELLER

And the man on the sofa with Jesse...

INT. BOSTON BAR - NIGHT

CHRIS (33, the smart kid in school who grew up cute, then put on 10 pounds) throws darts with FRIENDS.

STORYTELLER

... is Chris, who needed a quiet weekend away to work on his novel.

A WAITRESS approaches with a tray of beers. Chris and friends cheerily take them from her tray.

EXT. FEAST OF SAN GENNARO - FLASHBACK - MONTHS AGO

It's the well-known Italian street festival - an unbelievable amount of people crammed into a few city blocks.

STORYTELLER

In spite of these "obstacles", circumstances recently forced Theo and Jesse into each other's lives.

Theo navigates the crowd while Annette lags behind, typing furiously on her cell phone.

THEO

Annette, what do you want to drink?

ANNETTE

(typing on phone)

I told you. Those meatballs from last year, but that stand is further south. Why are we walking this way?

THEO

I said "drink". I'm already up to speed on the meatballs.

ANNETTE

(re: phone)

Uggghh!

(then, to Theo)

Here. Take this goddamn phone.

THEO

(hopeful)

Really?

She thinks a second, then pulls it back.

ANNETTE

No. Let me go handle stupid Elaine and her stupid bad taste and then I'll be good. I need to call her and it's too noisy here.

(walking off)

See, Theo? I try to delegate so I can be here with you. But *this* is what happens.

She throws her hands up and moves off. Theo takes a calming breath, then approaches a throng of people in line for beer.

THEO
 (to no one, re: line)
 Holy shit.

A woman turns. It's Jesse.

JESSE
 Right? For cheap beer, no less.
 (recognizing him)
 Hey. You look familiar.

THEO
 You too. Why?

JESSE
 I don't know. But you have a weird-
 ish name and a wife? Or you're gay.

THEO
 Wife, Annette. Brother's gay, maybe
 you smelled it on me. And it's Theo,
 which I guess is "weird-ish". You're
 in... fashion?

JESSE
 No. I make desserts for gourmet
 shops, restaurants, catering. It's
 called Sugar Fix.

THEO
 Good name. But I don't know it.

Chris approaches Jesse, phone in hand.

CHRIS
 (to Jesse)
 You're going to hate me, but Dave
 just got me a breakfast with someone
 at Farrar, Straus - remember, they
 publish Franzen? I need to go over
 my samples, get a good night's sleep --
 (then, noticing Theo)
 Hey, you're Theo, right? Our friend
 MaryAnn was your assistant --

JESSE
 That's right!

THEO
 There it is.

JESSE
 We're Jesse and Chris. We met here
 a few years ago, through MaryAnn.
 (then, to Chris)
 We were just trying to figure out
 how we knew each other.

THEO
 I remember now. How is she?

JESSE

Good. You know MaryAnn.

Jesse mimes tossing back a drink. Theo laughs, he gets it.

CHRIS

Babe, that's not cool. Why do you do that?

Jesse is suddenly self-conscious, which Theo notices.

JESSE

(to Chris)

So... are you leaving now?

CHRIS

Yeah. You can stay, though.

JESSE

Alone at a street fair. That's fun.

THEO

Annette's here. You can hang with us if you want.

CHRIS

(to Jesse)

Yeah, do that. I'm just going to go home and do my own thing, anyway.

JESSE

(to Theo)

He means masturbate.

CHRIS

Jesse!

JESSE

I'm kidding! I'm sorry! Why do I say these things?

Chris rolls his eyes, Theo barely hides his amusement.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(to Theo)

Anyway... um, yes, I'll stay. I'll walk Chris to the train and meet you back here.

As Theo and Chris say good-bye and Jesse and Chris walk off:

STORYTELLER

Theo was surprised he invited Jesse to stay, and wasn't sure how Annette would react. Fortunately...

Annette approaches with:

ANNETTE

Please don't give me shit about this.

He gets it immediately; they've done this a hundred times.

THEO

It's fine, you can go.

ANNETTE

I'll come right back, but Elaine's fucking up my window and this is a new contract and I have to make sure everything looks perfect. I'll be back in an hour. I swear.

He offers her a dubious look, which she doesn't like.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Don't do that, Theo. Don't act like this happens all the time. I'll try, that's all I can do.

He smiles. She offers a peck, then exits. Theo watches her go. FAST-MOTION as Theo moves up in line, PEOPLE depart...

STORYTELLER

Theo tried to ignore the feeling that his evening had just taken a turn for the better.

ACTION SLOWS TO REAL-TIME as Theo looks up to see Jesse walking toward him.

THEO

Annette just left.

JESSE

Oh. Huh. Really?

THEO

Yeah. I didn't expect it. Well, I always *kind of* expect it.

(awkward beat, then)

Listen, if this is weird --

JESSE

Well...

(considering)

Is it? I mean, why would it be?

STORYTELLER

Because they were clearly attracted to each other and in relationships with other people. That's why.

EXT. FEAST OF SAN GENNARO - FLASHBACK - AN HOUR LATER

A GAME STAND, stuffed animals everywhere. Theo and Jesse, with beers, talk and toss rings onto giant milk bottles.

THEO

... and when the doctor told us I couldn't get Annette pregnant, we rushed into the idea of adoption. Well, we started the process, but haven't filed the papers yet.

JESSE

Why?

THEO

Well, for one, we haven't been *great* with each other lately. And I don't see how a baby fits into our lives. I work a lot, she works A TON, she volunteers, she's taking law classes --

JESSE

Wow. Why so much?

THEO

I don't know, she hates me? Point is, she thinks we can swing a baby, I don't, we fight about it *often*.

This lands with Theo for a bit. Then, he bursts out laughing.

THEO (CONT'D)

What the hell? Why did I just tell you all that? So wrong.

JESSE

Yeah, it was intimate. But don't feel bad. I whined about Chris not having a job and using a cute name for sex. That's tacky.

THEO

What's he call it again?

JESSE

Sex-a-licious.

THEO

Yeah, cute names take the power out of sex. Sex should have power.

This is too far. For both of them. They back-pedal.

JESSE

Well, I get up really early for work--

THEO

It's getting late, so --

JESSE

But we should all get together for a double date or something.

THEO

Great. Let's do phone numbers.

They swap phones, typing their info into each other's.

STORYTELLER

The next day, it was clear their evening together had left its mark.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY - FLASHBACK

Theo preps for a serve, Coleman waits to receive. Theo tosses the ball, swings, and serves fast and hard right at Coleman.

COLEMAN

Whoa! Where'd that come from?

THEO

I don't know. Everything just feels right today, you know?

INT. NEW YORK CITY GYM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jesse enters, practically dancing to her iPod Shuffle. Ana (desk clerk from earlier) watches her approach.

JESSE

My girl, Ana!

Jesse, dorky, puts her hand up for a high-five. Ana reluctantly meets Jesse's hand, then:

ANA

What's your I.D. number again?

JESSE

Ana, it's me.
(playfully singing)
Six-five-three-one-niiiiine.

As Jesse walks through the turnstile and Ana eyes her...

STORYTELLER

Both Theo and Jesse ignored their initial plan of a double date.

INT. NYC STREET - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Theo surreptitiously uses his phone to take a photo of a PROSTITUTE in short leopard skirt, stilettos, the whole thing.

STORYTELLER

But they did stay in contact...

INSERT PHONE: Theo types (next to photo): "your next halloween costume?"

INT. NYC STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jesse takes a photo of a faded MADONNA TOUR POSTER.

INSERT: Jesse types (next to photo): "And I found yours!"

INSERT: Theo's response: "Haha! Well played."

INT. THEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

STORYTELLER

There followed a few nights like this at Theo's home...

Alone in bed with his laptop, Theo's on FACEBOOK, looking at photos of Jesse. Suddenly, Annette enters. Theo goes to work on the keyboard just before Annette sits beside him.

ANNETTE

(teasing)

Ooh, look how fast he types.

(re: computer screen)

The New York Times? Please. You closed porn so I wouldn't see. I know your tricks.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - MORNING - SAME

STORYTELLER

... and the occasional morning like this in Jesse's home.

Over breakfast, Chris complains as Jesse looks at a MAGAZINE.

CHRIS

Yes, it's money, and it's writing. But a newsletter for some cleft palette non-profit? That's going to depress the shit out of me. I won't have energy to do my real writing.

Reveal Jesse is surreptitiously looking at Theo's "EDITOR-IN-CHIEF" photo from his magazine. She turns the page, then:

JESSE

I hear that.

INT. THEO'S KITCHEN / INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

STORYTELLER

And of course things got worse. Or better, depending on how one feels about these two.

In SPLIT-SCREEN, Theo sits at his kitchen table watching Annette make coffee and breakfast, while Jesse sits in bed watching Chris sleep.

Then, from Theo's POV, Annette transforms into Jesse. He's now smiling and watching "Jesse" make coffee and breakfast. Meantime, from Jesse's POV, sleeping Chris becomes sleeping Theo. She softly runs her fingers through "Theo's" hair.

EXT. NYC STREET - MORNING

Theo runs, a smile on his face, his WORLD SPINS AROUND HIM.

STORYTELLER

There was a lot going on in Theo's life, but only one thing on his mind.

TIRES SCREECH. The spinning STOPS. Theo looks up to see he's in the middle of the street and a TAXI almost hit him.

TAXI DRIVER

Hey! I coulda killed you! What the Hell were you thinking?

Theo takes a beat, what was he thinking?

EXT. SUGAR FIX OFFICES - MORNING - TEN MINUTES LATER

Jesse stands with an out-of-breath, amped-up Theo.

THEO

Listen, I've been thinking, and... are you 100% sure you're living the right life for you?

JESSE

It sounds like you're about to sell me something.

THEO

I am, ish. I think about you a lot. And I think you think about me.

(off her silence)

Kinda waiting for you to confirm or deny--

JESSE

I do. Yes. I shouldn't, but --

THEO

No, that's good. Let's... go out.

JESSE

Out? What do you mean "out"?

THEO

Out. Somewhere no one knows us. Far out in Brooklyn, or Queens -- well, not Queens, nothing's in Queens. Annette and Chris both go away a lot, so let's take one night, separate from our lives, and... see. Because this you-and-me thing is probably all projection and fantasy, right? Don't answer: maybe it is, maybe it isn't. And yes, it's technically cheating -- which I don't love, at all. And I know I should run away from it. I know that. But I'm not. I can't let this go 'til I know what it is because life is too short and what if we're missing out on a *better one*? This could be the most classless thing I've ever done, or... maybe it's romantic? Don't answer: time will tell. So, what do you think? You can say "fuck off", but... you know... don't.

Theo waits. Jesse can't fight the smile in her eyes.

STORYTELLER

Which is what led them...

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS SIDEWALK - BACK TO PRESENT

Back on the FREEZE-FRAME of Theo and Jesse, on their date, forcing smiles as Ethan and his pretty date, ERIN, approach.

STORYTELLER

... to the uncomfortable moment they currently find themselves in.

The ACTION MOVES again with:

ETHAN

Theo. What are you doing in this neighborhood?

THEO

(avoiding)

Me? What are you doing here?

ETHAN

Erin here lives down the street.

THEO

Ohhhh. Cool. What do ya' know?

Long pause. Then... Erin steps forward to shake Theo's hand.

ERIN

Hi, I'm the Erin he's talking about.

ETHAN

My bad, should'a drove that.

THEO

(to Erin)

Hi. Erin, this is Jesse. Jesse,
this is Erin and Ethan...

(for Jesse's benefit)

... who works with me.

Jesse subtly clocks this news as they all shake hands.

ETHAN

"Works with me"?

(to Jesse)

I'm his boss. He works for me.

THEO

That is true. Yep.

They all stand in silence. It's awkward. Ethan looks to Theo and raises his eyebrows, suspicious, re: Jesse. Theo squints back, feigning confusion. Jesse takes charge.

JESSE

I'm not with Theo.

Theo is not-so-subtly shocked.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I just ran into him and he was nice
enough to walk me to the subway.
Because I was alone.

THEO

(improvising)

Yeah. Jesse is actually friends
with... my brother. Sam. Which is
how I recognized her when I saw her.

Erin nods as Ethan realizes something that delights him.

ETHAN

Wait, hold up. This is going to
blow you're mind, Theo, but I *think*...

(to Erin)

... you once told me that you took
care of some kids of a brother of a
guy who works for me --

ERIN

Oh my God, you're that Theo! I know
your brother Sam!

(MORE)

ERIN (CONT'D)

I work at the day care center where he and Brent leave their twins. I love those guys. I have to tell him I saw you two.

THEO

What a small world. Holy... shit.

Theo is blown away, Ethan smiles big. When it's too much:

JESSE

So, I should get going.

THEO

Right. And I'm walking you, so...
(to Erin and Ethan)
Have a good night.

Theo and Jesse walk away as Ethan and Erin call after:

ETHAN / ERIN

You guys, too. / Nice meeting you!

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS SIDEWALK - SECONDS LATER

Theo and Jesse round a corner. As soon as they do, they stop and just look at each other. What the fuck?

JESSE

I think they bought it. Really. I don't usually go to optimism without a reason.

THEO

Please, he was flat-out messing with me. Which, who cares? He's negotiating a nasty divorce and that woman is half his age. The bigger deal is my brother.

JESSE

He'll be cool, right? Gay people are usually very understanding.

THEO

He can be weirdly conservative.

JESSE

Then lie. He lied about his sexuality for what, twenty years? Why do you have to be so honest?

(then, realizing)

God, are you listening to me? I'm dancing so fast I don't even know what I'm saying.

THEO

You're trying to make me feel better.

JESSE

I am. I don't want to stop the night.
Are we stopping the night?

THEO

No, I'm not going to end this because
of an awkward conversation with my
brother. You know how many awkward
conversations he put me through?

(whining, as "Sam")

I'm in love with my roommate, anal
sex is hard...

(then)

Fuck him. Let's get a drink.

She smiles. He grabs her hand and they walk on. Then, they
let go of each other's hands and look around nervously.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

A dimly-lit hotel bar. They sit in a corner booth, Theo has
scotch, Jesse has wine. There's a very easy intimacy now.

THEO

You know what I hate?

JESSE

Tell me.

THEO

I hate when I'm enjoying a perfectly
cooked steak and a glass of scotch,
I flip through Instagram, see
somebody's filtered picture of a
gorgeous pizza and a glass of cab --

JESSE

And suddenly your steak tastes like
shoe leather and the only true joy
in the world is pizza and wine.

THEO

Exactly. You get me.

JESSE

I do. With me, it's trips. I'm
skiing, happily, then some jerk from
high school posts a shot of her
perfectly-pedicured toes at the beach
and I have to fight the urge to
totally shit on the ski trip I was
loving exactly one minute ago.

He laughs, enjoying her completely. Then:

THEO

Are your parents still together?

JESSE

Uh, where'd that come from?

THEO

I was thinking, "I love steak, but if I had to, could I eat only steak for the rest of my life?" Then I thought, "Theo, this isn't about steak, is it?"

It was pointed, and Jesse got it. She smiles.

JESSE

They are together, but I'm not sure they should be. Yours?

THEO

My mother left my dad after thirty years of marriage. Classy, right? Which, yes, may influence my opinion that it's impossible to have only one meal, or person, for the rest of your life. It seems unnatural.

JESSE

(considers, then)

I don't know what I believe anymore. Sometimes I think I'm just stressed and bored, like everyone. Other times, I think I'm with someone who's often unhappy and I wonder what it's like to be with someone who's not.

Theo gets this in his gut; this is the understanding they give each other. They hold each other's gaze, then:

JESSE (CONT'D)

Should we talk about the fact that we're in a bar in a hotel?

He laughs, surprised by her bluntness.

JESSE (CONT'D)

And I saw a lot of cash in your wallet. You usually carry that much cash, which doesn't show up on a credit card statement?

THEO

Um... no. I do not.

JESSE

Right.

They hold each other's gaze. 100% nervous intensity.

