

# ON

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INT. GRAMERCY TAVERN - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

In some upscale Flatiron restaurant, a host of HYPER-COMPATIBLE COUPLES (20s-60s) eat the same FOOD, wear the same BRANDS, employ the same HAND GESTURES.

It's like a page out of NOAH'S ARK:

A) Two BESPECTACLED NEUROTICS chatter fervently as they remove PINE NUTS from their SALADS one-by-one...

MARCH (O.S.)

Of course, I've never really cared  
about finding a perfect match.

B) Two WALL STREET GAYS take equal bites from their CLUB SANDWICHES, equal SIPS from their ARNOLD PALMERS...

MARCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I mean -- yes, matching pairs are  
*ideal*...

C) Two SHAMELESS PATRONS BELLY-LAUGH as they scoop marinara sauce up with their INDEX FINGERS...

MARCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...but I think people who get hung  
up on that kind of thing have a  
little too much time on their  
hands.

AT A NEARBY TWO-TOP

We find MARCH BERGER dining with her fiancé, RED CORBY (late 20s). They're both dressed in conservative EARTH TONES, eat STEAK AND POTATOES.

MARCH (CONT'D)

...So, naturally, it's not until we  
get to my boss' apartment and she  
asks us to take off our shoes that  
I even realize I'm wearing two  
different socks -- let alone that  
one's a beige ankle and the other's  
a burgundy tube.

(beat)

In my defense: Shouldn't the owners  
of shoeless households give some  
kind of advanced warning?

March waits on a laugh that doesn't come. Looks up to catch Red staring quizzically at her PLATE.

MARCH (CONT'D)

...Red?

RED

You haven't touched it.

MARCH

What?

RED

The steak. You haven't eaten any.

MARCH

Sure I have.

RED

First you cut it up into small pieces, and now you're pushing the pieces around on your plate.

MARCH

That's ridiculous.

RED

(pointing)

That triangular piece was over by the potatoes. Now it's next to your peas.

March averts her gaze. Knows this is bad.

RED (CONT'D)

...You don't really like tenderloin, do you, March?

Her SILENCE affirms.

RED (CONT'D)

What are we doing?

MARCH

What do you mean?

RED

You and me. This. What are we doing getting married?

MARCH

You want to break up over one disparate preference?

RED

It's not one disparate preference.  
It's a mountain of disparate  
preferences.

(for instance)

You use fragrance-free detergent. I  
like my clothes to smell like rain.

MARCH

I like my clothes to smell like  
rain, too. I just have sensitive  
skin.

RED

What about the music videos?

MARCH

We hate music videos. We think  
they're indulgent and trite.

RED

I think they're indulgent and  
trite. You love them. You watch  
them in the middle of the night  
while I'm asleep.

(what's more)

I don't like using chopsticks when  
we eat Chinese food.

MARCH

You agreed that chopsticks are a  
part of the cultural experience.

RED

I lied.

MARCH

Why?

RED

The same reason you lied about  
liking Scrabble.

MARCH

We play Scrabble all the time.

RED

And you hate every minute of it,  
don't you?

She considers lying, then:

MARCH

-- It's a game of chance posing as a game of strategy. What's "A-E"? That's not a word. There are no consonants. It's barely a sound.

Red FLUSHES, incredulous.

MARCH (CONT'D)

So, fine, then. We disagree on a couple of things. Those are blips. Those are outliers. They hardly amount to a foundational mismatch.

Just then, a WAITER appears with a PEPPER GRINDER.

RED

(to WAITER)  
No, thank you.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(to WAITER)  
-- Please.

Red SIGHS. Insult to injury.

RED

Look, March. I've seen my fair share of traditionalist marriages. There's a reason they've fallen out of favor. Affection is fleeting. Day-to-day preferences are *forever*. We can pretend all we want, but sooner or later, compromise breeds friction, and friction breeds resentment. It's common sense.

March finds his gaze. She's TEARING UP.

MARCH

I want to spend the rest of my life with you, Red. So what if it doesn't make sense? I love you. Isn't that enough?

OFF Red's conflicted glance, we

SMASH TO:

**CARD: "THREE MONTHS LATER"**

EXT. VARIOUS - NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

AS CREDITS ROLL, we're passed off to a string of TRAVELERS on their way to work. Throughout this sequence, a host of clues give us the sense that this particular Manhattan is a side-step from our own, or perhaps in the very near FUTURE:

A) A YOUNG MAN traverses a crowded block, but there's not a SHUFFLE in sight... foot traffic is synchronized, and it seems EVERYBODY KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE THEY'RE GOING.

B) A TEENAGER descends the stairs to the subway, approaches the car in perfect time with its opening DOORS...

C) An EXEC TYPE passes a STREET VENDOR, takes a pre-poured COFFEE from Vendor's hands WITHOUT STOPPING...

This future Manhattan is less about GADGETS and more about efficient SYSTEMS -- it's as if everyone on the island is operating in METHODOICAL HARMONY.

EXT. THE-POINT-IS HEADQUARTERS - NYC - MORNING

Our last traveler is an INTERN (20) who arrives outside of a ritzy glass tower.

INT. LOBBY, THE-POINT-IS HQ - CONTINUOUS

Intern enters a blinding white lobby, where a fluorescent emblem over the reception desk reads "ThePointIs Publishing."

As he passes toward an elevator bank, we spot a collection of FAMOUS PASSAGES overlaid on the wall: Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage" quote, Newton's second law, the American Constitution...

Each overlaid quotation is partially STRUCK THROUGH with SLEEK RED LINES, seeming to insinuate that here, these famous texts are "edited."

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

March walks on a TREADMILL DESK, recites a tedious pitch from a stack of NOTE CARDS.

MARCH

...If chosen to lead, I would strive for an edit that favors the central -- and might I add the *tumultuous* -- relationship between Nick and Jay. By focusing on their sections in particular, we would be able to enter the story later, and futhermore --

March DROPS A CARD, which gets caught on the moving belt.

## A JUMP WIDE REVEALS

This is, in fact, a conference room exclusively furnished with TREADMILL DESKS. Eight-or-so EMPLOYEES face one another as they stride dutifully in place.

On the WALLS, framed POSTERS spotlight abridged projects of the past. Most prominently: *Hamlet, A Tragedy in 20 Pages*.

March struggles to dismount, collect her notes, re-mount. March's boss, HOPE TRACER (50s, power suit) sips a macchiato, unimpressed.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Ah, anyway -- or, rather, *furthermore*, there's a wonderful metaphor to be examined here vis-a-vis each man's relationship to his insatiable yearning. For instance --

HOPE

-- I think we've heard enough, March.

MARCH

If I could just --

HOPE (O/L)

Do we have any other pitches?

CARBON (O.S.)

I say we strike him altogether.

## NEW ANGLE REVEALS CARBON TRULY (30s)

Striding briskly on a nearby desk. Carbon's the walking emblem of her hyper-efficient world: curt, tailored and CONFIDENT -- with the emotional complexity of a No. 2 pencil.

CARBON (CONT'D)

What's left is the story of a young bond salesman who moves to New York and starts a relationship with a golfer. He drinks too much, and the romance falls apart.

HOPE

(chewing this)  
A cautionary tale.

CARBON

That's right.

Another employee, QUID CHALK (male, 30s, bridge-and-tunnel), riffs on the concept.

QUID

The dangers of addiction. The *disillusionment* of addiction.

HOPE

Disillusionment. That's good.

CARBON

We could keep his cousin's husband, I think. They eat lunch together once or twice.

HOPE

On the golf course?

A female editor, BLUSH MEEKS (20s) chimes in. She's optimistic, somewhat OBLIVIOUS.

BLUSH

Maybe they talk about his drinking habit.

MARCH

-- What about the title?

HOPE

What about it?

MARCH

Well, I just think -- I mean that I'd assume -- they're going to expect *someone* named Gatsby to appear at some point in the story... right?

March's colleagues return blank stares. For a moment, only the delicate squeak of loafers on rubber.

HOPE

(to CARBON)

It's a great angle. I'll have the team start culling next week.

A perfunctory smile from Carbon -- not the first project she's landed.

March stifles her disappointment. Squares her index cards.

INT. MIDTOWN BAR - EVENING

March, Carbon, and Blush share a high-top at bougie happy hour spot.

BLUSH

You each fill out a digital lifestyle survey. It's mostly standard stuff: your preferred bedtime, your desired thermostat temperature. It's called Snap Coding. It's becoming very popular in Europe.

CARBON

How many questions are there?

BLUSH

About seven thousand, give-or-take. The more you answer, the more accurate your score.  
(gushing)  
Mole and I are 92.7% compatible.

Carbon finishes her cocktail. No sooner does she set down her empty glass than a PASSING WAITER exchanges it for a refill.

BLUSH (CONT'D)

Are you dating at all, March?

MARCH

Not yet. Soon. Just, you know. A lot on my plate.

CARBON

Have you gotten a Toy?

MARCH

Red and I were always more traditional with sex.

CARBON

The newest generation is totally customizable. I taught mine to sync my orgasm with my morning coffee. Another one fucks me to sleep every night at 11:15.