THEO

I wasn't making any assumptions, I swear. Just an option. One that we absolutely don't have to take.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Theo and Jesse stand opposite each other. Nervous. Then, he moves to her and they kiss. It's quickly intense, the kind of kiss that lifts your heart into your throat. The kiss moves them to the bed -- restrained sexual attraction finally finding its path. They're all over each other. It's fucking hot. And then, out of nowhere...

Theo stops. Lying on top of her, he just stops. They look into each other's eyes, and just breathe. Eventually:

THEO

Shit.

JESSE

Yeah.

THEO

What the fuck are we *doing*?

JESSE

I don't know!
(after a beat)
Should we stop? We should stop.

THEO

I suddenly felt... extremely married.
And disgusting.

JESSE

Me too. Real gross.

THEO

Really? Or are you just saying that to make me not feel like a pussy?

JESSE

No. I feel vile, I swear.

A long beat. They're both clearly torn, and still so close together. Jesse takes the reins.

JESSE (CONT'D)

It's okay. This is good. If we stop now, we haven't really done anything wrong. Kinda. I'm rationalizing. But still, stopping is better. Let's stop, right?

They just lie there. Still. Neither wants to make the first move. Eventually, though, Jesse does, squirming out from under Theo. She stands, straightens her hair, takes a breath, and picks up her coat. A beat, then he stands too, grabs his coat. Now what? Finally... she heads to the door.

THEO

Wait. This date solved nothing.

JESSE

Yes, it did. We can't do this, this way. We're not those people. Not that "those people" are bad people, but we're not them. Right?

THEO

Yeah. I guess so.

JESSE

It was a great night, Theo. And life is long. Hopefully.

Theo lets this land, accepts the end to the night. After a beat, she opens the door and they both head out.

INT. TWO SUBWAY CARS - MINUTES LATER

SPLIT-SCREEN of Theo and Jesse riding home, on separate trains. Theo has his eyes closed and head back. Jesse stares straight in front of her, blankly. Neither looks content.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Theo runs around, cleaning up the apartment.

STORYTELLER

Theo had once edited a story about the questionable value of guilt.

INSERT: Magazine article. The TITLE reads: "F--k Guilt!" The PHOTO shows a grinning MALE MODEL in a hot tub with FIVE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

BACK TO SCENE

Annette enters with a suitcase as Theo rushes to meet her.

STORYTELLER

But he started to recognize that guilt had its benefits.

ANNETTE

Oh my God, my idiot cab driver --

Theo sweetly holds her shoulders, looks her in the eyes.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

What's happening?

Theo kisses her, very romantically. She's startled at first, then slowly melts into it. When they part:

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Wow. I can't remember the last time you kissed me like that.

THEO

That's not good.

He kisses her again. She runs with it now.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - SAME

Chris is bent over, unzipping his suitcase as Jesse enters.

STORYTELLER

Meanwhile, at Jesse's house, a similar dynamic played out.

CHRIS

Let me unpack, then we can grab dinner somewhere. I'm starvi--

Flirty, she spansks him on the ass. He jumps up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

What? Was there a bug on me?

JESSE

No. Unpack later. How about a little sex-a-licious first?

CHRIS

I thought you hated that word.

She simply smiles and pulls him to the bed.

PRE-LAP the SOUND of a MAN and WOMAN CLIMAXING...

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's Annette and Theo, finishing strong. When they've gotten everything they can out of it, they roll off each other and collapse on their backs.

ANNETTE

Sweet Lord, I needed that.

THEO

Me too. So bad.

This makes them laugh. Together. Maybe this still works...

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Post-shower, Jesse puts cream on her face in the mirror as Chris comes out of the shower in a towel.

CHRIS

Are you disappointed in me?

Jesse is shocked. That came out of nowhere.

JESSE

What? No. Of course not.

STORYTELLER

She was three days ago.

CHRIS

I would be. When we met, we were both all, "this is my dream, this is your dream, let's get our dreams together." But I didn't get mine.

(squeezes stomach)

Plus, I'm a fattie.

JESSE

No, you're not. And you will get your dream, Chris. I believe that.

Chris kinda smiles. He's not convinced.

CHRIS

I'm reading this book that sucks ass. Meantime, it's *huge*, and the guy's advance for his next book is about a billion dollars.

She crosses to him and hugs him.

JESSE

Your turn is coming. You'll write your book, you'll make money, someone out there will read your work and think you suck. I promise.

She smiles mischievously. He playfully shoves her away.

CHRIS

You're too good to me.

JESSE

I don't know about that.

She smiles, a little uneasy with that.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - SAME

Annette and Theo prep dinner together, post-sex.

ANNETTE

I said, "Elaine, no! Cardboard palm trees are awful. Lucite palm trees are sexy -- see how they catch light, evoke Deco?" She's useless.

(then)

Ugh, stop me when I go on like this. I know it bores the hell out of you.

THEO

No, it doesn't.

STORYTELLER

It did three days ago.

ANNETTE

I have to say, though... the window did look gorgeous when I was done. And it made me want to go to the beach. Let's go to the beach.

THEO

Please! I'd love to go to the beach with you. Can you take some time?

ANNETTE

Of course not. But I should, right?

THEO

Yeah. I miss you.

ANNETTE

You do? I miss you too.

They share a genuine smile.

STORYTELLER

A few weeks later, Theo and Jesse had one final conversation.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT / INT. JESSE'S GYM - A MONTH LATER

SPLIT SCREEN: Theo's on his couch texting while Jesse stands, straddling the moving band of a treadmill, texting back.

THEO TYPES: "Good that we stopped, right?"

JESSE TYPES: "Yep. All good here :-)"

THEO TYPES: "Glad we did it, tho. Actually think it helped."

JESSE TYPES: "Agreed! R thanks in order?!"

THEO TYPES: "Ha! Ur welcome. Thank YOU."

They both pause, unsure what to type next. Then:

THEO TYPES: "Take care."

JESSE TYPES: "You too"

Theo swipes the texts, then hits "delete".

Jesse swipes, but pauses before deleting. She's surprised by tears in her eyes. She takes a breath to hold them back... then hits delete.

END SPLIT-SCREEN: We stay with Theo as he pockets his phone and Annette enters.

ANNETTE

Is my hair a disaster?

THEO

You look beautiful. Let's go.

Theo jumps up to exit, she follows.

ANNETTE

Your brother will tell me the truth.

INT. JAMES'S NEW JERSEY HOME - LATER THAT DAY

Modest family home. Theo and Annette enter to meet Theo's dad JAMES, his brother SAM (37, plain Joe with two kids, happens to be gay), Sam's boyfriend BRENT (30s, former party boy) and their twins OSCAR and BLAKE (2). AD-LIB "Hello's"...

SAME - LATER

Theo watches TV and drinks beer with James and Sam. Sam sits at a table, fiddling on a computer. They all react to:

JAMES / THEO

(re: TV)

That's too good! / No way!

THEO

Sick! Sick forehead winner down the line. I want to be able to hit that.

SAM

Rafa Nadal. I want to be able to hit *that*.

Both James and Theo react to Sam's comment as they hear:

LUCY (O.S.)

Hello?

Theo and James turn to Lucy, Theo's mother, on the computer.

SAM

Hi, mom.

THEO
 (sotto, alarmed)
 Sam, what are you doing?

LUCY
 Is that Theo?

THEO
 (pausing TV)
 Hey, mom.

LUCY
 Oh, that's what's your voice sounds like. If we were Jewish, Theo, I'd guilt you for never calling, but since we're not, I'll leave you to whatever it is that prevents you from keeping in touch with me.

THEO
 Sorry, Ma, I've just been --

LUCY
 Save it. Hello, James.

JAMES
 Lucy. To what do I owe this pleasure?

SAM
 I face-timed her so I could ask you guys something about the wedding.

JAMES
 No, you can't marry a guy. It has to be a girl.

James laughs at his own joke. No one else does.

LUCY
 Jesus, James. Know your audience.

SAM
 Anyway, I was wondering if you two would walk me down the aisle.

JAMES
 Like, give you away?

LUCY
 Oh, honey, of course!

THEO
 Sam! Don't make them do that *together*. That's fucked up.

LUCY
 Calm down, Theo. We've been divorced a hundred years, it's fine.

THEO

(to James)

Do you want to do this?

SAM

(to James)

Dad, you're not "giving me away",
I'm not a girl. You're just walking
me down the aisle, and Brent's sisters
are walking him.

JAMES

But not his parents?

SAM

Dead, remember? So no.

JAMES

Well... I guess so. Sure.

LUCY

Of course, sure. We're doing it.

THEO

This is weird. You're all weird.

Theo exits.

LUCY

(re: Theo, sotto)

Something's up with him. Sam, go
find out what it is and call me back.

(off Sam not moving)

Now, Sam. Go now.

Sam, obedient, exits.

INT. JAMES'S NEW JERSEY HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sam finds Theo getting a beer.

SAM

So... apparently I have a friend in
Brooklyn named "Jesse," who --

THEO

(looking around)

Sam, shut up.

SAM

Annette's outside with Brent and the
boys. And now you have to tell me
who she is.

Theo checks out the window to be sure Annette and Brent are
playing with the twins in the yard. They are.

THEO

There's nothing to tell.

SAM

Right, that's why you lost your shit when I asked about her. Tell me!

Theo stops, considers a long beat, then:

THEO

I swear to God, this does not leave this kitchen or I'll sit on your chest and Chinese-torture you 'til you cry again. I fucking mean it.

ACTION MOVES FAST-FORWARD as Theo tells Sam what happened. Theo checks doorways and peeks out the window to make sure no one is coming while Sam reacts in surprise over and over.

STORYTELLER

Theo told Sam about Jesse, and Sam was as understanding as Theo thought he'd be.

ACTION SLOWS to REAL-TIME.

SAM

You're a pig. Why did you even open the door to this woman?

THEO

I needed to know what it was.

SAM

So dumb. When those situations come up, you ignore them. You made a commitment, in a church, in front of --

THEO

Jesus, how did I get the only moralistic homo as a brother? Life is grayer than that, Sam. Annette and I were not good, we got this whole baby thing going on, or not going on, I'm fucking forty-- if this isn't it, I need to know soon.

SAM

You're having a mid-life crisis.

THEO

Or, a mid-life... awakening. What's a better option? Do what Mom did to Dad? Spend thirty years with Annette, take the best years of her life, then dump her and move on?

SAM

Oh, stop being mad at mom, it's ridiculous. And so what if you and Annette aren't terrific all the time? That's a relationship.

THEO

Maybe. But it makes me feel dead. Like all the other kids are outside laughing and playing in the snow but I have to watch them through the window 'cause I have the flu.
(then, exasperated)
Whyyy are you getting married?

SAM

You want too much out of it. If you can like someone's personality when you don't want to fuck them, and fuck them when you can't stand their personality, you're golden.

THEO

Yikes.

SAM

Content is the goal, Theo.

THEO

Content blows. Why does everybody think they're so mature for accepting lives that may not actually be right for them? Why is it so wrong to expect "great"? To expect happiness?
(off Sam's eye roll)
Whatever. I don't even know why we're having this conversa --

James enters, they both go quiet. James grabs a beer from the fridge, opens it, and leans against the counter. Silence.

JAMES

Got it. You don't want me here.

James exits. When they're sure he's gone.

THEO

Look, Annette and I are good now, so... I know it'll sound weird to someone like you, you little nun, but I'm glad I did it. It made me better with her at home. Really.

SAM

We have friends who let each other "slip" from time to time.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

They say, "nothing makes you appreciate your romance like a little faux-mance."

THEO

Yes! Exactly. See? Why can't you be that kind of gay?

Theo has noticed something out the window. He stops to look. Sam crosses to see what he's looking at - it's Annette playing with Sam's TWIN BOYS (2), and BRENT (Sam's boyfriend).

THEO (CONT'D)

When she smiles like that, with your kids, I want to give her that life.

SAM

You're scared, Theo. You're staring down the barrel of a life like mine and you're freaked.

THEO

That has occurred to me.

SAM

I think you're braver than that.

As this lands with Theo, Annette looks up and catches his eye in the window. She smiles and waves. He smiles and waves back. There's definitely something there.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Theo hangs in the doorway of the living room, watching Annette work at the dining room table. She has no idea he's there.

STORYTELLER

That night, as Theo watched Annette work, he fondly remembered the moment they met...

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK/DEPT STORE - FLASHBACK - SEVEN YEARS AGO

Autumn. As Theo (morning coffee in hand) walks, he notices a department store display window where a WOMAN stands on a ladder, back to him, adjusting large "snowflakes" that hang from above. She's creating a beautiful Christmas scene.

He notices her ass... and slows down. At that second, she turns and catches him. It's ANNETTE, seven years ago. They lock eyes. He laughs, guilty. She hides a smile, offering a curt wave good-bye. Getting the message, he walks off.

As he turns, TWO MEN carrying a large mirror into the store walk in front of him.

He pauses to let them pass, noticing in the mirror's reflection that he can see Annette behind him, checking him out. He grins, turns back, catches her.

Flustered, Annette turns to get off the ladder, but her heel catches on a wrung and she falls -- sloppy, awful -- ending with her bumping her head on the glass. Theo runs back.

THEO

Holy shit! Are you okay?

Mortified, she gets herself to a seated position. The following plays in loud voices through the window.

ANNETTE

I'm fine, thank you.

THEO

You hit your head.

ANNETTE

Not really.

THEO

Yes, really. I heard it hit.

ELAINE (from seven years ago) rushes in.

ELAINE

Oh my God, you did fall.

(calling off)

Ronald! She fell! Get in here!

ANNETTE

Elaine, I'm fine. Don't make a big --

A Security Guard, RONALD, enters the window now.

RONALD

What the heck, woman?

Elaine notices Theo, still watching, now smiling.

~~ANNETTE~~

~~Not don't you see! Nothing to see!~~

THEO

Do you need ice or something?

ELAINE

We got this, thanks!

ANNETTE

Elaine, stop.

(yelling through window)

That's very nice, but I'm fine. Bye now. Have a nice day.

Theo watches as they help Annette out of the window display, into the store. He stands a bit, then turns and sees A BODEGA across the street. Getting an idea, he crosses toward it.

SAME - MINUTES LATER

Annette re-enters the window with a band-aid on her head. She notices something taped to the window.

INSERT, ANNETTE'S P.O.V.: Theo has taped A PACKET OF TYLENOL and a BUSINESS CARD to the outside of the window.

Annette smiles, charmed like mad.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

Theo watches Annette affectionately as she works at the table.

THEO

Hey. Come to bed.

ANNETTE

(without looking up)
Still studying.

THEO

Come on, honey, you need to sleep.
(a little flirty)
Or, you know... to come to bed.

Annette looks up, something vulnerable in her eyes.

ANNETTE

I can't. I'm too upset right now.

THEO

What? Why?

ANNETTE

What's going on with our baby, Theo?
Are we doing it or not?

THEO

You want to talk about this now?

ANNETTE

Yes, I do. I'm in your dad's house, playing with your nephews and I'm thinking, "I want this." So, what's the hold-up? Are you upset because your sperm got blamed? Do you need time to process that? Because it doesn't look like it. And, you know, we're not young.

(MORE)

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

So, if I can make it better, let me make it better, and if I can't -- if it's your usual Peter Pan crap -- just admit that so I can try to let it go and we can somehow... move on.

After a beat, Theo turns and exits into the bedroom.

STORYTELLER

Theo knew not to take the bait. It was late and Annette was tired.

He instantly re-enters, upset.

THEO

This is so us. I'm standing here feeling all this love for you while you're over there hating me.

ANNETTE

I'm not hating you, I'm fucking sad. And yes, a little mad, but --

THEO

Why is it always like this with us? Always off. This is what I worry about with a baby. This and--

ANNETTE

Wait, let me guess. Something about me not being able to take care of you in the middle of the night, how am I going to take care of a baby?

Theo's silence says it all. She nailed it.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Has it occurred to you that the reason I do all this is because my life feels empty, and if we had a baby, I'd have some actual *purpose*?