BLUSH

You have two?

Carbon -- FOUR fingers.

CARBON

The whole thing is incredibly efficient. I haven't dated in months, and my sex life has never been better. Plus, with all the time I've saved on men, I've gained an extra thirteen minutes in my biweekly pilates sessions.

(to BLUSH)

Feel my lower abdomen.

BLUSH

Very taut.

Just then, a BELL CHIMES pleasantly overhead and, as if CUED, the women collect their purses and jackets.

CARBON

So great to catch up, ladies.

BLUSH

Same time next week?

MARCH

I'm free to grab dinner, if anyone's up for it.

Carbon and Blush STAND.

BLUSH

("sorry")

Mole and I are making dream catchers tonight. We both love crafts. And dreams.

CARBON

I have an orgasm scheduled for seven-thirty.

MARCH

Oh, alright. Well thanks again for inviting me. It's really great to spend time together outside of --

NEW PATRON (O/L)

-- Excuse me.

March turns to discover a NEW TRIO OF WOMEN waiting to sit. All around the bar, the next "shift" of patrons have taken over the tables.

MARCH

Oh, I'm sorry.

March stands, steps to the side. When she turns back around, Carbon and Blush are GONE.

EXT. MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NEW YORK CITY - EVENING

March arrives home to her Upper East Side brownstone, approaches her stoop just as a passing MAILMAN hands off a stack of envelopes.

MARCH  
(to MAILMAN)  
So much for the rain, right?

But he's ALREADY GONE.

INT. KITCHEN, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March sits at the head of the dining table with a copy of *Little Women*. Eats the world's crunchiest salad in the world's quietest room.

March is dwarfed by the large, BARREN space. The room reads like a parody of minimalist decor -- backless chairs, lamps hanging from piano wire, a glass-blown bookshelf with a single ledge.

Chic, functionless, and impossibly STERILE. Not a wall decoration in sight.

March balls her SWEATER, sits on it. *Fucking stool.*

LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

March channel surfs on a pillowless couch.

ON THE TV -- RAPID SERIES:

A) A POLITICAL COMMENTATOR addresses an INTERVIEWER.

POLITICAL COMMENTATOR (ON TV)  
*Economy is key here. How do we  
streamline the legislation process?*

B) A saccharine INFOMERCIAL HOST (40s) advertises a MOP-MEETS-IPOD-STAND.

INFOMERCIAL HOST (ON TV)  
*...Ever wonder where those seven  
minutes went?*

C) A REALITY STAR does a 'confessional' cut-away.

REALITY STAR (ON TV)  
*I'm twenty-nine years old. My eggs  
 aren't going to hang around  
 forever...*

D) We finally lands on a holdover MUSIC VIDEO NETWORK playing Olivia Newton John's "Physical." Baked and buff THIGHS thrust and gyrate against archaic WORKOUT EQUIPMENT.

MARCH

Settles on it, satisfied. Mouths along under her breath.

BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

March lies in the tub MASTURBATING with the SHOWER HEAD. It's not quite roomy enough for her to stretch out, but she's giving it her best.

She slides down onto her back, knees bent... Then sits up, legs straight. Splits the difference.

Suddenly, the water takes a SCALDING TURN.

MARCH

AH! --

CUT TO:

BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

March hangs blouses in her closet. Her entire wardrobe looks like it belongs on the OREGON TRAIL.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(rehearsing)

*Little Women is, in the most basic sense, a story of mortality. But it's also about women's loss of innocence. Young women's loss of innocence.*

Suddenly, something catches her eye on the top shelf --

She reaches up and retrieves a SCRABBLE TILE. Flips it over. It's BLANK.

She might cry -- STEELS HERSELF instead. Trashes it. Returns to the closet.

## MARCH (CONT'D)

*Little Women...* is about *LITTLE*  
women's loss of *BIG* innocence.

## MIDNIGHT

March lies awake in bed -- the recovered TILE now perched on the nightstand.

After a beat, she retrieves her LAPTOP from beneath the bed. Opens it, inputs a search.

## ON THE SCREEN

Is a 3-D GALLERY OF MALE SEX TOYS. They look exactly like HUMANS -- albeit NUDE and HAIRLESS. A banner at the top of the screen reads "LIVE TOYS CUSTOM COMPANIONSHIP," announces the arrival of the GENERATION 7 MALES.

These "Basic Models" cover a wide spectrum of sexual proclivities: all races and ages -- some handsome, others dowdy -- tall, short, fat, thin, queeny, deformed, athletic.

As March's cursor TOGGLES over these models, a host of hyper-customizable features hover in the foreground: eye color, skin color, body type, teeth shade...

## COOING FEMALE VOICE (PRE-LAP)

*Welcome to the 7th Generation of  
personalized companionship.*

OFF MARCH'S  
CURIOUS GAZE:

## INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

Another day. March stands over an open box, appraises its contents. Hard to tell if this is intrigue or disgust.

## COOING FEMALE VOICE (PRE-LAP)

*As the owner of a custom-tailored  
Live Toy, discreet, one-of-a-kind  
intimacy is only a touch away.*

## IN THE BOX

Is the contorted figure of a NAKED MAN, packed as efficiently as a tract of small intestine. His thighs lay flat to his stomach, like a fetus -- or maybe like a FUTON. His features are mostly obscured beneath copious PACKING PEANUTS.

COOING FEMALE VOICE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)  
*From the moment of activation, our  
 positive reinforcement technology  
 will ensure that your Toy remembers  
 your pleasure cues -- and only your  
 pleasure cues.*

MARCH

Looks wary as she finally reaches down, attempts to dislodge her purchase from its casing.

COOING FEMALE VOICE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)  
*The more often you use your  
 device...*

She tries to slide her arms around his torso... finally manages a sad grip underneath his ARMPITS. She straddles the box with her feet to keep it stationary as she YANKS! --

COOING FEMALE VOICE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)  
*...the more aptly it will please  
 you.*

The figure lifts slightly, but catches on the edge of the box. A second try, but no dice. March releases, leaving him slumped in a semi-upright position.

*This thing is fucking HEAVY.*

BEDROOM - LATER

On the duvet is March's still-to-be-activated Toy, laid out in the buff for our unflinching appraisal:

He's the proverbial CENTAUR of female fantasies: The bearded hipster who's also seen a gym... Hair on his chest, but none on the nipples... Sun-tanned skin and clean fingernails...

COOING FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
 (from PHONE)  
*March Berger: Your Toy, **UNNAMED**,  
 has now been activated. Would you  
 like to assign a name to your  
 device?*

ANGLE ON MARCH AT THE FOOT OF THE BED

As she considers... then HANGS UP her automated call.

With equal parts fear and wonder, she clinically examines her Toy's construction:

A) She presses her thumb into his forearm -- surprised to see the color drain from the site, just like HUMAN SKIN...

B) She pushes the CUTICLES UP on his toenails...

C) She quizzically squeezes his PENIS...

D) She hesitantly puts two FINGERS in his mouth, withdraws them to find their tips coated in SALIVA. *From where? How?*

Finally, she slides her hand down the base of his SCALP, searches for a touch pad...

And HIS EYES BLINK OPEN.

Toy's gaze SCANS THE ROOM for a moment, finally comes to rest on MARCH'S FACE. His glance is inquisitive and unself-conscious, like that of a passing TODDLER on the subway.

With a lateral twitch, his eyes MAP the singularities of her facial features. After a beat, his gaze travels down her BODY... "memorizing" its arrangement and contours.

When he's finished, his focus returns to March's face. Awaits instruction.

MARCH

Stand.

We watch as her Toy "PROCESSES" this command -- HIS PUPILS DILATE, seeming to DOUBLE IN SIZE.

Once they've returned to their NORMAL SIZE, he pulls himself up to standing. His nascent movement is stilted.

March and her Toy stand nose-to-nose for a long beat.

Finally, she reaches out and TOUCHES HIS FACE. His expression is present, if imperceptible.

Then, without warning:

TOY

Hello, March.

March STARTLES --

-- Instinctively POWERS HIM OFF.

Toy COLLAPSES ONTO THE CARPET.

March catches her breath. Embarrassed, in spite of herself.

EXT. PARK - NELSONVILLE, NEW YORK - DAY

March's portly nephew REGIS (11) clutches a FOOTBALL between his legs, attempts a LONG SNAP that barely sputters half a FOOT.

DELL (O.S.)  
Almost, bud.

WIDE REVEALS

March playing quarterback five yards behind. Her sister DELL BERGER (30s) coaches from the sidelines.

MARCH  
That's alright. You're doing great.

DELL  
Remember what your aunt March said about lining up your fingers?

REGIS  
Uh-huh.

MARCH  
You ready for another one?

REGIS  
Should I throw it faster?

MARCH  
*Higher*, bud. A little higher.

Regis nods.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
Alright, here we go...

Regis assumes the position.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
Set... HUT!

The ball pops up LATERALLY, clips Dell's THIGH.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
(encouraging)  
Yeah. Better.

LATER

March and Dell look on from the BLEACHERS as Regis lumbers through his SUICIDE SPRINTS.

This upstate town feels like a far cry from hyper-efficient Manhattan -- neighbors stop to chat on the sidewalk, a crowd idles outside of a cafe... there's an air of community and aimlessness that feels much more FAMILIAR to us.

DELL

It's the only thing he enjoys outside of his VR headset. If he doesn't make the team, I don't think I'll see his eyebrows again.

MARCH

Have you heard of the Snap Code?

DELL

If it's not a Birkenstock or a dry rub, you can assume it hasn't reached Nelsonville yet.

MARCH

It's a new dating algorithm.

DELL

You know people got together before the 'compatibility' revolution, right?

MARCH

Sure. And half of them got divorced.

DELL

Is this about Red?

MARCH

No.

Dell -- *are you sure.*

MARCH (CONT'D)

Maybe he was right. Maybe we were doomed by our practical differences.

DELL

Or maybe he's just an asshole.

MARCH

I'm serious.

DELL

So am I.

MARCH

Looking back on it now, I can think of a million things I conceded to him. My friends, my career, my *furniture*... maybe it was only a matter of time before I resented him for it.

DELL

Or maybe you would've resented him anyway.

MARCH

You're just a contrarian.

DELL

Do you really want to date yourself?

MARCH

No.

(on second thought)

I don't know. I just think maybe next time around, I should approach things more practically.

DELL

Love doesn't work that way. There's no such thing as a sure bet.

MARCH

But what if there was?

DELL

Then maybe I wouldn't be raising Dan Marino on my own.

In B.G., Regis TRIPS over a DANDELION PATCH, struggles back up onto his feet.

DELL (CONT'D)

(calling)

Good hustle, bud!

INT. 'THE STRAND' BOOKSTORE - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March peruses a bookshelf, stops at a spine: *The Final Comet*. On the "About the Author" jacket, she finds a YOUNGER PHOTO OF HERSELF. She looks BRIGHT-EYED. Optimistic.

March shuts the book. Shelves it.

## WIDE REVEALS

She's in the BACK CORNER of the store's dingy BASEMENT, where "Long-Form Literature" has come to die. Besides March, only a handful of GERIATRICS linger.

## UPSTAIRS - MINUTES LATER

March emerges onto the bustling main floor, where full-length novels have been replaced with "lit-lite." Books are now as thin as Playbills, organized by PAGE COUNT.

She approaches the 'FEATURED READS' table at the front of the store, finds an abridged *Romeo and Juliet*, edited by Carbon.

## INSIDE THE BOOK

An entire scene reads as:

*ROMEO: But, soft! What light through yonder window  
breaks? It is Juliet.*

*JULIET: Deny thy father and refuse thy name.*

*ROMEO: Henceforth I am not Romeo.*

She replaces the book, notes an EMPTY PEDESTAL at the center of the table. She gazes at it longingly...

Until an EMPLOYEE sets out a new title: *60 Seconds to Sober*.

## INT. BEDROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March approaches her closet in a NIGHTIE. She pulls open the double doors, finds her Toy deactivated -- and, as always, NAKED -- in his wrought iron stand.

After a moment, she reaches for the TOUCH PAD at the base of his scalp... his eyes FLUTTER OPEN, land on her face.

MARCH

Come down.

Toy PROCESSES, steps out onto the carpet.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Your name is David John.

David John processes... NODS.

MARCH (CONT'D)

I'd like you to kiss me.

David John steps forward, takes her face in his hands, pulls her lips into a soft KISS. The gesture is notably SMOOTHER than their last session -- his physical development has picked up where it left off.

After a beat, March moves toward the end of the bed.

MARCH (CONT'D)

I want you to take my clothes off.  
Slowly, like this.

David John watches as March pulls a strap from her negligee. Lets it drop.

He steps forward, gently releases the other strap.

March's slip FALLS TO THE GROUND.

Next, she steps forward... TAKES HIM into her HAND. His gaze remains impartial as she begins to STIMULATE HIM. The exchange is STERILE, emotionless. Bizarre.

Once he's reached a desirable "setting," March pulls away.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Now, lie down on your back.

David John processes, lies back onto the bed.

Moments later, March slips her panties off,

Climbs onto the duvet beside him.

With a transition both abrupt and clinical, March pulls herself on top of him,

Straddles his torso,

And, finally, GUIDES HIM INSIDE OF HERSELF.

She grips the top of her HEADBOARD as she rolls her hips forward, plants his hands on her backside.

March's eyes flutter as her head lolls backward in pleasure.

MARCH (CONT'D)

*God...*

A soft moan. She bites her lip.

WE STAY ON MARCH

As the action proceeds. She gradually loses herself to her passion. Her breath quickens, and before long...

...she succumbs to a POWERFUL ORGASM.

THE NEXT MORNING

March's eyes squint open in the early morning sunlight.

She smiles, warmed by thoughts of last night. But moments later, she's struck by a THOUGHT --

-- Looks down to discover an ARM WRAPPED AROUND HER TORSO.

WIDE REVEALS

David John's still lying beside her, his gaze locked placidly on the back of her head. *She fell asleep in his arms.*

Disconcerted, March slips from his embrace,

Powers him OFF.

INT. HALLWAY, THE-POINT-IS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

March approaches Hope's office, KNOCKS.

HOPE (O.S.)  
(calling)  
Yes.

INSIDE

She finds Hope on her TREADMILL DESK talking into an EARPIECE.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
(into PHONE)  
Any kind of dark wood. -- Espresso is fine. -- Flowers at the front, one violin. Arrange the rest at your discretion -- who cares what her hair looks like? It's a closed casket. Uh-huh. Bye-bye.

In the absence of any CHAIRS, March is forced to stand in the center of the CARPET in front of Hope's desk.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
March. I read your *Jane Eyre* pages, and once again, I'm drowning in landscape description. *Drowning*, March. I'm thirty thousand leagues under the sea.

MARCH  
 (correcting, sotto)  
 Twenty.

HOPE  
 Huh?

MARCH  
 I pulled a page and a half at Lowood, but the section about the frosted forest is -- one could argue that it's an integral metaphor for Jane's isolation.

HOPE  
 You're eleven pages over par. Our educators are paying for digestible literature, not musings on the weather. Anyone who's been outside can imagine a tree.

MARCH  
 I'm just trying to preserve the author's original intention.

HOPE  
 And that's exactly why you're still a secondary. Look at Carbon. You joined the same year and she's got sixteen above-the-title credits. Even Quid's taken projects, and he has the leadership skills of a wet noodle.  
 (in sum)  
 I'm giving you until the end of the quarter to prove me wrong. Efficiency isn't just our mantra, March. It's our brand. If you're not an asset, then you're dead weight.

March ingests this, offers a bleak nod.

INT. MARCH'S OFFICE, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

March climbs onto her own personal treadmill desk, which automatically begins to MOVE.

ON MARCH'S TABLET

A digital copy of *Jane Eyre* springs to life. She scrolls through the document, 90% of which has been STRUCK THROUGH with RED LINES.

Moments later, Carbon pops her head in.

CARBON

March: quick question. The car hits...?

MARCH

(this is routine)  
Myrtle Wilson.  
(OFF Carbon's blank stare)  
...She's Tom's mistress.  
(still nothing)  
...He's Daisy's husband.  
(nope)  
...The female cousin of Nick.

CARBON

-- The *drinker*. You're a whiz.  
Coffee next week?

Without waiting for an answer, she's OFF.

EXT. WEST VILLAGE - NEW YORK CITY - EVENING

March passes the basketball courts on West 4th street -- in lieu of a pick-up game, teenagers wander the cage in VR HELMETS. One collides with the FENCE.

March dials a number on her cell:

MARCH

(into PHONE)  
Polly? This is March. I just wanted to see if maybe you were around tomorrow and wanted to --  
(beat)  
-- March Berger.  
(beat)  
No, we did. We did break up. But I figured, you know, just because I'm not with Red anymore doesn't mean we can't still be friends, right?  
(beat)  
Oh. I see. Well, when you put it that way...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March sits on her balled-up sweater on her shitty, saucer-sized STOOL. She's eating SALMON. It's IMPOSSIBLY QUIET.

After a long beat, she clears her throat.

MARCH

My ex didn't like fish. I love salmon. So... now I get to eat it all the time.

(beat)

It's a superfood, you know. The amino acids repair damage to your cardiovascular tissue, and the Omega-3 Fatty Acids lower your cholesterol.

REVERSE ANGLE REVEALS

On the other side of the table, David John sits activated in a seat... STILL NUDE. He watches attentively as March eats.

A lengthy beat of silence. March tables her fork.

MARCH (CONT'D)

I'd like it if you would say something to me. The tutorial said you could speak.

David John PROCESSES a moment, his pupils dilating.

MARCH (CONT'D)

"Custom speech." Does that mean anything to you? I paid more for "custom speech."

(OFF silence)

...because I'm a sucker.

She starts collecting her dishes -- *this was a stupid idea.*

Then, suddenly:

DAVID JOHN

Salmon is good for your heart.

Mark looks up, stunned.

MARCH

What did you say?