THEO

You want a baby to give your life purpose? That seems like a bad idea.

ANNETTE

Please. There's no unselfish reason to have a baby. At least we're adopting, and giving a child a home who wouldn't otherwise have one.

THEO

Some people have a baby to love it.

ANNETTE

And why, Theo? *So they can give their life purpose.* Still selfish. Could you stop pointing out reasons to not have a baby and find a reason to actually have one?

THEO

I'm sorry, but... this always feels like pressure -- pressure from you, pressure from how fucking old we are -- I want to make this decision from a good place. Not this one.

She just looks at him, almost defeated.

ANNETTE

You always have a reason.

She goes back to her work. After a beat:

THEO

You know what's so stupid? I've been really getting on board the idea. Especially today.

ANNETTE

You're always *getting* on board. When are you going to be on board? We're stuck, Theo.

THEO

I know. Let me try to get us unstuck.

She wants to believe him. She really does.

STORYTELLER

Theo decided to be a man of his word, and get his marriage "unstuck"...

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - THEO'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Theo and Becki look at his computer screen.

BECKI

Holy gorgeous, I want to go. That used to be a barn?

THEO

Yep, now it's a hotel and spa. I'm going to write about it so they're comp-ing everything.

BECKI

Bitch.

THEO

Nice. I'm surprising Annette, so it can be more of an event. Since I can't actually *make* the baby, I need to do something special.

Theo takes a manilla folder out of his briefcase.

THEO (CONT'D)

I just need a cool way to give her the adoption papers with my signature on. It's so sterile, so to speak.

BECKI

You're really going to do this, huh?

THEO

Yes. Becki, you know me-- I want to have every experience in life that's available to me.

BECKI

No, you don't. Just yesterday you said you'd never go to India.

THEO

Nobody wants to go to India. They just say they do and then act like they liked it. It's a shit hole.
(off her look)

I know when I see the baby, I'll be happy I did it.

BECKI

Will you be happy you did it with Annette?

THEO

Wow.

BECKI

Wow is right! Totally out of line! Shut up, Becki. Shut. Up.

She quickly exits, leaving him to digest that thought.

INT. PHOTO SHOOT - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

MALE MODELS surround a SHIRTLESS FEMALE MODEL. All are being primed as Theo, frustrated, stands to the side on his cell.

THEO

(into phone)

What about the weekend after that?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK / SUBWAY ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

Annette talks with Theo outside a subway entrance.

ANNETTE

I don't know. I have a mid-term
that Tuesday. I'll want to study.

THEO

And the weekend after that?

ANNETTE

I think that's the Girls Club event
I volunteered for. Which you're
supposed to come to. And the Fourth
of July windows will be starting --
(then, sneezes)
Ugh, I'm getting a goddamn cold.

THEO

(contains frustration)
That's three weekends you can't do.
Can you pick one you can? I'll make
it work, whenever.

Annette hears the TRAIN and starts down the stairs.

ANNETTE

Ugh, that's the train.

THEO

It will be good for us, I promise.
By the way, there's a cliff-diving
place nearby. We can finally try
that. Remember how we used to --

ANNETTE

Theo, I have to get to class.

THEO

Did you hear what I said?

ANNETTE

Yes, I'll pick a weekend, but I can't
do it now, okay? I can't just drop
everything and jump off a cliff when
you want to. You're such a *boy*.

THEO

Ease up, Annette. I'm trying to do
something good here. Something fun
for us. Remember when you were fun?

ANNETTE

You know what, Theo?!
(MORE)

ANNETTE (CONT'D)
 (thinks better of it)
 Forget it. I'm cranky, I'm sick, I
 have to go.

She hangs up and runs down the stairs. We stay with Theo,
 who hangs up too. He seethes as Becki approaches.

BECKI
 You should be leaving now.

THEO
 Remind me that relationships are
 complicated and hard and resentments
 are normal and everything's fine.

BECKI
 I'm more of the belief that it should
 be easy most of the time.

Theo glares at her, then crosses out. She follows.

EXT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

Theo exits with Becki, who trails behind.

THEO
 Where am I going?

BECKI
 Downtown. You're meeting my friend
 Paul who has a pitch for the magazine.

THEO
 On a Friday night? There's no way I
 agreed to this.

BECKI
 You did! Kinda-ish.

Theo stops dead. Just ahead, Jesse stands at a NEWSSTAND,
 her back to him. Theo just watches her, frozen. And torn.

BECKI (CONT'D)
 Don't be mad. Are you mad?

STORYTELLER
 Seeing Jesse, Theo knew the best
 thing to do was walk away.

THEO
 Jesse!

Jesse turns and sees him. She's surprised.

JESSE
 Oh my God. Theo. Hi.

THEO

What are you doing in midtown?

JESSE

I had a drink thing, but he canceled. Then I got lost in a design magazine because I hate my bathroom. What are you doing in midtown?

THEO

Our offices are upstairs.

JESSE

Oh. Duh. Makes sense.

They both just smile at each other. Becki nudges Theo.

THEO

Oh. Becki, my assistant, meet Jesse, my friend.

BECKI

Hi.

JESSE

Nice to meet you.

THEO

(to Becki)

Okay, you can go. See you Monday.

BECKI

Oh. I'm leaving now?

(off Theo's nod)

Alright. Bye.

Becki exits, turning back quickly with an eye of suspicion. Theo waits for her to go, then turns back to Jesse.

THEO

So... how are you? Are you good? You look good.

JESSE

Thanks, I am. You do too.

STORYTELLER

Theo knew there was one thing he shouldn't say at this moment.

THEO

You know, if you want, I actually have some time for a drink right now, since your guy canceled.

JESSE

Oh. Um. Well...

INT. BASEMENT BAR - LATER

Empty glasses on their table in a retro basement bar, with games like "Sorry", "Connect Four", "Battleship", etc. Theo and Jesse are buzzed, playing "Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots".

THEO	JESSE
No! You're going down!	That's it! Fall down.
Here it comes, here it--	Frigging fall, damn it!

Jesse's red boxer goes down, Theo is the victor! She falls back in his chair, mock-exhausted.

THEO
Yes! Three out of five! I win!

Theo falls back in his chair. Both are wiped out, laughing. SHAWNA (20s, waitress, gorgeous) passes by.

SHAWNA
Two more, guys?

THEO
Yes, please! Thanks, Shawna.

Jesse watches Shawna exit.

JESSE
She's hot. Does that do it for you?

THEO
Of course. But not at the moment.

Jesse takes the compliment, but decides to moves on.

JESSE
So... how are you and Annette?

THEO
Nice segue. We're great. Good. Today, shitty. But, you know, just our normal ups and downs. How's Chris?

JESSE
Good. He got an essay published about a month ago. It was nice seeing how much happier he'll be with a little success.

THEO
Cool. I know you weren't loving him not making any money.

JESSE
I hate that I said that to you.

THEO

You're not a bad person for wanting an equal partner in life, Jesse. I hope you know that.

She takes this in -- clearly it means something. Then:

THEO (CONT'D)

So, this guy you were meeting for drinks tonight. Is that, um...

JESSE

Professional contact. Owns a catering company, wants to use my desserts.

(then, teasing)

You were worried I was pursuing a little something on the side with someone else, weren't you?

THEO

Says the woman who wanted to know if I found the waitress hot.

JESSE

True! Total hypocrite.

Theo'S PHONE DINGS. He looks down at it.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(re: Theo's phone)

It's okay, take it, I gotta whiz.

(off his laugh)

Ugh, why do I speak? Why?

Jesse exits as he checks his phone. INSERT, THEO'S PHONE: From Becki, "Paul waiting for U. WTF??" He types back: "Shit. Apologize and resched. SORRY!"

INT. BAR BATHROOM - NIGHT - SECONDS LATER

Jesse applies lipstick in the mirror. She stops, looks at herself right in the eyes. What am I doing?

STORYTELLER

Jesse knew she was walking a fine line with Theo, but she comforted herself with the knowledge that Chris had recently begun trading messages with an ex-girlfriend on facebook.

She snaps out of it and recommits to the lipstick.

INT. BASEMENT BAR - NIGHT

Theo texts Annette. INSERT: "Have a drinks thing, hope you're not too sick."

STORYTELLER

And Theo let himself off the hook because he was sure Annette hated him. Still, he chose to over-do it with the x's and o's...

INSERT: Theo types "xoxoxox". Then more, "oxoxoxoxo".

SAME - A LITTLE LATER

Shawna drops their drinks and exits. As they sip:

JESSE

Can I ask you something intimate?

THEO

I should probably say "no," so yes.

JESSE

You still think it's impossible to... only eat steak for the rest of your life?

THEO

Well, first, why pretend we're talking about steak, right?

(off her laugh)

I guess my answer is: I'm trying not to think about it at all.

JESSE

That's what we do, isn't it? We just ignore that stuff. I love Chris, but even now, when we're good, I think, "Can I do this 'til I'm dead?"

THEO

I love when women say this. It makes me feel like less of an asshole.

JESSE

We're not assholes. We're human. I want love, I want intimacy, I want a best friend who's my partner. I also want passion and great sex. I want to be a parent, but I want to work. I want time and money to travel, but I also want a home with my family. And in a perfect world I'd have an apartment all my own where I can go be alone. Or, you know, *not* be alone now and then.

THEO

I agree with all of that. Except some of the intimacy. Sharing a bathroom kills something in us all.

JESSE

True. Does everyone feel like this?

THEO

They have to. But the world is set up a certain way and eventually, I guess, we all give into it. God knows marriage isn't easy, but I think it can have its *subtler* rewards.

JESSE

Do you really think that?

THEO

I'm trying so hard to!

They laugh, then sit with that shared truth for a moment.

EXT. WEST VILLAGE SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Theo and Jesse walk, sharing a bag of chips.

JESSE

It was gorgeous, actually. Humid as hell, but I snorkeled and zip-lined --

THEO

Snorkeling freaks me out. I have to spin around in the water constantly to check for sharks behind me.

JESSE

That's adorable and hilarious.

THEO

Well, in order to preserve my manhood, I should tell you I'm trying to get Annette to go cliff-diving, so...

JESSE

I love cliff-diving! I want to go! I mean, not with you two, obviously, but I went once with friends and loved it. Chris isn't into it. I chose an intellectual over an adventurer. Fell in love with his brain. And it's a great brain.

THEO

Annette says she grew out of it all. And she thinks I should have too.

JESSE

Why? That's dumb. Grow out of picking your nose, not this stuff.

THEO

Well, I also pick my nose sometimes.

Jesse laughs as Theo spots something off-screen.

THEO (CONT'D)

Hey. You want to do something fun?

JESSE

Always.

Theo gestures to a BASKETBALL COURT they've come across. There's an abandoned ball tucked under a bench.

THEO

Quick game of HORSE? Sober us up?

Theo runs to the court, takes off his coat, picks up the ball and starts dribbling. Jesse watches, then joins him.

JESSE

Okay, but how about a wager?

THEO

Fifty bucks?

JESSE

I was actually thinking: if you win, the world is right. We all have one person we're supposed to be with forever, even if it's a lot of work and sometimes pretty boring.

THEO

When did that become my thing?

JESSE

Apparently, recently. But if I win: life is adventure and experience and there's more than one right person out there for each of us and we should be able to have whatever we want.

Jesse looks right in his eyes. He holds her gaze. He knows what she's doing, what she's implying. And he loves it.

THEO

You're on.

Theo turns right where he is and shoots. He makes it.

JESSE

Nice. Very slick.

Jesse gets the ball and walks to Theo. They're closer than they've been all night, which they both notice. A beat, and he gives her space. She focuses... and shoots. It's good.

THEO

Uh-oh.

JESSE

I have moments. My turn.

Jesse grabs the ball and dribbles a little. She then deftly performs a pretty sexy lay-up.

THEO

You set me up! You're good!

JESSE

Dad played in college and then didn't get any sons. Hit it.

She tosses him the ball. He tries the lay-up... and misses.

JESSE (CONT'D)

H for you! The lady takes the lead!

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Jesse turns away from the basket and throws backwards over her head. She misses.

-- Theo spins twice (as Jesse laughs) and shoots from the foul line. He makes it. Jesse tries the shot and makes it.

-- Jesse shoots; Theo shoots. They miss some, they make some. Occasionally PEOPLE stop to watch and cheer one of them on. Clearly, they're having a great time throughout.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Jesse takes the ball. She contemplates her next move.

THEO

(a la announcer)

All tied at H-O-R-S, with Jesse stealthily contemplating her next shot. The next person to miss, loses the game. Who will it --

Jesse rushes the net for another lay-up... and makes it.

THEO (CONT'D)

Whoa! You already made that shot.

JESSE

Yeah, and you missed it.

She throws him the ball. He catches it.

THEO

You can't do the same shot twice.

JESSE

Who called "no repeats"?

THEO

Now that's competitive.

JESSE

Only when it's for a good cause.

THEO

The cause of hedonism and lawlessness
and an end to structured society?

JESSE

The cause of true happiness. Of
allowing yourself to have love in
abundance. And if you miss, I win.

Theo takes a deep breath, prepping for his shot. He shakes out his arms and legs to get loose. He then focuses again. He starts dribbling. Then he charges the basket and leaps...

FREEZE FRAME: Theo, mid-air. Jesse, watching.

STORYTELLER

Suddenly, Theo and Jesse worried
about the implications of their bet.

ANGLE ON: THEO'S FACE, VERY FOCUSED ON HIS SHOT, TONGUE OUT.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

Yes, it was a silly bet, but Theo
needed to win to validate the choices
he was making with Annette.

ANGLE ON: JESSE'S FACE, APPREHENSIVE.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

And Jesse wasn't sure *what* she wanted.
If she won, would it confirm her
fear that her relationship was doomed?

Resume NORMAL SPEED as Theo shoots. The ball hits the rim. Theo lands and turns to see the ball circling the rim a few times... and eventually... falling out.

JESSE

No way. I won.

THEO

You did.

They stand in silence for a bit.

JESSE

Now what?

THEO

I don't know. I guess, now, life can be whatever you want it to be. The walls of tradition just crumbled around us, and you made it happen.

JESSE

I did, didn't I?

THEO

Yep. What's your life going to look like now, Jesse? The world is your oyster. What do you want?

Jesse stares at him. The tension is thick. It's hard to tell who is anticipating this answer more. Then, simply:

JESSE

I don't know. I'm not sure.

He's surprised to see a tear in her eye. And then a few more. She's trying to hold them in, but it's not working.

THEO

Jesse...

JESSE

Maybe I'm not cut out for no rules, huh? Maybe it's too much for me.

THEO

It's too much for a lot of people. That's why no one lives that way.

JESSE

What if it's you, Theo?

He freezes. She said what he wanted to hear, but...

JESSE (CONT'D)

I mean, we both feel it, right? And you're the one who opened this door. But then you left the room. And sometimes I feel like I'm still in there, waiting for you to come back.

She's wiping away tears. He quickly yanks off his loosened tie and hands it to her. She uses it as a tissue.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You know, I'm not a bad kisser. I was nervous in the hotel that night. I think about that. I kissed bad.

THEO

No, you didn't. That kiss was insane.

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

Why do you think I stopped? It could have wrecked my whole life.

JESSE

Oh. But, see, when you say stuff like that it makes me wonder why we're not more than this.

THEO

Because we have other lives.

JESSE

I know, but... you asked if I was 100% sure I'm living the right life and I'm not. Are you?

Jesse stops and waits. Theo chooses his words carefully.

THEO

If I met you and I was single, I'd be thrilled out of my goddamn head. I wouldn't believe my luck, but--

JESSE

I don't love how this happened either, Theo, but maybe the Universe gives you options when you need options. Sometimes people meet when they're in relationships and it sucks and you hate yourself and everyone thinks you're awful. But they don't *know*. And you get over it and you get happy because love wins. It has to.

Theo is overwhelmed -- she's not saying anything he hasn't felt, or thought. He wants to run away and be in love, but...

THEO

I got clear, Jesse. I did. And...
(considers, then)
I'm going ahead with the baby.

JESSE

Whoa. You are?

THEO

Yes. And I'm sorry, this is my fault! I asked you for a drink tonight, and--

JESSE

It's hardly your fault. My god, I can't believe I'm saying this to you when you decided to have a baby! Why didn't you tell me earlier?

THEO

I should have. But we were having such a good time and I get so fucking confused when I'm with you!

A beat, then Jesse abruptly grabs her coat.

JESSE

I have to go before more words come out of your mouth. I suddenly feel like they're all going to be bad. And can you not contact me for, like, an "are you okay" text or anything? Can we please just leave this here?
(before he can speak)
No talking. Just nod yes.

A beat passes as she waits. Reluctantly, he nods yes. They just stand there, feeling all kinds of shit with nowhere to put it. No way to have it. Eventually, she turns to go.

THEO

Jesse--

JESSE

No. Please don't say anything. I can tell it's going to be sweet and that would be awful right now.

It was, so he holds his tongue. Jesse walks off. He can only watch as she hails a cab, gets in, and drives off. He stands there, clearly and completely rattled.

STORYTELLER

The second Jesse left, Theo's mind went to work. He told himself he didn't *really* lead her on.

Through Theo's POV, we see the world around him instantly pick up speed - PEOPLE, CARS, ALL OF IT passes by in a BLUR.

EXT. NYC WEST VILLAGE STREET - SECONDS LATER

Theo walks, pensive, as the WORLD WHIZZES BY HIM.

STORYTELLER

He told himself he only felt better with Jesse than he did with Annette because he and Jesse don't have to deal with the pressures of marriage.

A DIFFERENT STREET - SECONDS LATER

Theo continues his walk, the WORLD FLIES BY.

STORYTELLER

He told himself it was good that he brought up the baby. Telling Jesse somehow made it more real. Which he wanted to do, to make the baby real.

Theo turns and enters a building.

INT. BASEMENT BAR - SECONDS LATER

The bar from earlier in the night. In sudden REAL-TIME, Theo enters and grabs a pack of matches from a bowl.

STORYTELLER

And yet he found himself back at the bar picking up a book of matches so he could hold onto something from this night.

He pockets the matches and crosses to exit.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT - SAME

Jesse rides, eyes wet with tears. She watches the buildings pass by out the window, but she's not really seeing anything.

STORYTELLER

Meanwhile, Jesse beat herself up. Why did she make up that stupid bet in the first place?

EXT. NYC STREET / BODEGA - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Jesse exits her cab and enters the bodega.

STORYTELLER

And why can't she just be happy with Chris? He's a wonderful person.

SAME - A MINUTE LATER

Jesse exits the bodega, taking a cigarette out of a new pack.

STORYTELLER

And does she love Theo, or does she simply love that he's *not* Chris?

She lights up, takes a long inhale.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

All she knew for certain was that she brought this on herself and deserved whatever horrible thing was now happening in her lungs.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - LATER

Theo enters quietly to find his home silent and dark. Then, A NOISE. He turns to the KITCHEN to see Annette putting a Pop-Tart in the toaster. She looks up, seemingly half-asleep.

ANNETTE

(slurry)

Hey. When'd you get home?

THEO

Why are you in the dark?

She absorbs this info, then flips the switch - but misses. She has to flip it again. And a third time. Finally, light.

THEO (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

ANNETTE

Ambien and Nyquil. I'm sick.

(re: pop tarts)

Why are these taking so long?! I hate this new toaster!

She manhandles the toaster. He pulls it away from her.

THEO

Hey, hey, hey, you just put them in.

ANNETTE

No! Did I?

THEO

Yes. And be careful, that's a \$500 toaster. It's designed by Starck.

ANNETTE

Can't you just be happy with the stuff we already have? Does it always have to be new, better stuff?

Theo stops. If she only knew.

THEO

You have to go to bed. You can't take Ambien and stay awake.

ANNETTE

I like it. I can't feel nothin'.

She laughs at her own grammar mistake. Her laugh makes her a little dizzy - she grabs the counter for support. He wraps his arm around her shoulder and guides her toward the bedroom.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

I'm a big bitch to you, huh?

THEO

Let's not talk now.

ANNETTE

I am. I'm sorry, but I don't get it. We both wanted kids when we met, and then, you know... fail. And now I don't know *where* you are. I think maybe I resent you 'cause I have no power.

(considering)

That must be it because saying it made me mad again.

(big breath, then)

Sorry. I need to let it go.

THEO

Honey, it's not your fault. I've made my share of mistakes, too.

ANNETTE

Yeah. You have.

(smiles, then)

Wait. Something big, you mean?

She looks him in the eye. He weighs his options.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Actually, don't tell me. If it's big, I want to remember to hurt you and right now you have three heads and that song "Word Up" is playing on a loop in my head.

She wanders into the bedroom. He dodged a bullet.

THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Theo helps her into bed.

ANNETTE

Do we have a bad marriage? Be honest.

THEO

Not "bad", no. Just...

ANNETTE

Different than it was.

They share a look of understanding. That says it.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Sometimes I don't like you, but I still love you, and I need you. You balance me.

THEO

Yeah. Same, I guess.

She smiles, closes her eyes. As she dozes, she FARTS loud.

ANNETTE

I farted.

THEO

I know.

ANNETTE

But you still have to love me. That's what relationships are. You have to love people when they fart.

THEO

Yep.

Annette offers some MUMBLE of contentment as she dozes off. He watches her sleep. Then, she FARTS again in her sleep. He rolls his eyes and exits-- that's enough.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

Theo gets a glass of water, then leans against the counter to drink it. He takes the MATCHES out of his pocket, turns them over a few times in his hand. Then, he notices a POST-IT on the coffee maker. He crosses, peels it off and reads:

INSERT: the POST-IT reads: "Second weekend in June. Let's go then. I'll make it work. A. XO"

He looks back at the matches -- what the fuck am I doing?

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jesse stands at her door. She takes a deep breath to calm herself. Then she opens the door to find...

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Chris, pants around his ankles, masturbating at the table. PORN SOUNDS emanate from his computer. He jumps up, pulling on his pants as she reacts, wincing.

JESSE

Oh, God. Really?

CHRIS

Shit. Sorry!

JESSE

I thought you'd be in bed!

CHRIS

I couldn't sleep.

Chris yanks up his jeans and pulls himself together.

JESSE
 (re: computer)
 Can you pause that, please?

CHRIS
 I'll close it. I don't need to do it now. I didn't even want to. I only did it because I was depressed.

JESSE
 (under her breath)
 Of course you were.

CHRIS
 What?

Jesse considers where she wants to take this. Then:

JESSE
 I said of course you were. You're always depressed, Chris.

CHRIS
 I'm not *always* depressed. And what did the therapist say? We're not supposed to use words like "always"?

JESSE
 Well, I "always" hate it when you bring our therapist into our fights.

CHRIS
 Okay, whatever's going on with you lately, I don't know why you have to take it out on me.

JESSE
 I'm not "taking it out on you", it's *about* you.

CHRIS
 What does that mean?

Jesse takes a beat. Can she finally say this? To him?

JESSE
 We need you to get a job, Chris.

CHRIS
 Oh. Who's "we"? Is "we" you?

JESSE
 No, we is *us*. And it's not because I pay for everything. It's more complicated than-- I just think we'll both be happier.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

You're not getting approval for what you love to do and it's bad for you.

CHRIS

It is, huh?

JESSE

(slowly coming undone)

Yes. And the money stuff just shines a big ugly light on this screwed-up power dynamic we both hate. It's not good and it makes me uncomfortable and so does this conversation. I feel really gross right now. But I want a partner, Chris, and it's okay for me to want that.

CHRIS

There are tons of ways I contribute around here, you know.

JESSE

I do. But it's hard to hear "this job will depress me" or "this is a sell-out job". Maybe you could sell-out a little now. And write.

They lock eyes. Then, worried about what she's said, Jesse covers her face.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

CHRIS

Don't. You said it, it's what you feel. Don't apologize now.

Chris starts to exit. But he stops for:

CHRIS (CONT'D)

There isn't some perfect relationship where people don't have shit to deal with, Jesse. That doesn't exist. What do you think is out there?

She looks up, almost wanting to tell him. But he turns and exits. She hears the door open, then close. She's spent. She falls on the bed. This whole night took too much.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - THE NEXT DAY

People enter and exit courts, grab water, hit balls. On one court, Theo plays a point with Coleman, who's clearly in charge, smacking the ball to the corners, forcing a frantic Theo to run left, then right, then left, etc.

COLEMAN

Run it down... that's it, nice get...
head down on the backhand...

Coleman hits to Theo's forehand. Theo gets to the ball and tries to whip it down the line - his favorite shot. It sails over the fence and into the other court behind them.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

You did it again.

THEO

What?

COLEMAN

I have you stretched wide on your forehand, your *weaker* shot, and you try to pound it down the line? That's a bad decision.

THEO

And my racket face was open.

COLEMAN

Yes, but mostly just a bad decision.

THEO

And I wasn't balanced.

COLEMAN

And it was a bad decision.

THEO

I get it! I made a bad decision! I make a lot of bad decisions, okay?! It's kinda my fucking thing!

Theo smashes his racket on the court. It breaks, ugly.

COLEMAN

Talk about unbalanced.

Theo just stares at Coleman. His head might explode.

INT. NEW YORK CITY GYM - SAME

Jesse, in shades, walks to the counter. Ana (from the opening scene) whispers to a CO-WORKER.

ANA

(re: Jesse)

This bitch is nuts. Trust.

(then, to Jesse)

Morning. Can I get your I.D. number?

JESSE

Six-five-three-- You know what, Ana?
I'm here five days a week. You should
know my damn number by now, or just
let me pass because you see me here
ALL THE TIME!

(composing herself)

Forget it. I can't do this today.

Jesse turns and exits. Ana turns to her co-worker.

ANA

See? Whacka-doodle-do.

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sam feeds the currently loud and cranky twins, BLAKE and OSCAR, at the same time. Theo, stressed, pours himself tequila and empties a bag of to-go food for him and Sam.

SAM

I thought this was over.

THEO

It was! And I wanted it to be, I swear, but... I did think about her. And then I just run into her on the street right after Annette and I have another fight?! I'm not one of those "universe it telling you something" people, but... is it?

(then, frustrated)

Aah! I need an epiphany or something!

SAM

An epiphany is not a thing.

Oscar pushes his plate off the high-chair tray. It BANGS on the floor, food goes everywhere.

SAM (CONT'D)

Oscar, why?

Sam cleans up the mess as Theo holds up a to-go container.

THEO

I got a salad with chicken and you ordered yourself lasagna and cannoli?

SAM

Well, you're out there dating, so --

THEO

Not funny. Can we just split all three?

SAM

No, if you wanted lasagna and cannoli, you should have ordered it.

THEO

But I didn't know I wanted it until I saw it next to my plain ol' salad.

SAM

Well, tough.

THEO

Come on! Split with me.

SAM

No.

THEO

Just give me some! I don't want to sit here eating something healthy and boring while you're going to town on something fun and delicious!

Sam just looks at Theo for a bit. Then:

SAM

You heard that, right?

THEO

Yes! My marriage is salad and Jesse is lasagna and cannoli and I have serious issues!

(then, positive spin)

Except that lasagna and cannoli are bad for you and we don't know that Jesse is bad for me.

SAM

Yes, we do. She's carbs, fat and sugar. Your salad has protein and micro-nutrients you can't even see.

THEO

But I'm saying she's not lasagna and-- whatever. Why do I come here?

SAM

'Cause you want to do the right thing and you know that's what I'll say.

Theo stops and thinks: is that why?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - SAME

Jesse, red-eyed and very emotional, sits with Dr. Gregory.

JESSE

... and I'm standing there looking at bathrooms in a magazine, thinking, "I wonder which one Theo would like" and he just walks up? How is that not the universe telling me something?

DR. GREGORY

Is it possible Theo simply represents what you're missing with Chris?

JESSE

Well... yes. I guess.

DR. GREGORY

And is it possible you could get into a relationship with Theo and eventually have issues with him? Maybe he works *too much*. Maybe he's a racist. These are just examples.

JESSE

Yes, it's *possible*. But is it possible Theo and I will handle our problems better than me and Chris? Is it possible that's *why* I'm drawn to him? Because we're actually better for each other?

DR. GREGORY

Yes, that's possible too. I suppose it's all possible.

JESSE

I hate therapy sometimes. No offense, but it's like, why? You know? Why?

Dr. Gregory hides his hurt. Barely.

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - SAME

Sam is now holding Oscar, who's crying.

SAM

Oh! By the way, we want you to buy us steak knives for our wedding.

THEO

Steak knives for your wedding. What brought that up now?

SAM

I was thinking, "What do I get for indulging Theo's mid-life crisis," then I remembered Brent saying, "have Theo buy our new steak knives, he'll know the best ones."

THEO

Fair enough.

Blake loudly smashes a wooden spoon on his high-chair tray.

SAM

(to Theo, re: Blake)

Can you pick him up? That's what he wants.

Theo picks up Blake, who squirms and whines.

THEO

Sam, how do you do this? The noise, the mess, someone needing you all the time. And that tequila. What is that? You need better tequila.

SAM

A) Not everyone cares if they're drinking the *right* tequila. And B) Don't confuse Annette with this life. If you put all this on her, she can't win. And I love her, so...

INT. DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - SAME

Jesse fiddles with a throw pillow. Dr. Gregory waits.

JESSE

How do you know if you're running toward something better, or just away from something difficult?

DR. GREGORY

Jesse, there is a silver lining here. You've wanted to tell Chris to get a job for a while, and you did it.

JESSE

It wasn't my plan to get drunk and spew that demand at him after professing my love to another man. This is hardly a triumph.

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

It's quiet now. Oscar plays on the floor. Theo and Sam sit on the sofa. Blake has fallen asleep on Theo's chest.

THEO

God, his breath on my neck...

SAM

Best thing in the world. When he does that with me, I feel, like, straight-up love. 100% Pure.

Theo digests that as BRENT (30s, former party boy), enters with a shopping bag. He doesn't see Theo.

BRENT

Sam, wait 'til you see the suits I got the boys for the wedding.

(noticing)

Theo, hey. What are you doing here?

SAM

He saw that Jesse girl again.

THEO

Sam, why?!

SAM

Because we're in a relationship and we don't keep secrets from each other.

BRENT

Yeah, right. Try getting me to tell you how much I paid for these suits.

(then, to Theo)

My two cents? You should have slept with her. Then you'd be over it.

It's the pull of the unknown that keeps you messed up.

THEO

That has occurred to me.

SAM

(to Brent)

I don't love that theory coming out of you.

INT. DR. GREGORY'S OFFICE - SAME

Jesse is now overcome. Tears in her eyes, the whole thing.

JESSE

When you say, "I love two people" it sounds like a good thing. Like... abundance. But this feels awful.

(then)

Does Chris deserve to know all this?

DR. GREGORY

Chris deserves to be with someone who wants to be with him.

That hits Jesse in the gut. Is that her?

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - BOYS BEDROOM - LATER

Theo watches as Sam and Brent put the sleeping boys in their cribs. A sweet family scene. Sam turns and crosses to Theo.

SAM

I wish I had something smart to say.

THEO

(playful)

Me too. Just once in your life.

SAM

Okay, how 'bout this? You've pretty much gotten everything you wanted and you don't know how to lose. You're everybody's favorite, especially mom and dad. You don't *really* know this Jesse, you're just afraid to grow up and be a father and let go of the ridiculous fantasy life you sell in that magazine -- the vacations, the girls, the super cool iPhone docks. I'm glad it kinda makes you happy, and thanks for the money you loaned us to buy the eggs to make our sons, but *grow up now*. You'll enjoy it more than you think. I'm sure Annette has options, too, by the way, and she's not going to wait around forever.

Theo is stunned. As is Brent. After a beat:

THEO

You hate me.