DAVID JOHN

The fatty acids in salmon are good for your heart.

MARCH

(pleased)

That's right.

March smiles. David John PROCESSES... smiles back.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

March stands in the living room, reads from a stack of NOTE CARDS. David John sits on the couch at full attention.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Ah, so. *The Sun Also Rises* is, in the most basic sense, a love story between Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley... but it also explores the devolution of Jake's masculinity against the backdrop of World War I, and also the changing sexual landscape of the 1920s.

(revising)

-- The newfound sexual freedom of the 1920s.

(not quite)

-- The 1920s' newfound sexual ideals.

March edits her notes. As she does, David John PROCESSES her text, regurgitates a condensed version:

DAVID JOHN

It's a book about sex.

MARCH

Not exactly, no. I mean -- yes, in a way, but only insofar as sex relates to Jake's masculinity. He's impotent, and his impotence serves a larger theme of what it means to be a man. This then serves an even broader argument about the personal repercussions of World War I on its soldiers, and I'd say an even greater statement about strength. And, you know, by turn... weakness.

A beat, then:

DAVID JOHN

It's a book about impotence.

MARCH

(deflating)

This is it. I lost my fiancé, and now I'm going to lose my job.

(MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

Pretty soon, I'll have to move back to Dayton and sell corn out of my parents' Winnebago.

(beat)

It isn't fair. Carbon only lands these projects because she's self-assured in her ignorance. Because she *wills* people to believe that she knows what she's talking about.

DAVID JOHN

Ignorant people are successful.

MARCH

So that's it, then -- "custom speech" just means you repeat whatever I say?

DAVID JOHN

If you're the most confident person, you're the most successful person.

MARCH

(agitated)

It's not that simple. That's a reductive take on the situation. There are lots of -- there are plenty of other reasons why things haven't worked out for me. There are many factors at play that I haven't told you about.

BEDROOM - LATER

David John climbs into his CLOSET STAND. March reaches behind his neck and POWERS HIM OFF.

IN BED - MINUTES LATER

March lies awake, stares at the ceiling. Is it that simple?

INT. ELEVATOR/LOBBY, THE-POINT-IS HQ - MORNING

March boards the elevator with her nose in a copy of *The Sun Also Rises*. She mumbles "key words" to herself, looks like she hasn't slept.

Moments later, a beaming Blush enters behind her.

BLUSH

Good morning, March.

MARCH

Hi, Blush.

The car begins to RISE. Blush notes the cards, keeps quiet... until, abruptly:

BLUSH

-- I'M GETTING MARRIED!

Blush thrusts forth her ring finger, looks like she's about to SHIT HER PANTS.

MARCH

Oh, wow! That's amazing.  
(hugging her)  
Congratulations.

BLUSH

His proposal was so beautiful,  
March.

MARCH

I can't wait to hear all about it.

Blush hits the EMERGENCY STOP button, dives right in.

BLUSH

It all started around 8:15. Mole and I were eating lemon merengue pie -- citrus fruits are a Level 1 Shared Preference of ours -- and when we were finished, he told me that he had to go inside to use the bathroom -- but he didn't *really* have to use the bathroom...

March eyes her watch, antsy. Smiles politely.

MARCH

That's wild. I think we should probably get to the office, though, before the meeting starts.

Blush looks momentarily stung, then:

BLUSH

(realizing)  
Oh my God. I'm so sorry, March. Here I am rambling on about my engagement, when you were dumped by your fiancé after eight years.

MARCH

Oh, no -- that wasn't --

BLUSH

-- No, you were. You absolutely were. HR told me all about it on my first day.

MARCH

What?

BLUSH

It must have been traumatizing. You're probably thinking about it right now, aren't you.

MARCH

I wasn't. I am now.

BLUSH

Listen, March -- just because you were savagely rejected by the person you trusted the most doesn't mean you don't have value as a human being. *You have value.*

MARCH

Thanks, Blush, but it's really --

BLUSH

-- It doesn't matter if Red didn't see it, or Hope doesn't see it, or the interns downstairs don't see it...

MARCH

The interns talk about me?

BLUSH

Look at me.  
(taking March's FACE in her hands)  
*I see it.*

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

March emerges from the elevator in a COLD SWEAT.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

The weekly meeting is in full swing -- Carbon finishes delivering a vibrant pitch.

CARBON

...the remaining edit leaves us with Jake Barnes: a man whose drinking problem ruins his vacation to Madrid.

HOPE

Biting stuff, Carbon. Very universal themes at play here.

(then)

Is that all for *Sun Also Rises*?

MARCH

I have a proposal.

HOPE

(dubious)

Let's hear it.

ON MARCH'S TREADMILL DESK

Is the stack of NOTE CARDS, several PHOTO REFERENCES, the NOVEL. She clears her throat, wipes her palms on her skirt, begins reading off of her notes:

MARCH

*The Sun Also Rises* explores the devolution of Jake Barnes' masculinity against the backdrop of World War I...

March hesitates, looks up from her cards. She's losing them, like always.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(going off script)

Impotence. *The Sun Also Rises* is the story of an impotent man. He wants to have sex, but his penis doesn't work, and so... most other things in his life don't work, either.

Hope considers this for a beat, then:

HOPE

(to MARCH)

Sounds fine. You'll pick a team next week.

MARCH

Really?

HOPE  
 (moving on)  
*As I Lay Dying.* For God's sake,  
 somebody tell me something good...

Across the room, Blush gives March a THUMBS UP. March beams, tries to repress her excitement.

INT. KITCHEN, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Back at home, March GUSHES to David John over dinner.

DAVID JOHN  
 She was impressed.

MARCH  
 She was definitely impressed. After the meeting she pulled me aside and said, "Nice work." But the way she said it -- it wasn't...  
 (pedestrian)  
 "Nice work." It was more like...  
 (awestruck)  
 "Nice work."

DAVID JOHN  
 She spoke in a low voice.

MARCH  
 No, what I mean is that she was genuinely pleased with the work I had done. And when it's published, I'll finally have a book on the top floor. It's like my Nana used to say: "Fortune favors the bold."

David John PROCESSES, then:

DAVID JOHN  
 You're the smartest woman in your office.

MARCH  
 Well, I don't know about that...

A beat, then:

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 You know what? I am the smartest woman in my office.  
 (re: STOOL)  
 And I deserve to sit on a chair that's as big as my ass.

March laughs. David John LAUGHS BACK.

March laughs harder. David John laughs harder. Their laughter feeds each other... soon, March is laughing so hard she has TEARS IN HER EYES.

Off their CRESCENDO, we

CUT TO:

INT. MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - VARIOUS (MONTAGE)

As time passes, David John is gradually integrated into March's household routines, his behaviors becoming more NUANCED and COMPLEX with time. Meanwhile, March updates her home, bringing the space some much-needed CHARACTER:

- A) David John and March have sex in BED...
- B) March shows David John how to flip a cut of SALMON on the stove...
- C) March and David John repaint the walls GREEN...
- D) March and David John have sex in the shower...
- E) March lies naked on the couch reciting passages from *The Sun Also Rises* as David John rubs her FEET...
- F) David John serves March a perfectly-seared piece of SALMON...
- G) March's NECK REARS UPWARD as she ORGASMS...
- H) David John and March are further along in their painting: she splatters him with her BRUSH. He deftly follows her lead, and they wrestle each other to the FLOOR...
- I) March and David John reposition March's PLUSHY NEW SOFA in the living room, which is now fully-painted...
- J) March flops onto her back beside David John, post-coitus. Satisfied.

END MONTAGE.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

David John sits on the couch watching Fatboy Slim's "Weapon of Choice" video. Christopher Walken spins in his BAGGAGE CART.

MARCH (O.S.)

After his trip to the Sri Lankan temples, he got hooked on this new-aged, pseudo-minimalist kick. Of course, he had no qualms about hanging on to his parents' brownstone...

We may notice that David John's physical behavior has become much more HUMAN-LIKE, and his "processing" of external stimuli is significantly FASTER.

MARCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(from BEDROOM)

The funny thing is, I used to love clothes. I was actually voted "Miss Avante-Garde Ohio" at my sophomore hoedown.

Through the bedroom door, we see March appraising herself in a new, trendy CUT-OUT DRESS -- tag still attached. It's the first thing we've seen her in that doesn't scream 'SCHOOLMARM.'

DAVID JOHN

But then everything changed.

MARCH

God, it was *relentless*. He spoke out against anything 'loud': Paintings, clothes. He once called my bomber jacket a "totem of Western gratuity," and I was so ashamed that I gave it to my dry cleaner.

DAVID JOHN

He became an oppressive person. Someone you could hardly recognize.

MARCH

He used to tell me I was his 'nice girl.' Even worse -- I used to *like* it.

DAVID JOHN

He manipulated you.

MARCH

It was like brain-washing. Like mind control.

She emerges from her room in the DRESS.

DAVID JOHN  
You look just like Vivien Leigh.

MARCH  
(correcting)  
Elizabeth Taylor.

DAVID JOHN  
You look just like Elizabeth  
Taylor.