SAM

I love you. But go home.

Theo gives Sam a "you're scary" look, then turns away into:

THE LIVING ROOM

As he crosses, a shelf full of PHOTOS catches his eye. He stops and picks one up. It's Annette, holding Oscar and Blake when they were born. She has a huge smile on her face, one baby in each arm. Theo, James, Sam and Brent surround her and the twins. This is his family. He can't deny it.

He then notices an old photo, from the 1980s. It's clearly him and Sam as kids, 8 and 10, with a YOUNG JAMES.

Something hits him. Hard. His eyes fill with tears.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - THEO'S OFFICE - TWO DAYS LATER

Theo sits at his desk. He slips documents, one by one, into a very cool-looking photo album. Becki enters on a mission.

BECKI

So, you blew off my friend for that girl, didn't you? Who is she?

THEO

("calmly")

Becki, this is Jacob, my adoption lawyer.

Theo gestures to JACOB (50s, professional) on the sofa.

BECKI

Oh, shit. I mean, shucks. Hi.

JACOB

Hello.

THEO

Can you excuse me one second?

Theo, photo album in hand, ushers Becki out of the office.

BECKI

Sorry, I didn't know he was in there. Wait -- your adoption lawyer?!

THEO

Yeah. I'm doing it.

BECKI

Really? Now?

THEO

I was at Sam's this weekend and I saw this picture of me and him as kids, with my dad. I'm already ten years older than my dad was then, and we were practically teenagers. I'm letting my life slip away and it's time to move forward.

BECKI

Okay...

THEO

Look --

Theo shows her the photo album. It's full of signed adoption papers -- Theo's fresh signature next to Annette's old one.

THEO (CONT'D)

These are copies, actually. Jacob has the originals. But don't say anything to Annette, still a surprise for our trip. And check this out.

Theo turns to the back page of the photo album. It's empty, but for the four corners that will hold a photo in place.

THEO (CONT'D)

The last page is for a photo of the baby. When it comes. How'd I do?

BECKI

Wow. I had this whole story in my head with that chick from the other night. You know... Annette's a type-A pain, wants a baby, here comes this cute new thing with a little more time on her clock -- biological and otherwise. Theo's jumping ship.

THEO

(after a beat)

Wrong.

Theo smiles tightly, then walks back into his office.

STORYTELLER

Over the next few weeks...

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Theo, in a tux, waits as Annette comes out of the bathroom in a gown, looking beautiful.

STORYTELLER

... Theo devoted his life to the decisions he'd made. Both at home...

ANNETTE

Thanks for doing this. I know you hate these low-rent non-profit things.

THEO

You want me there, I'm there.

(off her look)

What? I can be unselfish.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Theo is gathered with his STAFF, including Ethan and Reid.

STORYTELLER

... and at work.

REID

Seriously, I think it would make a good article. Guys worry about this.

ETHAN

"Can you break your penis?"

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I don't want to think about that.
Or publish it. Quick, somebody pitch
something else, I'm getting chills
in my taint.

THEO

"Cool baby stuff". There are tons
of dads out there who have taste,
and also have babies. What's a cool
bassinet, a diaper bag that doesn't
look like a purse...

REID

That's lame.

ETHAN

I don't think it's terrible.

REID

(on a dime)

Well, I guess if we do it *right*...

THEO

Wow. Talk about a broken penis.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Theo walks, Ethan sidles up beside him.

ETHAN

Baby stuff, huh? Is this with the
wife, or your...

(makes air quotes)

... "brother's friend" from Brooklyn?

THEO

Don't make air quotes. Air quotes
are out.

ETHAN

Who says?

THEO

We did. August, two-thousand eight.
(checks wall clock)

Jesus, how is it five-thirty already?!

Theo rushes off.

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Theo walks with Annette, she holds his arm.

STORYTELLER

Theo was growing content. And working
hard to be content with that.

ANNETTE

I'm getting excited to go away.

THEO

Good food, good wine, cliff-diving.

ANNETTE

I did not agree to that!

THEO

Fine. We'll have bad wine.

She laughs as TWO WOMEN walk toward them with grocery bags. The first woman enters a building, but the second stops:

WOMAN (O.S.)

Theo?? Oh, my God! Yay!

Theo looks up to see MARY ANN (33, his former assistant, vintage cute) running toward him to hug him.

THEO

Mary Ann? How are you?

MARYANN

Amazing! Six months sober, aaaand...
(holds up ring finger)
I'm engaged!

THEO

That's great. Congrats. Annette, you remember Mary Ann.

ANNETTE

How could I forget the woman who reminded you to buy me flowers on our anniversary?

MARY ANN

Ha! True. Hey, what are you doing now? We're having a little engagement party upstairs and I've talked about you a bunch -- come meet my fiance.

FREEZE on Theo:

STORYTELLER

Theo's mind raced with one terrifying thought.

EXT. FEAST OF SAN GENNARO - FLASHBACK

From the night Theo and Jesse met. Chris is there.

JESSE

We're Jesse and Chris. We met here a few years ago, through MaryAnn.

ACTION REWINDS to replay instantly:

JESSE (CONT'D)
We met here a few years ago, through
MaryAnn.

A THIRD TIME:

JESSE (CONT'D)
-- through MaryAnn.

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE
Annette turns to Mary Ann before Theo can answer.

ANNETTE
Sure. We can do that. Let's go.

THEO
Well... wait. How big a party are
we talking? We don't want to crash
some intimate dinner thing.

MARY ANN
It's super casual. Come on! I used
to trim your ear hair before meetings,
this is the least you can do!

Theo hides his alarm as Mary Ann pulls him to the door.

INT. MARY ANN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Theo, Annette and Mary Ann enter the small space. Lots of
smoking PARTY-ERS. Theo subtly searches the crowd.

MARY ANN
Sorry about the smoke. Bunch of AA
friends -- which I shouldn't say.
Duh. Let me find Diego. Two secs.

When she's gone, Annette turns to Theo:

ANNETTE
We have emphysema now, from this one
party.

THEO
A quick hello and we're gone.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Theo?

Theo turns to see Chris. Uh-oh.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Hey. It's Chris, remember?

THEO
 (dying inside)
 Of course. Hi. Annette, Chris.

CHRIS
 (to Annette)
 I don't know if you remember, but we met at San Gennaro years ago. We talked about how much we loved *The Book Thief* and how much we hated --

CHRIS (CONT'D)	ANNETTE
<i>A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.</i>	<i>A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius!</i>

ANNETTE (CONT'D)
 I do remember!
 (having fun)
 How could I forget an attractive man who agrees with me?

Chris laughs. Theo reacts: what was that?

CHRIS
 Jesse! Come here!

JESSE (O.S.)
 One second!

Theo goes a little white as he follows Chris's eyes to the Jesse, turned away, across the room. As Jesse turns toward them (holding three drinks), the IMAGE FREEZES:

STORYTELLER
 Theo didn't want Chris and Annette to see Jesse's reaction when she saw him, so he had to improvise.

ACTION RESUMES. Just as Jesse turns and spots Theo, he "sneezes" LOUD. Both Chris and Annette turn toward Theo.

ANNETTE	CHRIS
Sweet Lord, Theo.	Wow.

THEO
 Sorry. Must be the smoke.

Jesse quickly covers any anxiety before Chris turns back.

CHRIS
 Babe, look who it is.

JESSE
 Hey, I wondered if you might be here.

THEO

We actually weren't invited. Just ran into Mary Ann on the street. And we're only staying a minute. She wants me to meet the fiance.

JESSE

Oh. Cool. Well, hello. And...
(re: drinks)
I have to get these to some friends on the roof, so... nice seeing you.

ANNETTE

You too.

Jesse and Theo exchange a tight smile before she exits, which Annette notices.

CHRIS

So, what's been going on? You still at the magazine?

Suddenly, MaryAnn is there.

MARY ANN

Diego's on the roof. Come.

Mary Ann grabs Theo and drags him to the roof.

ANNETTE

("hurt", to Chris)
Well, then. I guess Mary Ann doesn't care if I meet Diego.

CHRIS

His name's Diego, you know all you need to know.

Annette laughs, charmed by him.

ANNETTE

So, where can I get a drink?

CHRIS

Not here. Bunch of alcoholics.

ANNETTE

Ugh, really? How is she calling this a party then?

Chris laughs now. These two are having a ball. Meanwhile:

EXT. MARY ANN'S ROOF - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Theo is with Mary Ann and DIEGO (30, hot, ethnic). Nearby, Jesse excuses herself from a conversation with FRIENDS and walks toward the building entrance.

Seeing this, Theo excuses himself and crosses to catch up to Jesse.

THEO

Hey, Jesse.

She turns, then subtly checks to see if anyone's watching.

THEO (CONT'D)

It's okay.

JESSE

I feel like every single person here can read my thoughts right now.

THEO

Me too. But they can't.

(then)

Just in case, let's turn around.

They face out, away from the party. Theo points at something.

THEO (CONT'D)

See? I'm just pointing something out to you, like a building, or --

JESSE

Please stop. I feel sick right now. Just seeing her... I feel awful and anxious and mean.

THEO

I felt the same way seeing Chris. And I'm sorry. Mary Ann literally dragged me up here. And then when I saw you, I couldn't just leave and say nothing, that seemed ridiculous.

JESSE

This is too scary, Theo. We shouldn't talk. Besides, we got some time and distance -- which is what we wanted, right? So, let's not mess that up.

Theo is torn: stung by what she's said, but certain she's right. She looks at him: please go. As he's about to oblige:

CHRIS

Hey, you two!

They turn to see Chris and Annette approaching, all smiles.

ANNETTE

Fresh air, thank God. Okay, turns out this is a dry party, so Chris and I were thinking...

CHRIS

Impromptu double date. Come on.
We'll duck out on the DL.

Theo and Jesse subtly react: aren't these two fast friends?

JESSE

Oh, I don't know. I'd love to, but
I'm not feeling great.

CHRIS

Because you're starving. You said
so an hour ago. We'll get food.
Come on, I've been writing all day,
I can't go back home. Theo?

ANNETTE

Please, like he ever turns down a
chance to go out for a drink.
(off Theo's look)
It's true, you're always buying work
people drinks. Tonight, you're buying
me one. You're buying us all one.

Annette smiles and grabs Theo's arm. Theo and Jesse hide
their terror.

EXT. NYC STREET - MINUTES LATER

Theo and Annette walk a short distance behind Jesse and Chris.

THEO

Since when are you such a social
butterfly?

ANNETTE

I'm being fun. You said I forgot
how to be fun and you weren't *wrong*.
(then)
And that girl clearly has a thing
for you. Surely you want to hang
around for some of that ego stroke.

THEO

What? No. Don't cause trouble.

ANNETTE

Don't pretend you don't notice. I
saw it the first time we met them.
Thank God she's a little dumb or we
would not be doing this.

Annette smiles, mischievously. Theo just "laughs" along.

ANGLE ON : JESSE AND CHRIS, SPEAKING IN HUSHED TONES

JESSE

I guess I just wanted to be alone
with you tonight.

CHRIS

He works at a magazine, Jess. I
mean, yeah, he's kind of a douche,
but maybe he can help me out.

JESSE

You don't want to write for some
trendy men's magazine.

CHRIS

I do now. You buy Mary Ann's gift
and I act like I had something to do
with it. I hate that. I want to be
more of a partner, like you said.

JESSE

Which is sweet, but... it'll be so
weird to sit there while you network.

CHRIS

You asked for this, Jesse. And now
you're being weird and kinda cold to
them. What's going on?

JESSE

(uh-oh)

Nothing. I'm probably just hungry,
like you said. And I should be more
supportive, so... I'm good. Sorry.

Chris is satisfied. He wraps his arm around her and kisses
her forehead. In the b.g., Theo takes note of this affection.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT - AN HOUR LATER

Theo, Annette, Jesse and Chris sit drinking and eating.
They're all a little buzzed, genuinely enjoying themselves.

ANNETTE

(to Jesse and Chris)

Paris is amazing, you have to go.

She catches Theo watching her.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

(to them, re: Theo)

He thinks that sounded pretentious.

THEO

I didn't say anything!

ANNETTE

We went to Paris, I liked it, how do you say that without sounding pretentious? Someone tell me.

JESSE

It's true! Any time someone talks about Europe -- "Florence has the best food. Berlin is a blast" -- all I think is, "we get it, you can afford international airfare."

(to Annette, backtracks)

Which is not what I was thinking when you recommended Paris.

ANNETTE

It's fine. And maybe I'm overselling. We were crazy in love when we went so I could be coloring the whole experience with that brush.

Annette looks to Theo, fondly. He smiles, which makes Chris and Jesse smile. Although Jesse's smile is a bit layered.

CHRIS

Well, maybe Paris will be our celebration trip when I sell a book. My treat, for once.

JESSE

Chris, don't say that.

CHRIS

(to Annette and Theo)

I've been holding out to sell some writing while Jesse's been our bread winner. For too long.

ANNETTE

I'm sure she doesn't mind. It's romantic, supporting an artist.

CHRIS

I think the romance has worn off.

Jesse wants to engage, but doesn't. Theo sees her struggling.

THEO

So, Jesse, is Chris a good writer?

JESSE

(what are you doing?)

Um... yes. He is. Very good.

THEO

(to Chris)

You want to pitch me something for the magazine?

ANNETTE

Theo! I love you right now!

CHRIS

(to Theo)

Are you serious? Because that would be great. Although, I should warn you. I don't know a ton about pop culture or hip gadgets or, you know, "undercarriage grooming trends".

Theo hides how vaguely insulting that was to him.

THEO

That's okay. We also run political pieces, first-person essays about health issues, spirituality...

CHRIS

Oh, great. The substantive stuff is probably more my speed. Not sure I'm the right guy for "Sex Tips from an ex-Monk," or whatever.

JESSE

("sweetly")

Chris, that's a little insulting.

CHRIS

No. Is it? I'm just joking.

ANNETTE

Please, Theo knows he's not winning a Pulitzer any time soon. They have a horoscope page, for God's sake.

Annette and Chris laugh at her joke. Theo doesn't love it.

THEO

(to Chris)

You know what I think would make a terrific article? Why not write about having a girlfriend who makes the money in your relationship?

Just like that, it's tense. Which Theo's fine with.

THEO (CONT'D)

It's obviously a real thing, and an original discussion.

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

I'm sure there are other guys in your situation who'd appreciate some insight into the power dynamics, the self-esteem issues, whatever. That, to me, seems *substantive*. Right?

CHRIS

Yeah. It is. I'll think about that.

Jesse doesn't know who she's more mad at now. Theo casually sips his tequila, avoiding Jesse's gaze.

ANNETTE

(saving it, to Chris)

Well, I'm sure you're a good writer. I could tell when we were talking about books at San Gennaro.

CHRIS

Thank you.

Another tense beat. Annette gives it another try.

ANNETTE

I love that festival. It makes me feel like a real New Yorker.

CHRIS

Totally. We go every year.

ANNETTE

Us, too. How have we only seen each other that one time?

CHRIS

Well, and then last year. I was pissed I missed hanging out with you three. For a meeting that amounted to nothing, by the way.

ANNETTE

Last year?

Theo and Jesse's eyes dart to one another. Chris is confused.

CHRIS

What? That was last year, right?

Chris and Annette are both now confused. She looks to Theo.

THEO

(to Annette)

You left early. You were mad at Elaine and you took off.

ANNETTE

Mad at Elaine sounds right, but --
 (to Jesse)
 I'm sorry. Am I being rude right
 now? Did I forget seeing you?

JESSE

No. It was just weird timing. Chris
 had to go, so I was going to stay
 with you two, then you left while I
 was saying good-bye to Chris, and
 when I came back...

Jesse's stuck, and covering some fear. Theo jumps in:

THEO

(to Annette)
 I thought you were going to be there
 so I invited her to stay with us but
 then you bolted.

ANNETTE

So it was just the two of you?

Chris is staring into the side of Jesse's head right now.

THEO

Yeah. For a little while.

CHRIS

(to Jesse)
 I don't remember you telling me that.

JESSE

Well, why? It was no big deal.
 Theo felt obligated to spend time
 with me, I could tell. But then...

THEO

(helping)
 I ran into some friends --

JESSE

Yeah. And then he went off with
 them and I walked around a little.

ANNETTE

(to Theo)
 Who?

THEO

Who what?

ANNETTE

Which friends? Did you run into?

She's on a mission here, and Theo can sense it.

THEO
Ethan, from work. And some date.

A beat. Annette takes in the table - Chris, Jesse, all of them together, and decides to buy what Theo's selling.

ANNETTE
Oh. You probably told me. I'm sure
I was just lost in my own thing.

Jesse, without looking at Chris, gently rests her hand on his shoulder. Chris downs the rest of his margarita. It's very tense. And the poor WAITER chooses now to approach.

WAITER
I see empty glasses. Who wants to
keep this party goin'?

ANNETTE
Nothing for me.

CHRIS
Me neither.

THEO
(trying to be casual)
Jesse?

Annette glares at Theo: you're taking care of her now?

JESSE
(to waiter)
I'm done, thanks.

THEO
Okay. Just the check.

Theo hands the waiter a credit card. The waiter exits, leaving four silent people, heads spinning.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Jesse and Chris ride, each staring out an opposite window. The silence goes on, and on. Then:

CHRIS
Am I being paranoid, or are you tense
and quiet for a reason?

Jesse bites her lip, freaking out. She looks at him, and can't fight the tears in her eyes. Chris looks destroyed.

EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

Theo and Annette walk. He reaches out to hold her hand. She accepts for a few steps, then lets go and stops walking.

ANNETTE

You hate Ethan.

THEO

What?

ANNETTE

You hate Ethan, but you left that girl, who's clearly into you - like I said - to hang out with Ethan?

Theo starts to speak, but Annette stops him with:

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

And before you answer, if there's even a small part of you that values this relationship, don't lie to me.

That stops him dead. He says nothing, for a while.

THEO

I didn't run into Ethan, but --

ANNETTE

Right. Okay. So you two spent the evening together, alone, and kept it secret. Then tonight, on the roof, all reluctant to hang out... Why do I feel sick right now, Theo?

THEO

Annette, just wait --

ANNETTE

Months ago, you were in the shower and your facebook page was open but you weren't signed in. So I decided to sign on to your account, see what you were up to. When your husband feels only occasionally committed to you, that's what you do. But this time, your password didn't work. You changed it out of the blue. Did that have anything to do with her?

THEO

Well, we did have some conversations on there, yeah.

Annette's face is awash with feelings - every one, at once.

ANNETTE

So, this was, like, a thing. That went on. And this whole time you've been hiding it from me, and --

THEO

It wasn't what you think it was. We never really did anything. It was only ever... almost something.

ANNETTE

Those are just words. Idiomatic words. Do you care about her?

The fraction of a pause Theo takes is too much for Annette.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Don't pause, you jerk! Don't fucking pause! Why am I working my ass off to fix this relationship while you're out with that --

THEO

Whoa, hold up. I feel awful about this, trust me. But how have you been "working your ass off"? You're never even around.

ANNETTE

Fuck you, Theo. This is not about me right now.

THEO

No, it's about *us*. You're the one who said, "do we have a bad marriage" and neither of us had an answer. I fucked up. I did. But maybe it was nice to spend time with someone who doesn't resent me, or want me be an entirely different person.

ANNETTE

What?! I just want you to be the person I fell in love with.

THEO

Well, we both want that, so --

Annette looks like she might explode.

THEO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have --

ANNETTE

Aaaaaahhhh!!!! Shut up! Shut your stupid, childish, asshole mouth!

She then abruptly turns to go. When Theo follows:

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

No! Don't follow me!

(MORE)

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

And don't come home tonight. Or until I tell you, you can. And don't call or show up or reach out to me in any way. I'll call you. When I want. Give me that. Show me that one respect, you selfish dick!

She storms off. Theo can only watch, stunned. Wrecked.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jesse is on the sofa, eyes red and pained. Chris is in a nearby chair, shell-shocked. She told him everything. The room is heavy. After a beat, he gets up and exits to:

CHRIS

I'm going to bed.

JESSE

Now? But shouldn't we talk about--

CHRIS

About what? You love him, you're trying to love me. I'm caught up.

Jesse wants to make him feel better, but she can't. He might be right. Chris enters the bedroom and closes the door. Jesse sits and stares, her eyes brimming with tears.

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Sam opens the door to see Theo, a broken mess.

INT. SAM AND BRENT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Theo, fully clothed, lies on some sheets and pillows Sam put on the couch. Sam sits nearby.

SAM

When Annette said all this, were you thinking, "I have to fight for this"?

THEO

Yeah. Part of me.

SAM

That's at least some clarity, right?

THEO

But another voice in my head said,
"If you really want out, if you really
want a shot with Jesse, this is it."
(then)

I'm so goddamn stupid.

Sam doesn't disagree. Theo lies there, spent and confused.

INT. JESSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Like Theo, Jesse lies on her own couch, spent and confused.

INT. THEO'S APARTMENT - LIVING/DINING AREA - NIGHT - SAME

Annette enters from the kitchen carrying the \$500 Phillippe Starck toaster. She sets it on the dining room table. She goes back into the kitchen. SOUNDS OF RUMMAGING. She returns with a hammer, and clobbers the fuck out of the toaster. Smashes it to shit. Then, fired up, sips her cocktail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Theo drives in a sport coat and nice shirt, looking a little haggard. Radiohead's "Creep" BLARES on the radio.

THEO

(sings along)

*I'm a creep... I'm a weirdo... What
the hell am I doing here? I don't
belong here... I don't belong here...*

EXT. PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Theo pulls into a space and parks. He stares forward, not shutting off the car or the music.

STORYTELLER

Weeks later, Theo had a realization:
Sometimes, when you want to punish
yourself for mistakes you've made,
the universe is kind enough to give
you a hand.

We follow Theo's gaze to... white cloth-covered tables, rows of chairs facing a small stage, lights hanging from trees, WELL-DRESSED PEOPLE. It's Sam's big gay wedding. Theo takes a flask from his pocket and swigs. Of all days...

TAP, TAP, TAP! Theo looks up to see his mother, LUCY, knocking on the passenger side window.

LUCY

There he is, there's my boy.

Theo tucks the flask in his pocket and gets out of his car. Lucy runs around to meet him and wrap him in a big hug.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Good lord, you're handsome. No wonder
you cheated, it's got to be so easy.

THEO
 (to no one)
 My mother, ladies and gentlemen.

LUCY
 How are you? Are you awful?

THEO
 Yep, I'm pretty awful.

LUCY
 Then I won't give you hell for neglecting me. Which I now understand. You were mad at yourself for how you were treating your own marriage, but you projected all that onto me for leaving your dad.

THEO
 Can you be a mom today, not a shrink?
 She grabs his arm and they walk toward the event.

LUCY
 You're right. What a shitty time for your brother to get married. Just drink. A lot. I'll drive you back to the city.
 (re: sport coat)
 Did you borrow this from Sam?

THEO
 No, I don't borrow clothing from Sam. He has no taste and everything's coated with baby gunk. Annette let me get stuff while she was out.

LUCY
 She's not coming, is she?

THEO
 No. She made it clear that was one more thing she hates about me.

LUCY
 That's temporary. What about the other one? The baker?
 (off his look)
 Sam told me everything. I took him out for a little bachelor party last night - two beers and he told me all kinds of crap. So, is she coming?

THEO
 No. We haven't even spoken since --

LUCY
 Since the night at the Mexican place?
 You're kidding!

Theo reacts: Sam left nothing out. James (Theo's dad) approaches in pants, a jacket and a bright purple shirt.

JAMES
 Hey, does this shirt look okay?

LUCY
 I'm not sure.

THEO
 Wow, that's purple.

JAMES
 Yeah, I thought I'd try something different. Gay wedding and all. It was a bad idea, huh? Should I change?

LUCY
 (to Theo)
 Awww, your dad's nervous.

JAMES
 No, I'm not.

LUCY
 I was married to you for a hundred years, I know when you're nervous.

JAMES
 Well, we're not married now so you don't get to analyze me anymore. Go analyze, Dick. Where's he?

LUCY
Richard, you jerk, is back in Florida. I left him there out of respect for you, you jerk.

JAMES
 You called me jerk twice.

THEO
 This is sweet. You should do this show for Sam as a wedding present.

Theo crosses off toward the event.

LUCY
 (to James)
 Don't take it personally. His marriage is falling apart, he's in love with two women, and he's living in a studio apartment.

JAMES
 No. A studio? Christ.

EXT. PARK - WEDDING AREA - LATER

The wedding begins. GUESTS sit in their chairs. JOAN (40s, short-haired lesbian) waits to officiate. Theo's in the front row, next to two empty chairs. Mackelmore's "SAME LOVE" starts through the speakers. Theo reacts, "really?"

Brent walks down the aisle with his TWO SISTERS. The GUESTS hoot and holler - it's not your average solemn wedding. One of Brent's sisters offers Theo a smile. Was that a flirt?

Now Sam walks the aisle with Lucy and James on either side.

GAY GUEST

Sweet shirt, Sam's dad!

James enjoys that. Lucy and James then sit on either side of Theo as Sam joins Brent on stage. Sam and Brent lock eyes. Instantly, Brent starts to tear up. Sam hands him a tissue from his jacket. The audience lets out an "Awwww".

Theo takes a flask out of his pocket for a quick, "subtle" swig. Lucy and James exchange a look -- uh-oh.

SAME - LATER

A WOMAN sings Adele's "SOMEONE LIKE YOU". It's gorgeous, and everyone is feeling it. Lucy, a tear in her eye, looks to Theo, who's shocked at something his phone.

THEO

Jesse changed her facebook status to "single". Just now, because I checked this morning and it said nothi --

LUCY

I don't like you right now.

Lucy yanks the phone away. He reaches for it, but she quickly tucks it in her cleavage. Shit. Theo's mind is reeling.

SAME - LATER

Joan officiates the end of the ceremony.

JOAN

By the power vested in me by the state of New York, by the goddess, and by all things good in this world, I now pronounce you husband and husband. Kiss it out, dudes.

Sam and Brent smile and kiss. Rose petals fall from somewhere. Someone lets go of the twins, who run on stage to be with their dads. Sam and Brent instantly pick them up. Another big "AWWWW" from the crowd. It's beautiful, moving and romantic.

Lucy, teary, hugs James. She sees Theo, clearly fighting some feelings. She hugs Theo as well. As she pulls away, he tries to snag his phone back, but she slaps his hand.

EXT. PARK - RECEPTION TENT / BAR AREA - LATER

The party is hopping now -- the BAND plays, guests dance, lots of talking and hugging and merriment. At the bar, an already buzzed Theo hands his flask to the BARTENDER.

THEO

Whatever good tequila you have back there. Fill 'er up, please.

The bartender takes the flask as Brent's sister BETH (38, cute but wants to be hot) approaches.

BETH

Hi, you're Sam's brother Theo, right?

THEO

Yep. And you're Brent's sister...

BETH

Beth.

THEO

Beth. I recognize you from the 'walking down the aisle' portion of the day. Having fun?

BETH

If I can't have fun at my little brother's gay wedding a year after my divorce, something wrong with me.

THEO

(smiles, then)

Let me guess. Brent said, "Theo's marriage fell apart too, you should go bond with him." And then my brother, the Virgin Mary, said, "Guys, that's inappropriate."

BETH

(he was right)

Wow. I mean... wow.

She laughs as the bartender hands Theo his flask back.

BETH (CONT'D)

So...? Should we bond?

A beat, then Theo smiles and clinks his flask with her drink.

SAME - LATER

Guests dance to UPBEAT MUSIC from the BAND. Theo and Beth dance too. And drink, and laugh, and dance closer.

ANGLE ON : LUCY AND JAMES WITH SAM, WATCH THEO.

LUCY

This is exactly what he needs.

SAM

To bang Brent's sister at my wedding?

JAMES

To have fun! You think they could bang? That's better.

Theo spins Beth, who almost falls into an OLD LADY. They quickly right the woman, then stifle laughs behind her.

EXT. PARK - RECEPTION TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Guests sit, tolerating SARA, Brent's other sister (30s, sweet & dull), as she finishes a toast. No Theo, no Beth.

SARA

Beth was supposed to do this with me. It would have been funnier with her. I don't know where she went.

People politely laugh. Sam glares at Brent -- they know.

SARA (CONT'D)

Anyway, Sam, we all think you're great. And I worry about Brent less when he's with you. So, thanks.

Everybody raises a glass to Sam and Brent. Sara crosses away from the stage as Lucy and James make their way up and people APPLAUD. Lucy takes the mic, James is a little tipsy.

LUCY

Brent, when Sam was young and I pictured the woman he would marry, I knew she'd have to be smart because Sam wouldn't put up with anyone stupid. And I knew she'd have to be pretty because his father wouldn't put up with anyone ugly.

JAMES

She ain't lying!

People LAUGH as Theo and Beth, hair askew, lipstick smear on their faces, covertly enter the tent.

LUCY

And I knew she'd be fun as hell because Sam can be stodgy and he needs someone to help him *live*.

SAM

(facetious)

Thanks, mom. Very sweet.

LUCY

Brent, you are all these things and more, and we adore you. There was, of course, that one surprise.

JAMES

Your penis!

Lucy slaps James as most people LAUGH.

LUCY

Welcome to the family, Brent.

Everybody cheers. Sam and Brent kiss as Lucy notices Theo.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh, *there's* your brother. Theo, come say something.

JAMES

Yeah. Come on, get up here.

Sam takes in the mess that is Theo. He's worried.

SAM

He doesn't have to if he doesn't want to. Don't *make* him.

Theo doesn't like that Sam doesn't want him up there.

THEO

They wouldn't be *making* me, Sam.

SAM

Well, I'm just saying, no pressure.

THEO

Is that really what you're saying?

SAM

What else would I be saying?

THEO

I guess nothing, so maybe I should make a toast.

SAM

Please, make one.

Theo, lipstick smeared on his face, approaches the stage. He stumbles over someone's foot, then rights himself.

BRENT

(to Sam)

You made it worse, just FYI.

Theo takes the mic from Lucy, who sees the lipstick. She tries to wipe it off with a napkin, but he doesn't want it. She forces it, a mother and her boy. When the struggle ends:

THEO

Hi, everyone, I'm Theo, Sam's brother.

Theo holds his glass up and looks to Sam, who's holding a sleeping Oscar. And Brent, who's feeding Blake. Theo says nothing. For too long. People begin to wonder what's up.

LUCY

(sotto, to Theo)

Honey?

THEO

Sam...

Sam, and others, react. Where's this headed?

THEO (CONT'D)

Jesus, look at you. The four of you. Sitting there, making your little family. How'd you do that, and make it look so easy?

(increasingly emotional)

Actually, I know how. You just love, Sam, in this simple, honest way. And look what you have. You knew what you wanted, and you got it. I'm so envious of that. You have your shit together in a way I never have, and I'm stupid proud of you.

(realizing)

And I didn't even get your steak knives yet. I should have done that. I'm sorry, Sam. I'm should have...

Theo's eyes are full of tears now. As are Sam's, and everyone else's. Guests toast and APPLAUD... but then grow concerned when Theo's tears come quicker. He's kinda melting down.

LUCY

Theo, love?

Theo walks off, choking back tears, through the crowd. He soon disappears into the dark, with one more quick sob heard from the distance. Lucy looks after him, worried.

JAMES

(to Lucy)

Let him go. It's Sam's night.

They stand firm, letting Theo go. It's quiet, awkward. A DISTANT SOB rings out. Lucy and James exchange a look.

SAM

(to his parents)

Just go!

Instantly, they both run after Theo.