MARCH  
Anyway, I think my sister was  
right. I should look at this whole  
thing as a gift. An opportunity for  
self-discovery.  
(then)  
Starting with cut-outs.

She tears the TAG from her dress.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

March sets a POTTED ORCHID in the center of the dinner table.  
Fiddles with it. Steps back to appraise.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
(pleased)  
I have a plant.

When she turns back toward the foyer, she nearly trips over a  
BOX labeled "RED'S STUFF." On top, the SCRABBLE BOARD.

She sighs. *It's time.*

She picks up the PHONE and dials.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (PHONE)  
(laughing)  
Hello?

March bristles -- *who are you?*

MARCH (INTO PHONE)  
Is Red there?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Red's hands are covered in cheese  
right now. Can I help you?

RED (O.S.)  
 (from BACKGROUND)  
 Is it that Cincinnati number again?  
 Tell them I'm dead.

Indiscernible clattering, laughter. Woman SQUEALS, giggles.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
 (to RED)  
 Quit it!  
 (to MARCH)  
 Omigod. He's such a butthead  
 sometimes.  
 (to RED)  
 Yes you are a butthead!  
 (to MARCH)  
 Sorry -- who is this?

March stands there for a second, deflated.

...HANGS UP.

INT. ST. MARK'S DIVE BAR - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March sits at a hole-in-the-wall drinking Bourbon by herself. She FINISHES HER GLASS, and a WAITER appears from behind with a REFILL.

She DOWNS it in one gulp -- ANOTHER WAITER comes out of the woodwork with a THIRD.

Moments later, a trail of CIGARETTE SMOKE wafts in from an open window.

March COUGHS, looks outside for the source -- pissed. Covers her mouth with her sleeve.

OUTSIDE THE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Fed up and now VERY TIPSY, March exits the bar, spots a guy leaning against a tree, BACK TO CAMERA.

MARCH  
 Hi, excuse me -- would you mind  
 putting out your cigarette? Your  
 smoke is wafting into the bar.

Beat. Smoker's unresponsive.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 Oh, I see. Thank you for that, kind  
 sir. '  
 (MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

Tis I who forgot that the streets  
of Manhattan are yours, and yours  
alone. But could you do me a favor  
when you're finished? ...Would you  
mind going home, pulling out your  
thumb-sized penis, bending over the  
bathtub and --

MARCH (CONT'D)

-- *fucking* yourself?

SMOKER

Sorry, did you say something?

Smoker turns, pulls out his EARBUDS.

Welp. This is embarrassing.

To make matters worse...

SMOKER (CONT'D)

...March Berger?

MARCH

Goz?

...They RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER. This is GOZ PEERMAN (late 20s).  
Handsome in an unassuming way. Probably owns more records  
than shoes.

MARCH (CONT'D)

You're taller than you were in high  
school.

GOZ

That'll happen sometimes.

MARCH

Do you live in the city?

Goz points to a BEDROOM WINDOW across the street.

GOZ

You?

MARCH

Uptown.

A beat, then:

GOZ

Sorry -- did you just tell me to  
fuck myself?

MARCH

Oh, no -- that was just -- I  
thought you were somebody else.

(MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Somebody -- you know. Shitty.

Goz smiles. Endeared to her.

INSIDE THE BAR - LATER

March and Goz are getting SAUCED -- whiskey for her, gin for him. A palpable spark as they razz one another.

MARCH

...Other than that, you were perfectly likable.

GOZ

Your friends. Another steep detraction.

MARCH

Oh, so we're not finished?

GOZ

What was her name? The one who always insisted we perform a "sun salutation" before homeroom.

MARCH

Vine Phillips. She became a congresswoman.

GOZ

*Vine Phillips.*

MARCH

Your skateboard.

GOZ

What was wrong with my skateboard?

MARCH

You always carried it under your arm. It was very passé. Frankly, I'm not sure I ever saw you ride the thing.

GOZ

You were constantly apologizing. You apologized every time you raised your hand in class. "I'm sorry -- I just have a question." Drove me nuts.

MARCH

You ruined my 15th birthday.

Goz mimes a gunshot to the chest.

GOZ

I ruined your birthday?

MARCH

I took Vine and a few other girls to the Summer Solstice Festival. You and Moorehouse were there -- skateboards in tow -- and you threw up Four Loko all over our picnic blanket.

GOZ

Oh, God. That was *you*?

MARCH

We had to toss the entire charcuterie plate.

GOZ

Jesus. I'm really sorry. Honestly.

(beat)

You know what? I think there's only one way to make this up to you.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March and Goz sit on the steps of the Washington Square fountain, where a TALENTLESS MUSICIAN belts along to an acoustic, nearly-unrecognizable version of "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." Beside them, a deli-assembled CHEESE SPREAD.

GOZ

(re: SINGER)

To be fair, he's a terrific showman.

MARCH

Excellent posture.

GOZ

God, do you remember that local DJ on WSNY? What was his name?

March hesitates, then:

MARCH  
 ...David John.

GOZ  
 (remembering)  
 David John. That's right. 'DJ D.J.'  
 He was the only clean signal for  
 like twelve miles. It was always  
 this song and...

MARCH  
 The Cure. "Just Like Heaven."

Goz -- impressed.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 (explaining)  
 I used to call into the show when  
 my parents were asleep. I told him  
 I was a schoolteacher named Janey,  
 and he'd played songs for me.  
 (beat)  
 We used to talk. Never anything  
 special -- the weather, new sales  
 at the corner store. In my head, he  
 smelled like maple syrup and looked  
 just like Chachi Arcola.

GOZ  
 You must've been heartbroken.

March doesn't follow.

GOZ (CONT'D)  
 Didn't you hear? The guy bludgeoned  
 his wife to death with a soldering  
 iron. Must've been a few years  
 ago...

MARCH  
 (horrified)  
 ...What?

TALENTLESS MUSICIAN (SINGING)  
*And girls, they want to have fun...*

GOZ  
 Yeah. Pretty gruesome stuff.

March chews this, SHELL-SHOCKED. Vaguely ashamed.

Moments later, Goz extends a hand -- as in a DANCE  
 INVITATION.

MARCH

Oh -- no. I can't -- I mean, I don't dance. Publicly.

GOZ

Are you saying you'd like to go somewhere more private?

Goz grins -- half-kidding.

GOZ (CONT'D)

Hey so, I read your book. *The Final Comet*.

MARCH

Yeah?

GOZ

It was good. Really good.

(joke)

I've probably only read about nine books, but out of the nine it was at least, like -- number five. Maybe even four.

MARCH

You're too kind.

GOZ

Have you done anything since?

MARCH

I'm an editor now. Except, I don't add any words that weren't already there -- so really, it's more like culling. I'm actually leading my first project this month.

GOZ

Why'd you quit?

MARCH

Writing? I guess it just seemed like a dead end. Nobody reads long-form anymore.

(beat)

Plus, there's something kind of amazing in short-form. The editors I work with -- they can boil anything down to a single sentence. Life, loss, romance. The way they look at the world... it's like everything's simple. It's like everything's clear.

GOZ  
Maybe not every story's a  
soundbite.

MARCH  
Yeah, well. I made a choice.

GOZ  
Gotcha.  
(matter-of-fact)  
So then, you're a pussy.

March bristles, defensive.

MARCH  
What about you? What's the status  
on *your* grand plans?

GOZ  
Work's work. I never had any  
passions I could take to the bank,  
so when my uncle offered me a job,  
I moved to the city. That was years  
ago.

MARCH  
And you're happy?

GOZ  
I'd probably be happier back in the  
cornfields. I've never been much  
for the city.

MARCH  
Why don't you leave?

GOZ  
Yeah. I'm getting around to it.

MARCH  
Got it.  
(beat)  
So you're a pussy.

Goz smiles. March smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, GOZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Goz carries March through his bachelor pad as they ravenously  
SUCK FACE.

IN HIS BEDROOM

He throws her down onto the bed.

They pull each other's clothes off -- heaving, moaning.

But just as the action commences, something catches March's eye -- a BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN POSTER on the wall.

March suddenly PULLS AWAY. Sits up. Rubs her temples.

MARCH

I can't. I can't do this.

GOZ

Why not?

MARCH

You like Bruce.

GOZ

What?

MARCH

Bruce Springsteen. You're a Bruce Springsteen fan.

GOZ

So?

MARCH

So, I'm not.

GOZ

And...

MARCH

What if we hang out again? Are we going to have to listen to his music?

GOZ

Not if you don't want to.

MARCH

So if things progress between us -- then what? You're just gonna give him up cold turkey?

GOZ

I think you're getting ahead of yourself.

MARCH

You smoke. I hate smokers. My uncle died of lung cancer. So then, that leaves us two options: either you quit and I become the ball-buster, or you don't quit, and I spend the rest of my life quietly resenting you for it. Either way, we're fucked.

(beat)

This is the moment when it happens. When people start ignoring signposts. This moment right here.

GOZ

Look, I don't know about our 'practical compatibility.' But I had fun with you tonight. We don't have to have sex if you don't want. We'll talk. We'll just catch up.

MARCH

We could...

(beat)

But why waste the time?

Goz -- crestfallen.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Thanks for the drinks.

March gathers her things.

And with that, she's GONE.

INT./EXT. TAXI - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March looks down, finds a TEAR in her new dress. *Great.*

Suddenly, her gaze snags on something: Outside in the CROSSWALK, an OLDER MAN (70s) walks arm-in-arm with a woman (20s) who perfectly resembles MARILYN MONROE. The dress, the mole -- all of it.

*Is that a LiveToy...?*

Before she can examine them further, her cab ACCELERATES.

INT. BEDROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March opens the closet doors, hesitates a moment... then ACTIVATES David John.

His eyes flutter open. He smiles warmly.

DAVID JOHN  
Hi, March.

MARCH  
I'd like you to come to bed with me  
tonight.

IN BED - SOON AFTER

March and David John lie spooning.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
In an hour, you can quietly release  
me and roll onto your back. I sleep  
warm.

She shuts her eyes. He stares ahead, his motor WHIRRING.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - MORNING

The space is now decorated for the holidays -- wreaths,  
garland, a CHRISTMAS TREE.

In addition to the orchid, three or four MORE PLANTS adorn  
the room: a poinsettia, a couple FERNS...

Outside the window, a blanket of FRESH POWDER over Manhattan.

MARCH (O.S.)  
It's just that it might be hard for  
me to travel right now. I'm a week  
out from my deadline. -- Yes, it's  
the same place...

In a QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) David John draws the CURTAINS.
- B) David John deftly operates a FRENCH PRESS.
- C) David John squares the SILVERWARE for MARCH'S BREAKFAST.

KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

David John sits across from March's perfectly-prepared  
BREAKFAST SPREAD as she talks on the phone in B.G.

She's wearing a bright, boldly-patterned SKIRT SUIT. A little more skin on display. She's also sporting an angled BOB.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(into PHONE)

...Because I don't want to quit.  
I'm finally moving up. -- Uh-huh.  
Yes, Mom. Flights are expensive  
over the holidays. -- Uh-huh. If  
you think that's best. -- Okay.  
Yeah, you too. Bye.

March hangs up, sighs. Sits down to eat.

David John's PUPILS DILATE as he scans her BODY LANGUAGE.

DAVID JOHN

You're upset.

MARCH

What?

DAVID JOHN

You're chewing your cuticles, and  
your shoulders are pulling forward.

March sits up, self-conscious.

MARCH

I'm fine.

She sips her coffee, scrolls through her TABLET. David John's PUPILS DILATE again... then:

DAVID JOHN

Your mother's disapproving.

March -- *where did that come from?*

DAVID JOHN (CONT'D)

She doesn't trust you with your own  
wellbeing. And that's not fair to  
you.

It's as if he's READ HER MIND.

March stares at him, dumbstruck. *Who IS this person?*

FOYER - SOON AFTER

March approaches the front door, where David John waits with her mug of COFFEE and LUNCH. Familiar routine.

He leans in for their regular GOODBYE KISS. But this time, March LINGERS A MOMENT LONGER in their embrace.

She gazes into his eyes, nose-to-nose. Seems to infer something more.

DAVID JOHN(CONT'D)  
Have a great day, March.

MARCH  
Yeah. You, too.

She turns for the door, tries the handle -- can't open it. Tries it again -- no dice.

Finally realizes she FORGOT TO TURN THE LOCK. *Whoops.*

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

The editors are gathered for their weekly meeting, with Hope at the helm.

CARBON  
Personally, I think we should focus this quarter on expanding the definition of "classic." Who decides which novels are "classic" anyway?

QUID  
(agreeing)  
Lay's wasn't always the classic potato chip.

CARBON  
No -- those are *Lay's Classics*.

QUID  
Exactly.

HOPE  
You're both missing the point. We're not competing for better content.

MARCH  
-- We're competing for form.

Hope looks up to find March striding briskly at her desk.

HOPE  
(surprised)  
That's right.

MARCH  
If I might pitch an idea.

HOPE  
Please.

March reaches into a folder, retrieves a two-page TRAVEL BROCHURE. Displays it to the group.

MARCH  
I call it the 'Pamph-*Lit.*'

QUID  
That's a Catskills hiking guide.

MARCH  
Picture it. Novels culled to five hundred words or less. Classic American literature retrofitted to the length of a cocktail menu.

CARBON  
(mystified)  
...The most abridged publication in history.

MARCH  
Novelettes will be obsolete by the New Year. The future of fiction is single-fold.

The room chews this a minute. Not sure what to make of it.

They look to Hope. Her gaze is INSCRUTABLE.

Finally:

HOPE  
I'll pitch it upward at the quarterly briefing.  
(beat)  
Nice work.

March smiles. UPS THE PACE of her stride.

INT. MIDTOWN BAR - EVENING

With the CHIME OF AN OVERHEAD BELL, March, Blush and Carbon slide into the same table at the familiar happy hour spot. Blush is notably TANNER, sports a half-head of CORNROWS.

No sooner have they pulled in their chairs than their drinks are served by the arms of THREE SYNCHRONIZED WAITERS.

BLUSH

Mole and I spent the entire week betting on hermit crab races. We both just love them. Races, I mean. Hermit crabs, too.

MARCH

(laughs)

Oh -- for a minute I thought you were going to say that you spent the entire week having sex.

BLUSH

Right, well, that too.

(beat)

Not every day, per se, but that's just because Mole had a stomach ache on Monday and Tuesday, and I cut my knee on a piece of coral on Thursday. Right on the joint, so.

(beat)

Plus, it's not like everyone has sex on their honeymoon. I mean we did, of course. We were practically designed for each other. But generally speaking, that's not always the case.

A beat.

MARCH

(to CARBON)

How's the holiday party coming along?

CARBON

(groans)

The whole guest list is imploding since I pushed the start time. Apparently, people need to get home to their "families."

(to MARCH)

Which reminds me -- are you seeing anyone? I have to nail down the plus-ones by tomorrow night.

MARCH

Oh. No, I don't think so.

CARBON

You don't know if you're seeing someone?

MARCH

No. I mean -- I've been spending time with someone, but it's not a serious thing. It's just for fun.

Blush and Carbon exchange glances.

BLUSH

Well...?

MARCH

Well, what?

BLUSH

Do you like him?

CARBON

Does he have a big dick?

MARCH

Sure. I like him. And -- yeah, the sex is great. It's more than great. It's the best sex I've ever had.

BLUSH

Is he compatible?

CARBON

Double check his mattress preferences. Pillow-tops have always been a deal-breaker for me.

MARCH

That's not the problem. He's very compatible. He's exactly my type. And he's generous in a way that isn't self-serving. He anticipates everything that I need before I even realize that I need it. We have the same sense of humor. We never fight. Plus, he knows my body better than any man I've ever met. He's... basically perfect.

CARBON

So... what *is* the problem?

March considers this prospect, as if for the first time.

EXT. NELSONVILLE PARK - NELSONVILLE, NEW YORK - EVENING

Dell watches from the bleachers as Regis EATS DIRT in a TACKLING DRILL. A COACH (40s) claps his COMPETITOR (12) on the back as Regis struggles up onto his feet.

DELL  
 (into CELL PHONE)  
 I can't watch. He's gone down three times already. They just keep going through the line-up over and over again. It's like an endless loop. God, March, it's like some sort of torture cycle.  
 (to REGIS)  
 Stretch it out, bud!

INT. BATHROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - SAME

On the other end of the line, March sits in a BUBBLE BATH, surrounded by candles.

THROUGH THE CRACKED DOOR

She watches David John vacuuming in the buff. His long, graceful strokes are athletic... even SENSUAL.

DELL (O.S.)  
 ...Are you there?

MARCH  
 (into PHONE)  
 Sorry.

David John finishes with the vacuum. Takes a seat in the armchair and cracks open a copy of *The Feminine Mystique*. His PUPILS WIDEN as he begins to ingest the text.

I/C FOLLOWING:

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 Do you remember when you found that snapping turtle on Grandma's farm? You carried it with you everywhere you went, and then finally one day Mom told you it was just an empty shell.

DELL  
 Shy Shirley. Yeah, I remember.

MARCH  
 But you kept carrying it around anyway. Even after you knew it was empty. Why'd you do that?

DELL  
 I guess it was a cool shell.

MARCH

But also -- because it made you  
*happy*, right?

DELL

I don't know, March. I was six.

MARCH

And ultimately, it didn't matter if  
Shirley was real or not, because  
the way you felt about her was  
real. And at the end of the day,  
who cares what anyone else thinks  
about it?

DELL

I guess so.

MARCH

Thanks, Dell.

DELL

For what?

MARCH

I gotta go.

March CLICKS OFF. Considers.

EXT. MIDTOWN - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Another night. A HEAVY SNOW is falling.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March stands at the kitchen counter drinking a glass of WINE.  
Fidgets with the seam of a green-and-red COCKTAIL DRESS.

On the nearby TV, Paula Abdul's "Straight Up" video.

MARCH

(calling O.S.)