EXT. PARK - PLAYGROUND - SECONDS LATER

Lucy and James run toward Theo, who's swinging on a swingset, fairly high. He's barely post-cry and too amped up.

LUCY

I don't like this.

JAMES

Hey, buddy, whatcha' doing?

THEO

I'm a dick, you guys! A selfish dick!

LUCY

I did not raise you to talk about yourself like that. Please get down.

THEO

Did you raise me to fuck up my life?
To fuck up other people's lives?

JAMES

People make mistakes, kid.

THEO

Big ones! What's *wrong* with me?!
(then, intense)
Seriously, what is it? Am I afraid
to grow up, like Annette says?

JAMES

Probably. All guys are.

THEO

But other guys have babies and don't
have affairs. You think I'm some
dumbass narcissist who fell for Jesse
because she's so much like me? That's
a thing, right?

LUCY

Of course. All love has a trace of narcissism. We fall for the people who reflect back the image of ourselves we want to see. Can you stop swinging? I don't like it!

THEO

But the narcissism thing is too reductive! I care about both women. I *feel* that.

JAMES

Who says you don't?

THEO

Maybe I have a damaged ego and I'll fall for *anyone* who gives me attention.

SAM (O.S.)

That's the one!

Lucy and James turn to see Sam approaching, alone.

THEO

Sam, what are you doing here? You should be at your wedding.

SAM

Yes, I should. But it's time for us to dance with our families and mine is out here taking care of you.

LUCY

Theo, get down now! I'm not kidding!
(then, to Sam)
And don't do that. Your brother didn't have the benefit of growing up gay like you did.

SAM

That's literally the first time anyone has ever said that to anyone, ever.

LUCY

You boys do a lot of soul-searching. By the time you come out, you know who you are. Theo is still finding his way.
(to James, re: Theo)
Honest to God, James, make him stop.

JAMES

Theo! Your mother wants you to --

LUCY

No, James! Not "your mother wants".
You want.

JAMES

But I don't want, Lucy. You do!

THEO

This is it! I'm a mess because you guys got divorced. The trauma of that loss makes it impossible for me to fully commit to someone.

SAM

Now that's intriguing.

JAMES

(to Lucy)

This is you. This is what happens when kids are raised by a therapist.

LUCY

Oh, I'm sorry I gave our sons words for their feelings.

(then, to Theo)

And trauma, my ass! You were a grown man when I left! Get over it, and get the hell off that swing!

THEO

If I stop, the world will spin again. This makes me feel like I can keep up.

JAMES

(to Lucy and Sam)

What is he talking about?

LUCY

Ignore him until he gets down!

SAM

Theo, you are going a little high.

THEO

I have to figure this out before it's too late!

JAMES

Too late for what?!

THEO

For me, Dad! I'm fucking old and I have gray pubes and a weird pain in my neck that I'm sure is a *tumor* on my spine -- which I could have survived ten years ago, but now?!

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

Forget it. And I shit on my marriage to an amazing woman, but I'm too freaked to fight for it 'cause the second I get it back, I'm going to worry I missed out on a *better* life with Jesse, who just announced to the world that she's single! So now I'm going to lose them both and die alone from this stupid tumor!

(realizing)

I have to do something.

Theo tries to stop himself but he's going to fast and the swing throws him across the sand of the playground. It's ugly and sloppy and seemingly painful.

LUCY / JAMES / SAM

Oh my god! / Aw, hell. / Jesus!

Lucy, James and Sam rush to him, crumpled on the ground. Theo instantly tries to stand, but can't really do it.

THEO

Owww... my foot, my... everything...

JAMES

What the hell was that?

THEO

(struggling to stand)

Help me up. I have to go tell Annette I'm trying to figure stuff out so she doesn't move on yet. Then I'll tell Jesse I'm sorry I destroyed her life, but someday it could be good because we can be together, maybe.

LUCY

Are you insane? That's a horrible idea. You're not going anywhere.

THEO

I have to. Weren't you listening?

He starts to limp off, dirty and disheveled and broken.

LUCY

Theodore Alan, I've had it! Sit down!

Lucy points to a see-saw. Theo pauses: if he sits on one side, he'll fall to the ground. He starts to get on, then:

THEO

But... I can't because --

JAMES

(to Sam)

Get on the other side. Help your brother out, for Christ's sake.

Sam, exasperated, sits on the other side to balance Theo.

LUCY

(to Theo)

First of all, don't say any of that crap to those women, or you will lose them both, I promise. And you are too smart to think you have one problem that can be fixed so your whole life will fall into place.

JAMES

She's right. That's retarded.

LUCY

You are a narcissist. And you're a product of divorce, and you have ego problems, and you don't know who you are, and you don't want to grow up.

JAMES

Like all men.

THEO

But I cheated on a great person.

LUCY

So did I! It happens!

A beat. Theo and Sam try to register what she said.

LUCY (CONT'D)

That's right. I met Richard before your father and I divorced, all right? He knows, and now you know.

THEO

Mom, that's awful! I don't know what to say.

LUCY

How about nothing since you did the same thing?

That shuts him up.

SAM

Well, I haven't cheated. And neither has dad.

Lucy looks to James: you wanna take this?

JAMES

I had a bit of a porn problem toward the end of the marriage. Might've had a a few "fun" massages. Is that cheating? It's a gray area.

LUCY

(to Theo)

Sweetie, we get it. Marriage is so much work and your father and I were bored out of our heads in ours.

JAMES

She's not wrong.

LUCY

Thirty years of the same questions, the same fights, the same genitals --

SAM

Okay, easy on the genitals.

Lucy crouches down to Theo, affectionately.

LUCY

Listen to me. When I met Richard, I could look at something I'd seen a thousand times -- a building, or a park bench, or the sky, even -- and it suddenly looked different. Like it glowed.

Sam and Theo look to James, concerned:

JAMES

It's eight years. I'm fine.

LUCY

(to Theo)

And I hated myself for it. I didn't want to lose what I'd built for so long, but I also didn't want to miss a chance to love this other person who... gave me new eyes for the world.

Theo can't help but be moved by that. He gets it.

THEO

I think that's how Jesse happened. I wanted new eyes for the world.

JAMES

Having a kid works, too. Watching you two grow up and discover your lives, there's nothing like it.

THEO

You're kinda batting me back and forth here.

LUCY

Theo, eight years after meeting Richard, the sky still sparkles *some* days. But other days... I'd give a whole hell of a lot to have one more go-round with your dad.

James clocks this, genuinely moved. It's a sweet moment.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Sweetie, the question you have to answer is this: who do you need in your life, and who you're okay longing for? Because whatever you decide, that's what's going to happen.

The truth of this hits Theo in the gut. He knows it's true.

BRENT (O.S.)

Hey!

They turn to see Brent, a twin on each hip.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Sam may have to put up with this crap, but I don't. Get back up here and celebrate our marriage!

SAM

(to his family)

That's my husband, bitches.

Sam jumps off the see-saw and runs to Brent, leaving Theo to fall on his ass. Oof! Lucy and James rush to help Theo up.

LUCY

(re: Brent)

He's kind of a pill, isn't he?

JAMES

Yeah, settle down, right? He's not even allowed to do this in thirty other states.

EXT. PARK - RECEPTION TENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Theo sits with his foot up on a chair - a bag of ice on his ankle. He watches Sam and Brent, and Lucy and James, slow dance among other guests. He's alone, and he's feeling it.

EXT. NYC STREET - THEO'S NEW NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Theo's car pulls over and parks - James drives, Lucy rides shotgun, Theo is in back staring off.

LUCY
Okay, here we are.

Theo just sits there, looking numb but feeling everything.

JAMES
Buddy?

THEO
Every day, I keep thinking... this moment I'm living right now is going to be a memory --
(snaps fingers)
-- like that. And this one, and this one. So much is over already.

JAMES
Yep. This is the oldest you have ever been.
(off Theo's horror)
It's also the youngest you will ever be. So act like it.

THEO
I have no idea how to do that.

LUCY
Nobody does. Just get calm, and get some rest.

Theo looks to his mother. Really? That's it?

LUCY (CONT'D)
Now, I mean. Out you go. We'll get your car back in the morning.

Theo takes in his parents, clearly up to something.

THEO
I don't know how I feel about what's going on with you two tonight.

JAMES
You don't know how you feel about a lot of stuff. Go to bed.

Theo's been shot down. He simply gets out of the car and limps up the stairs to his apartment.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - HALF HOUR LATER

A table and two chairs, a sofa, a TV, a bed. Clearly not permanent for him.

Theo lies in bed, trying to sleep. The faint TICK of the SECOND-HAND comes from a hip alarm clock on his nightstand. He's hyper-aware of it, this marker of the passage of time.

TICK... TICK... TICK... TICK... TICK... TICK... TICK...

SAME - LATER

Theo tries to sleep in a different position. The TICKS seem LOUDER. And FASTER. He opens his eyes, irritated, then flips to another position, putting a pillow over his head.

SAME - LATER

Theo lies on his back, staring straight at the ceiling. The ticks seem VERY LOUD and VERY FAST now. After a bit, he grabs the clock, rips it out of the wall and throws it on the floor. Finally... silence. He lies back down.

And then TWELVE DISTANT GONGS of church bells at midnight. He's tortured. Fucking tortured.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - HUDSON RIVER PARK - MORNING

CLOSE ON Theo as he goes for a run through the city. WIDEN TO REVEAL the WORLD SPINS WILDLY around him. Theo stops. He takes in his world, fast and crazy as it is.

STORYTELLER

The next day, Theo made a decision.

A flicker in Theo's eyes, and he starts running again.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - KITCHEN - MORNING

MUSIC PLAYS. Theo energetically makes himself a smoothie, sips coffee, bumps a drawer closed with his butt, etc.

STORYTELLER

He was not going to feel sorry for himself, or let this whole thing get the better of him.

INT. WILLIAMS-SONOMA - THE NEXT DAY

We're on Theo's back as he stands at the STEAK KNIVES display. There are many options. A SALES CLERK approaches.

STORYTELLER

He was going to get his life right back on track.

SALES CLERK

Can I help you find something?

Theo turns, teary-eyed. The "new Theo" is a mess again.

THEO

There's too many choices. I don't want all these choices. Just tell me what to buy. Please, just pick.

The Clerk, nervous, grabs a box of knives and hands it to Theo. Theo takes them, looks at the image on the box.

THEO (CONT'D)

These are horrible. Really. The worst ones here. I can't...

Theo hands the knives to the clerk and wanders off, broken.

STORYTELLER

He then decided it was better to simply immerse himself in his pain.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Theo eats fast food, guzzles scotch, looks at his computer.

ON THE COMPUTER: Two windows open, side by side. One is a PHOTO OF HIM AND ANNETTE in happier times, the other is JESSE'S FACEBOOK PAGE. He stares at the screen, dead-eyed.

EXT. THEO'S STUDIO / LUCY'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

SPLIT-SCREEN: A tipsy Theo rants and gestures to his computer (remnants of his binge nearby), while Lucy sits up in bed.

THEO

Jesse's at some yoga retreat, which people only go to when they're depressed as shit. I hate that I did that to her. Meantime, Annette posted this quote: "better to be strong than pretty and useless"--

LUCY

True, and funny.

THEO

Yes! She's funny, it's one of the things I love about her. But I also can't stop arguing with her in my head. And that quote seems like a dig at Jesse. Or me. Was it me?

LUCY

Sweetie, stop.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

You're tormenting yourself with this social media bullshit, which is making me, and every therapist I know, a lot richer. Go out, live in *the world*, get busy.

THEO

Isn't that a little simplistic?

LUCY

Yes, it is! It is simple. Screw all that other information -- talk about useless. You can't live all the moments of a life at once, Theo. Just live the one you're in.

Theo takes a beat. Does that makes sense to him?

THEO

Did you just come up with that?

LUCY

I did. Hold on, I'm writing it down.

Theo reacts as Lucy picks up a notebook.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - MORNING

Theo walks, dressed for work, carrying a computer bag.

STORYTELLER

With no other option, Theo took his mother's advice. After all, she did have a PhD. And an affair.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - THEO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Becki is at Theo's desk, organizing papers. He enters, pulls an iPhone, iPad, laptop, etc. out of his bag.

THEO

Erase Jesse's contact info from these. Sign on to my facebook, Instagram and twitter and change my password so I can't spy on anyone.

BECKI

But you know where they both work.

THEO

I'm trying here. Don't tell me what the password is, no matter what I do, or say, or threaten you with.

BECKI

Threaten me with?

THEO

Where's that list we made of all the stuff I want to do before I die?

BECKI

On your laptop in the personal folder. Also, there's a hard copy right here.

She pulls a paper off a push-pin board. He reads it.

THEO

Okay, so far, I've taken tennis, which I still suck at, and listened to a Spanish lesson once on my phone.
(hands her paper)

Fill my schedule with this stuff.

BECKI

Really? Like, I'm supposed to just schedule an African safari?

THEO

Local stuff, stuff I can do alone, stuff you can charge to my credit card. What do I have this morning?

BECKI

Not much, actually.

THEO

No more empty time.
(thinks, then)
That friend of yours, the writer I blew off. Can I meet him now?

BECKI

Probably, he's currently in my bed -- wink, wink. Yay, he'll be so happy.

THEO

Great. Tell him to scrub off and meet me at ABC Kitchen at ten.

BECKI

Can I just say? I think this is great. You, giving yourself time, just for you, to get clear.

THEO

Yeah, I'm a real hero. Don't just stand there, call your boy toy.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - NIGHT - DAYS LATER

Theo lies in bed, not sleeping. He's anxious.

AT HIS TABLE - MINUTES LATER

Theo has the FACEBOOK sign-in page open. He tries a password; it doesn't work. He thinks, tries another one, doesn't work. He picks up his phone and dials.

BECKI (O.S.)

No.

THEO

Give me the password.

BECKI (O.S.)

I said no.

THEO

Give them to me or I'll fire you.

BECKI (O.S.)

You will not, I know too much. And it's been *twelve hours*. Go to sleep.

THEO

I can't sleep.

BECKI (O.S.)

Meditate.

THEO

Nobody does that. How?

SAME - LATER

Theo sits up in his bed, breathing, trying to meditate - legs crossed, eyes closed, hands turned upward on his knees.

THEO

Fuck this.

He lies down, pulls down his boxers. He'll jerk off instead.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Coleman and Theo rally. Theo's playing better. Calmer.

COLEMAN

That's it. Nice and relaxed...

Theo hits a fast backhand, Coleman tries to return but nets.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

See? You just kept making me hit ball after ball and eventually I made the error. You took the point.

THEO

Yeah. It wasn't exciting, but --

COLEMAN

Doesn't have to be exciting all the time! You have to be content to just keep the ball in play.

THEO

(so dry)
Yay. Content.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - ELEVATOR - MORNING

Theo exits the elevator to find Becki holding a PILE OF BOOKS. She shows them to him as they walk and talk...

BECKI

Here are the books you wanted.

THEO

Madame Bovary? That wasn't on my list.

BECKI

I added it. Cautionary tale about adultery. Keep you on track.

He reacts: she has a point.

BECKI (CONT'D)

And check your calendar. You 'bout to get bizz-zzay.

INT. CLASSROOM - SPANISH CLASS - NIGHT

Theo sits with OTHER STUDENTS at desks.

THEO AND CLASS

Yo soy de los Estados Unidos y estoy perdido.

SUBTITLED: *I am from the United States and I am lost.*

INT. BOXING CLASS - EVENING - DAYS LATER

Theo hits a punching bag, an INSTRUCTOR holds the other side.

THEO

When do we get into a ring and spar?

BOXING INSTRUCTOR

Slow down, cowboy. We got nothin' but time.

Theo glares at him, then hits the bag very hard.

BOXING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

I don't know what I said, but that was a much better punch.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Theo sits up in bed, reading "Madame Bovary". He pauses a second, stares off, clearly thinking of one or both of the women in his life. He's lost in it. Then:

THEO
Aaaaaahhhhhh!!!!!!

He smacks himself in the face. Then, he "calmly" reads again.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - EVENING - A FEW DAYS LATER

Coleman once again hits balls back and forth from center court, running Theo left, then right. Again, Coleman hits to Theo's forehand corner and Theo attempts a dramatic forehand down the line. The ball smacks into the net. Shit.

COLEMAN
What am I going to say right now?

THEO
I shouldn't have tried the forehand down the line, but I had the shot!

COLEMAN
What?! I hit the ball flat and fast, you were off-balance and rushing --

THEO
I have to rush if you hit it fast!

COLEMAN
But don't try that shot 'til you're not rushed.

THEO
It's my favorite shot!

COLEMAN
What are you, nine? Wait for the moment! Be patient, slow it down.

Theo just stands there. Thinking. He looks intense.

THEO
Oh my God why is everything the same goddamn lesson all the time?!

COLEMAN
Hey, don't get all mad again.

THEO
(a little mad)
I'm not mad! This is me, learning something I have to learn that I don't want to learn! It's good!

EXT. PARK NEAR MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

Theo, eating lunch outside, finishes "Madame Bovary".

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - THEO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Theo marches up to Becki at her desk and drops the book.

THEO
She killed herself?!

BECKI
Um... Spoiler alert.

THEO
"Spoiler alert"? You made me read
it, and it's a million years old.

BECKI
But I didn't know she killed herself!
(bursts out laughing)
Oh my God, I'm so sorry.

STORYTELLER
Theo went like this for months,
filling time with activity...

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - EVENING

Theo, in goggles and headphones, stands with a GUN EXPERT who shows Theo how to shoot. Theo takes the gun and shoots. He reacts, a little freaked. The gun expert laughs at him.

EXT. CHELSEA PIERS - DAY

Theo swings on a trapeze. The TRAPEZE INSTRUCTOR stands by.

STORYTELLER
... after activity.

TRAPEZE INSTRUCTOR
Alright, keep your body relaxed and
let yourself fall.

Theo swings forward, lets go of the bar, and falls to the net on his back. He instantly jumps up, elated.

THEO
I want to go again! Can I go again?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Theo, shirt off, sits on an exam table. DOCTOR SIEGEL examines Theo's neck.

DOCTOR SIEGEL

You sit at a desk all day. And what kind of exercise do you do?

THEO

Running. Lots of it. Some tennis. Boxing. A little time in the gym. I took a trapeze class last week.

STORYTELLER

He had his good days...

DOCTOR SIEGEL

Theo, you don't have a tumor. You're stressed and you're abusing yourself.

INT. MAGAZINE OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The MAGAZINE STAFF (15 people) is gathered, including Theo, Ethan and Reid. Reid passes some copy to Theo.

STORYTELLER

And he had his bad days.

REID

You're going to like this, Theo. There's a ton of cool stuff for dads.

Theo looks pained. He forgot about this.

REID (CONT'D)

That crib? How dope is that crib? I'd sleep in that. The diaper bags, I fudged. I just found cool regular bags that fit diapers, bottles, all that. Babies are way cute, by the way. Way.

Theo can't take it. He gets up and walks out.

ETHAN

It's not you, Reid. His marriage went to shit when he had an affair with his brother's friend. You know, between us.

Theo pops his head back in, glares at Ethan. Really?

INT. CLASSROOM - SPANISH CLASS - EVENING

Theo and all the students end class.

SPANISH TEACHER

Adios, clase!

THEO AND CLASS

Adios, Senorita Ortiz!

STORYTELLER

He had days when he felt strong...

SAME - MINUTES LATER

Leaving class, a PRETTY WOMAN (30) approaches Theo.

PRETTY WOMAN

Hey, Theo. I was wondering --

THEO

I'm in love with two women.
 (off her look)
 I'm forcing myself to say that out loud so I stay focused. Otherwise... yeah. For sure.

PRETTY WOMAN

Okay. Thanks for the heads-up.

She walks off. Theo's conflicted about having done that.

STORYTELLER

And days when he felt weak...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - SIDEWALK/STORE WINDOW - DAY

Theo, on the sidewalk, looks in a store window where Annette pauses in her work to meet his gaze. She's calm, but clear.

ANNETTE

Go away, Theo.

THEO

I know, I'm sorry, I just wanted --

ANNETTE

I'm not ready.

A beat, then he nods, understanding. He offers a sad-ish smile, then starts to go. After a few steps, he hears a KNOCK ON THE GLASS. He turns back to see her at the window.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

I was running from you, too. Just... in a different way.

THEO

Well, you definitely had reason to.

ANNETTE

Your way was much worse, of course, but I wasn't perfect.

They share a bittersweet, complicated smile. Then, she turns back to her work. After a beat, he walks off.

STORYTELLER

And more days when he felt weak...

EXT. SUGAR FIX OFFICES - SIDEWALK - EVENING

Theo, in a suit, stands behind a tree, looking up at Jesse's office. She's visible in the window, but unaware he's there.

THEO TEXTS: "I'm sorry. Very."

JESSE TEXTS: "Me too."

THEO TEXTS: "How are you?"

JESSE TEXTS: "So-so. Figuring out who I want to be."

THEO TEXTS: "Yeah. Same."

They both pause, unsure what to type next. Then:

JESSE TEXTS: "Later...xx"

THEO TEXTS: "I hope so." A beat, then he deletes that and simply types back, "Later...xx"

Theo looks up to be sure Jesse's not looking, then walks off. After a few steps, a PHONE PING. He stops, reads:

INSERT: JESSE'S TEXT, "You look handsome in that suit."

Shit. He smiles, walks back to look up at the window. She's waiting for him. They meet eyes for the first time in months. They simply look at one another, nothing more. Then:

INSERT: THEO TYPES, "And you look beautiful, as usual."

She reads, looks back at him. After a beat, she offers a good-bye wave. He waves back. She then crosses from the window, leaving him alone on the sidewalk.

INT. BOXING GYM - DAY

Theo's now in the ring, sparring with someone. His boxing coach stands inside the ring, off to the side.

STORYTELLER

As time passed, Theo was surprised to discover he was enjoying his life.

Theo takes a punch to the head. Ow! He looks startled.

BOXING INSTRUCTOR

You alright?

THEO

Yep!

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

I've just never been punched in the head before. Which would surprise you if you knew me better.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Theo, in bed, reads "Crime and Punishment" and drifts off.

STORYTELLER

He even allowed himself to sleep.

His eyes flutter... then close. A beat, then the book falls flat on his chest. He doesn't wake up.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Theo waits as Chris exits a building, spots him, and stops.

STORYTELLER

His newfound attitude inspired him to attempt to right some wrongs.

THEO

Before you punch me - and you should totally punch me if you want - if you still need the work, and this isn't too fucked up, the offer stands for you to write something for us.

Chris goes to punch Theo, but Theo blocks the punch.

THEO (CONT'D)

Jesus!

CHRIS

You said I could punch you.

THEO

But I didn't think you'd do it.
(considers, then)
But you have every right. Go again.

Chris goes to punch Theo, Theo blocks again.

CHRIS

Knock it off!

THEO

I'm sorry! It's a reflex, I guess.
I'm taking boxing and --

Chris surprises Theo with a punch to the stomach.

THEO (CONT'D)

(doubled over, pained)
There it is. We good now?

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Theo and Coleman are mid-rally, backhand to backhand. It's tight - this is the best we've seen Theo hit. Theo whips a flat backhand fast to the center of the court. Coleman drives the ball back. Theo hits a forehand to Coleman's forehand, taking him wide. Coleman stretches to grab the ball with his forehand, hitting it cross-court... where Theo is waiting.

Theo strikes the ball perfectly, nailing it **DOWN THE LINE** for an outright winner. Coleman watches it whiz by.

Both men are stunned. Then Theo lets out a guttural:

THEO

Come on!!!!

COLEMAN

See?! You took your time. You waited for the moment. You took the shot *when you knew you had it.* Bam!

Theo laughs, finally triumphant.

EXT. HUDSON RIVER PARK - DAY

Theo runs. It's the familiar scene: He moves in **REAL-TIME** as the **WORLD SPINS IN FAST-MOTION**.

STORYTELLER

Theo never got his epiphany.

EXT. NYC STREET - A DIFFERENT DAY

Theo runs. Again, Theo moves in **REAL-TIME** as the world spins **A LITTLE LESS FAST**.

STORYTELLER

There was no single flaw that he was able to identify and overcome.

EXT. NYC STREET - A DIFFERENT DAY

CLOSE-ON Theo as he runs...

STORYTELLER

There was only a slow progress...

This time: **THEO** moves in real-time, and the **WORLD SLOWS DOWN TO MOVE WITH HIM**.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

... a simple acceptance of the passage of time that allowed Theo to discover the person he wanted to be.

He spots something that makes him stop. We follow Theo's eyes to a department store window. The window display is elaborate, well-done and sexy. Annette's work?

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

And the person he wanted to be with.

And right next to it, on the brick of the building... a faded Madonna poster. Just like the one Jesse texted him.

He smiles, calmly and clearly.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Theo stands in the Meadow. We are ON HIM, so we can't see the woman he's talking to. He's clear, focused, real.

THEO

First of all, I'm sorry I was such a disaster with you. I take full responsibility. This is not an excuse, but I realized I was living my life like I was *dying*, you know? Like I was running out of time, which made me scared to take a chance on anything. But lately, I've been living like I'm going to *keep* living, and I feel really good. The only thing missing... is you. And yes, I know there was so much wrong with what happened between us, but I want to do better. And I know I can *because of you*. I look back and... you were showing me how to choose a path instead of just standing at a crossroads. I can't just search the horizon, weighing which life to live. I need to pick one, and live it. And now, I know the life I want, and I want you in it. A lot. Is there any way that's possible? No pressure, of course, but you know... say yes.

He smiles, waits for her reply. We FREEZE ON HIS FACE.

STORYTELLER

She said yes.

An inspiring, sexy SONG (Muse's "Madness") kicks in for:

MONTAGE -- THEO PUTS HIS LIFE BACK TOGETHER WITH "HER"

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

From HER POV, Theo enthusiastically tells a story.

INT. THEO'S STUDIO - LATER

From HER POV, Theo brings a freshly cooked meal to the nicely-set table where she sits.

INT. CAR - DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, as though shot by her from the passenger seat, of Theo driving, talking, laughing. The countryside whizzes by outside.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her, of Theo hiking through woods in front of her. As a joke, he pulls his pants down to moon her. The camera shakes. Clearly, she's laughing.

EXT. GRASSY KNOLL - SAME DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her, of Theo now in a bathing suit. The camera moves in front of him to capture the CLIFF HE'S ABOUT TO JUMP FROM. The water far below.

She angles back on him. He makes a nervous face, then turns, runs to the edge and jumps. She rushes over to follow him as he splashes into the water. After a beat, he resurfaces and YELLS in exhilaration.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her. A moving van. Theo carries a few boxes down the ramp and up the stairs of a brownstone.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her. Theo's lawyer stands by as a NURSE hands Theo a baby. He looks to camera, tearing up.

INT. THEO'S NEW APARTMENT - EVENING

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her. Theo gently bounces a BABY that screams and cries.

SAME - LATER

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her. Theo asleep on the sofa. The baby sleeps on his chest.

EXT. JAMES'S NEW JERSEY HOUSE - WINTER - DAY

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE, shot by her. The house is decorated for Christmas. Theo, holding the baby, walks up the sidewalk to greet Sam, James, Brent and the twins at the front door.

JAMES

There they are.

THEO

Hey, Dad.

Lucy bursts through the crowd, from the house.

LUCY

Nobody holds this baby before me!

Theo turns to camera, makes a "here we go" face.

END MONTAGE

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Theo opens wine as Lucy cooks. James is about to exit.

JAMES

Lucy, you can bring Richard sometimes.
I don't mind.

LUCY

It's fine. He has his family at
Christmas, I have mine.

They share a smile, then James exits as Brent enters.

BRENT

(to Theo)
That baby is gorgeous.

THEO

Right? I'm crazy in love.

LUCY

I'm happy for you, sweetie.

She kisses Theo's cheek. Then, looks him in the eye.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(whispers)
It's okay to miss her.

BRENT

Lucy!

LUCY

(to Theo)
I'm just saying, don't judge yourself
for it. There's the life we live,
and the one we keep an eye on...
(gestures beside her)
... somewhere over there. It just is.

Theo offers her a grateful, knowing smile. Sam pops in.

SAM

Dad wants a picture. Hurry, before
the boys melt down.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

THROUGH A DIGITAL CAMERA LENS, we see James, Lucy, Sam, Brent, Oscar and Blake posing around Theo, who holds his baby. In the foreground, we see A WOMAN'S HANDS adjust the camera angle and timer. General commotion:

BRENT

Do I have time to pee?

SAM

No.

JAMES

(to Lucy)

Anything in my teeth?

LUCY

I don't have to do that anymore.

SAM

(re: James's teeth)

All good.

(then, the space)

Wait. How's this going to work?

THEO

She'll hit the timer and come over.

How long have you been on this planet?

(then, noticing)

It's flashing, honey. Come on.

STORYTELLER

In the end, what matters is not whom
Theo chose to be in his life...

They all AD-LIB: "Hurry!" "Come through here." "Somebody
say something funny." We're on HER BACK as she enters frame:

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

What matters is that he actually
chose.

Just as she is about to reveal herself, we FREEZE:

INT. THEO'S NEW APARTMENT - MORNING

Theo wakes in bed, looks next to him (O.S.) and smiles.

STORYTELLER

And the next day, he chose again.

INT. THEO'S NEW APARTMENT - BABY'S ROOM - EVENING

Theo takes the baby from the crib and hands it to HER (O.S.).

STORYTELLER

And days later, he chose again.

INT. THEO'S NEW APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Theo paces, frustrated, clearly mid-argument with HER (O.S.)

STORYTELLER

And on days when he didn't want to choose...

SAME - LATER

Theo sleeps on the couch with a blanket.

STORYTELLER

... he made himself choose again.

Theo shakes his head, gets up and walks into the BEDROOM.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Theo pushes a stroller down the street. Something off-screen catches his eye. His face lights up a bit.

STORYTELLER

And months later, when he saw the woman he'd let go, smiling and happy, he knew the last thing he should do is call out to her...

It's clear Theo is really wrestling with this... and then the BABY COOS. Theo stops, looks down at his son. Relieved.

THEO

Thanks, buddy.

STORYTELLER

... he chose again.

Theo continues pushing his baby down the sidewalk...

Fade to Black.

THE END

JUST FOR US - POST-CREDIT FUN

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Theo pushes a stroller down the street. Something off-screen catches his eye.

STORYTELLER

... when he saw the woman he'd let go, smiling and happy, he knew the last thing he should do is call out to her...

As Theo watches her and contemplates calling out, he hears the BABY COO. Theo stops, looks down at his son. Relieved.

THEO

Thanks, buddy.

INT. FLORIDA HOME - DAY

Lucy watches RICHARD (60s, retired doctor, the familiar voice of the STORYTELLER) reading from a laptop.

RICHARD

... he chose again.

He looks up at her.

LUCY

Well, what do you think?

RICHARD

I think you have to tell people which woman he picked.

LUCY

No. That's the whole point of my essay - there is no purely happy ending in life, every happy ending has some complexity to it, some balance of gain and loss. I want the reader to feel what Theo feels.

RICHARD

So that's how you feel about our happy ending? Some gain, some loss?

Frustrated and on-the-spot, she takes the computer from him.

LUCY

Don't make this about you, Richard, it's about my son's mid-life crisis.

RICHARD

But I'm curious, what did you lose in picking me?

LUCY
Someone who compliments my writing,
apparently.

He gets up and crosses to her.

RICHARD
(teasing)
Well, whatever it is, I am very sorry
for your loss.

LUCY
(teasing back)
I don't know why I left my marriage
for this.

He grabs her, offers a good, strong kiss. Then:

LUCY (CONT'D)
(smiling)
It's coming back to me.

Fade to Black AGAIN.