Nothing about our sex life. Stay  
away from politics. Focus on the  
questions I gave you. And don't  
pretend to eat anything, either. I  
think people might think that's  
weird.

She eyes the clock, then, moments later --

DAVID JOHN EMERGES FROM THE BEDROOM.

For the first time, we see him FULLY CLOTHED in a freshly-tailored SUIT. He makes Christian Grey look like SCREECH, may as well be cut from stone.

March -- momentarily stupefied.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
You look... nice.

DAVID JOHN  
You look nice, too.

MARCH  
(re: DRESS)  
You don't think maybe it's too short?

He PROCESSES, pulls for a soundbite:

DAVID JOHN  
The women at your company show more skin in church.

March laughs feebly. Sucks in a sharp BREATH.

DAVID JOHN (CONT'D)  
You're nervous.

MARCH  
I'm not the sort of person who goes against the grain. I'm the sort of person you ask to watch your laptop when you pee.

David John approaches, pulls her into a soft KISS.

DAVID JOHN  
Fortune favors the bold.

MARCH  
That's funny. My nana used to say that, too.

INT. THE BOOM-BOOM ROOM - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

ThePointIs' holiday party is in full swing -- some sip themed cocktails by the bar, others shuffle to a pared, synthetic rendition of "Jingle Bell Rock."

IN THE CORNER

A group of ASSISTANTS participate in an "efficient" Secret Santa exchange. One ASSISTANT (22) hands an UNWRAPPED GIFT to ANOTHER ASSISTANT (22):

ASSISTANT

I got you a wok. Because you asked  
for a wok.

ANOTHER ASSISTANT

Thanks.

BY THE BAR

Blush two-steps beside her husband MOLE (30s). The pair wear coordinated CHRISTMAS SWEATERS -- each making up one half of the NATIVITY SCENE.

They're a notable mismatch -- Mole is short, paunchy, and haphazardly-bearded. Despite their "92.7%" compatibility, this couple has ZERO CHEMISTRY.

MOLE

This is my favorite Christmas song.

BLUSH

Mine too.

A beat.

MOLE

Hey, so -- where did Frosty keep  
his savings?

BLUSH

In a snow bank.

MOLE

(realizing)  
You also read the Post this week.

BLUSH

It's a Level 1 Preference.

MOLE

Right. For me, too.

BLUSH

That was a funny one.

MOLE

Yep.

Silence.

BLUSH  
I'm so happy.

MOLE  
Me too.

AT A NEARBY TABLE

Quid chats up his DATE (20s). She's pretty, in an EAST ORANGE NEW JERSEY sort of way.

QUID  
So you've been using the coding app for a while now?

QUID'S DATE  
Only a couple months. It's all the rage in Amsterdam.

QUID  
I heard that, too. To tell you the truth though, the whole thing sorta freaked me out at first.

Just then, Date's phone *PINGS!* She goes to silence it, but something on the screen catches her eye.

QUID (CONT'D)  
I guess I worried it would make dating into some kinda competitive sport. Y'know, where everybody's lookin' over each other's shoulders for the next more compatible Joe.

Date looks up from her phone, spots A HANDSOME GUY across the room. Handsome Guy looks up from HIS phone. The pair lock eyes, unbeknownst to Quid. They smile.

QUID (CONT'D)  
Anyway, just bein' paranoid, I guess.  
(beat)  
So, tell me more about your family.

QUID'S DATE  
I'll be right back.

Quid's Date and her new match stand from their separate tables in tandem, make their way to the EXIT together.

Quid hums to himself, sips from his glass. None the wiser.

CARBON

Is standing with Hope and a few other EXECUTIVES when a SHEEPISH MAN (30s) approaches... taps her on the shoulder.

SHEEPISH MAN

(to CARBON)

Hey there. My name's Dice. I work in the math department. Third floor. *Third-floor-for-sure.*

He clears his throat, nervous.

CARBON

Are you religious?

SHEEPISH MAN

Not really.

CARBON

Kids?

SHEEPISH MAN

No.

CARBON

Spin for me?

Sheepish Man hesitates, reluctantly turns in a circle. Mortified. Carbon scans his physique.

CARBON (CONT'D)

So sorry, Deuce.

SHEEPISH MAN

Dice.

Carbon turns back to her conversation, leaving Sheepish Man crestfallen.

Moments later, an EXECUTIVE's (40) attention is pulled to the ENTRANCE. We follow his gaze to --

MARCH AND DAVID JOHN

Descending the stairs arm-in-arm. As they make their way toward the bar, various spectators take note:

HOPE -- looks up from her conversation, stunned.

BLUSH -- gives David John a conspicuous ONCE-OVER.

FEMALE INTERNS -- nudge each other to attention.

QUID -- instinctively sucks in his GUT.

AND, FINALLY, CARBON

Turns just in time to see March walking toward her -- SPILLS HER MARTINI down the front of her dress.

CARBON

March.

MARCH

(to CARBON)

Carbon, this is David John.

DAVID JOHN

(to CARBON)

It's great to finally meet you.

Carbon GASPS. Nearby partygoers FALL SILENT, familiar with his ARTIFICIAL VOICE.

CARBON

(private)

March... this isn't...

March knows she's in the spotlight. Takes a deep breath.

MARCH

(to ALL)

He's a 7+ model. I purchased him six months ago on the internet, and now we're seeing each other.

Carbon stands slack-jawed. There is, one might say, a

HEAVY.

FUCKING.

SILENCE.

Onlookers watch, shell-shocked, as March and David John enact a "routine" with sultry, almost PERFORMATIVE precision:

March shrugs out of her coat, and David John deftly CATCHES IT as it falls from her shoulders.

DAVID JOHN

(to MARCH)

A drink?

MARCH

My usual.

David John beelines for the bar, PARTS THE CROWD like the RED SEA.

A stunned BARTENDER hands off a GLASS OF WINE. David John turns on his heel, breezes back toward March.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 (to DAVID JOHN)  
 Wait.

David John STOPS dead in his tracks.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 I'm not thirsty anymore.

David John pivots again, returns to the bar. Sets the glass down.

NEARBY WOMEN exchange incredulous glances. There's something provocative -- downright SALACIOUS -- in their exchange.

David John returns to March's side, HEELED like a Pointer.

Finally, Hope steps forward from the group, comes face-to-face with David John.

She studies him clinically, like a rare piece of art.

DAVID JOHN  
 (to HOPE)  
 If you're going to stare, you may  
 as well introduce yourself.

Hope is taken aback, impressed by his spunk.

HOPE  
 I'm Hope Tracer.

She reaches for his hand. He shakes it.

DAVID JOHN  
 Pleased to meet you, Hope.

HOPE  
 Likewise.

David John looks to March, who issues a small NOD.

DAVID JOHN  
 (to HOPE)  
 Would you like to dance?

Carbon shoots March a glance -- *what the fuck is happening.*

But before anyone has a chance to intercede:

HOPE  
Yes, I would.

David John extends an arm, leads Hope out onto the floor.

AN HOUR LATER

David John is leading Hope through a choreography sequence we may or may not recognize from *Footloose* as partygoers watch from afar. The crowd seems to be SPLIT: Some attendees -- primarily COUPLES -- SNEER at the spectacle. Others are ENRAPTURED.

Blush sits in a corner with Mole, stares at David John with obvious LONGING.

MOLE  
(re: TART)  
So tell me -- do think this is  
strawberry *jam* or strawberry  
*preserves*?

BLUSH  
(distracted)  
Me too.

Mole follows her gaze to David John. Deflates.

MEANWHILE -- MARCH

Is surrounded by a group of FEMALE COLLEAGUES -- all ears.  
Among them is:

CARBON  
What kind of chores? Like, the  
dishes?

March nods.

A BRASH WOMAN  
Can he play cards? Hold 'Em?

MARCH  
(nods)  
He gets better each time.

BRASH WOMAN  
My cousin took his 4+ out for ice  
cream once.  
("though")  
Truth be told, he's a bit of a  
queer.

PRUDISH WOMAN

(to MARCH)

And he actually -- does he know what to do down there?

CARBON

(to PRUDISH WOMAN)

Haven't you ever used one?

BRASH WOMAN

They're very receptive. Mine makes love to me just like Eminem in *8 Mile*.

PRUDISH WOMAN

My husband thinks they're the devil's work.

CARBON

(to MARCH)

You have conversations?

MARCH

All the time. He's a great listener. And he remembers everything.

BRASH WOMAN

Any back-talk? You have to smack him around?

MARCH

Never.

BRASH WOMAN

Good. Can't stand back-talk.

Across the room, David John gives Hope a final DIP.

PRUDISH WOMAN

He is awfully handsome.

MARCH

I was thinking about more of a coif in his hair, but --

PRUDISH WOMAN

-- Oh, God no. The coif is trendy. Here today, gone tomorrow.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Quid drinks by himself, his date long gone. He sees David John approaching from the dance floor, much to his chagrin.

DAVID JOHN  
Hi. What's your name?

QUID  
Quid.

DAVID JOHN  
Are you having fun?

QUID  
I dunno.

DAVID JOHN  
Do you like Christmas?

QUID  
Not really.

DAVID JOHN  
Why not?

Quid shrugs. *Fuck this guy.*

QUID  
I dunno. I guess it's always been a rough holiday for me.

DAVID JOHN  
Tell me more about that.

Quid hesitates for a long beat, then:

QUID  
I guess if you really want to know, it probably started when I was seven or eight. I mean -- don't get me wrong, I was a well-mannered kid. Normal. I liked a present every now and then...

CUT TO:

TEN MINUTES LATER

Quid has ostensibly opened up.

QUID (CONT'D)  
...And I'm sayin' -- "No, Mom. Fuck YOU." She starts pullin' the stuffing out of the Elmo doll -- here I am, seven years old, still forming my anatomical -- y'know -- *knowledge.*

(MORE)

QUID (CONT'D)

And my own mother's got his head in one hand, body in the other... YANKIN' and YANKIN'... soon, there's nothing. An arm here, a few tufts of cotton there. Nothing. Here I am in tears.

(beat)

So eventually they pulled me off Santa's lap, and that was our last trip to the Long Island Mini-Mall.

DAVID JOHN

Thanks for sharing that.

QUID

Yeah. You know something -- you're a pretty alright guy.

Beat, then:

QUID (CONT'D)

You know, actually -- there was this other time at the Cheesecake Factory...

MIDNIGHT

Hope approaches March at the bar. In B.G., the party is thinning out -- only a handful of guests remain scattered throughout the room.

HOPE

I approved the final pass on *Sun Also Rises*. It's official: You're above the title.

(beat)

I must say, while I hate surprises, I'll always take my share of the pleasant ones. You've really turned it around, March.

MARCH

Thank you. I appreciate that.

HOPE

We've acquired George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. I'd like to try it as a Pamph-Lit.

MARCH

They liked my idea?

HOPE

It's ambitious -- but, if properly executed, it could change the face of the industry. I'd like to debut it at the Board of Education luncheon next month.

(OFF silence)

Assuming you can handle it.

MARCH

Of course. Yes. This is... yes.

HOPE

Good.

Hope finishes her drink. Stands.

HOPE (CONT'D)

(re: DAVID JOHN)

Honestly? I think it's brilliant.

INT. ELEVATOR, THE BOOM-BOOM ROOM - NIGHT

March and David John board the elevator beside Blush and Mole. David John KISSES MARCH'S NECK. She giggles.

Blush eyes them, forlorn.

The foursome begin a GLACIAL DESCENT.

EXT. THE BOOM-BOOM ROOM - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March and David John step off the curb. A CAB appears, as if from thin air.

INT. CAB - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

March lays her head on David John's shoulder. Smiles.

DAVID JOHN

You're happy.

MARCH

I'm happy.

INT./EXT. NEW YORK CITY - VARIOUS (MONTAGE)

As the Christmas season envelops Manhattan, we watch March and David John explore the city as a couple.

All the while, we note David John "hard-wiring" statements, cues, and other bits of INFORMATION from the outside world:

A) March and David John ride a horse-drawn carriage through Central Park. David John's PUPILS DILATE...

CARRIAGE DRIVER (O.S.)

*The horses aren't actually abused, y'know. They got a good life. Not so many options in life as a horse.*

B) March and David John walk hand-in-hand down Fifth Avenue...

STREET PROMOTER

*Comedy tickets, folks! --*

PETA ADVOCATE (O/L)

*-- Do you have sixty seconds for human rights?*

BUM (O/L)

*Fuck your mother, motherfucker!*

C) March and David John stroll through the MoMa in AUDIO HEADSETS; a PASSERBY (18) seems to RECOGNIZE David John from the Live Toys website -- nudges her FRIEND (18)...

AUDIO RECORDING (V.O.)

(from HEADSET)

*...The symmetrical cubes are thought to symbolize a yearning for political harmony...*

D) March and David John watch a Broadway Play beside a NOISY COUPLE (40s)...

CHARACTER (O.S.)

(from STAGE)

*I come from nothin', Pop. And nothin' grows up into nothin'.*

NOISY HUSBAND

*...Seat's like a brick...*

A nearby CELL PHONE RINGS. David John's eyes grow WIDE.

CLOSE ON DAVID JOHN'S FACE over a swelling COLLAGE OF SOUNDS: exchanges, car horns, music, advertisements... OFF its crescendo, we

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

March paces the room with a dog-eared copy of *Animal Farm* as David John watches T.V.

ON THE SCREEN: a CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL COMMENTATOR references footage of a GRISLY OVERSEAS BOMBING.

CONSERVATIVE COMMENTATOR (ON TV)  
*Disagree all you like, but the fact  
of the matter is, if we'd  
intervened sooner, hundreds of  
civilian lives could have been --  
and would have been -- spared.*

A FEW MORE PLANTS line the window. We're verging on OVERKILL.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

As March and David John approach the subway, they're forced to weave through a crowd of POLITICAL PROTESTORS.

MARCH  
(re: PROTESTERS)  
It's unbelievable. Do they really think that pulling troops out of a country we've all but crippled is a viable option?

PROTESTORS  
(chanting)  
Now means today! Now means today!

MARCH  
They've been chanting the same thing ever since that idiot pop star tweeted it last week. It's like the entire country's rejected the notion of an independent thought.

DAVID JOHN  
If the U.S. had intervened sooner, we could have spared civilian lives.

MARCH  
What? -- No. That's wrong. Forget that.

David John PROCESSES, his motor whirring.

DAVID JOHN  
*Data forgotten.*

They descend the stairs.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

March and David John take a seat on the bench.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE CAR

March spots a GAY MAN (50s) sitting hand-in-hand with his QUEENY TOY (30s/40s)... the Toy looks EXACTLY LIKE DAVID JOHN, except that he sports EYELINER and a pair of PATENT-LEATHER CAPRIS. They were clearly designed from the same basic model.

Suddenly, her attention is stolen by:

PANHANDLER  
 Spare some change, brother?

A PANHANDLER (60s) approaches David John with his cup. David John digests this -- then:

DAVID JOHN  
 You're either supporting the homeless, or you're supporting *homelessness*. It's really that simple, Ted.

PANHANDLER  
 That's right, brother.

Then, just as quickly, ANOTHER SOUNDBITE surfaces:

DAVID JOHN  
 So you can double down on your crack supply? Fuck off, man.

Nearby PASSENGERS turn and stare. A TEENAGED BOY snickers.

MARCH  
 (to DAVID JOHN, under her breath)  
 What are you *doing*?

David John's MOTOR WHIRS. Moments later:

DAVID JOHN  
 Bum once spit on my loafer. Stained my Barker Blacks. Piss-smelling, track-marked, Mexican son-of-a --

MARCH  
-- Stop speaking.

When the train finally rolls into Grand Central, March stands and exits. David John follows.

GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MOMENTS LATER

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW shows COMMUTERS walking through the station with perfect economy -- foot traffic patterns appear almost CHOREOGRAPHED.

MARCH

Emerges from the subway stairs, fuming.

DAVID JOHN  
(scanning her POSTURE)  
You're upset.

MARCH  
That was humiliating. You can't say things like that.

DAVID JOHN  
*Teach me how to please you.*

MARCH  
I'd like you to forget what you said on the train. All of it.

David John PROCESSES.

DAVID JOHN  
*Data forgotten.*

MARCH  
And you can also forget anything else, you know... like that.

David John's PUPILS DILATE. His MOTOR WHIRS for a long beat, then:

DAVID JOHN  
*Error code: Specify command.*

MARCH  
I'm open-minded, okay? I'm very tolerant of opposing perspectives. I just prefer you'd disregard anything racist. Or sexist.  
(beat)  
Or, you know, uneducated. Or trite.  
(MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

I guess, also, anything mawkish. Or overtly Southern. Anything pompous, or cynical -- except, you know, when it's ironic.

DAVID JOHN

*Error code: Specify command.*

MARCH

From now on, I just wish you'd be more thoughtful with the kind of information you ingest.

DAVID JOHN

*Error code: Specify --*

MARCH (O/L)

(finally)

*-- Just forget the stuff I don't agree with, okay?*

March looks around for eavesdroppers -- vaguely EMBARRASSED. David John PROCESSES for a long beat.

DAVID JOHN

*Data forgotten.*

MARCH

(relaxing)

Great.

(beat)

I'm sorry if I was brash before.

DAVID JOHN

You don't need to apologize.

MARCH

It means a lot that we can communicate about these sorts of things.

They head for the northbound train hand-in-hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DELL'S HOUSE - NELSONVILLE, NY - EVENING

Regis sits in the middle of the carpet with his HEADSET on, uses both hands to row what appears to be an INVISIBLE CANOE.

Over the speakers, the Vince Guaraldi Trio's "Christmas Time Is Here."

STEM (O.S.)

By the time we find out, we'll  
already be dead. That's what I'm  
telling you.

IN THE KITCHEN

Dell removes a GLAZED HAM from the oven as her mother STEM  
and her father FLICK BERGER (both 60s) look on like line  
judges at a tennis match.

FLICK

The infected pig doesn't smell any  
different. It doesn't look any  
different either.

DELL

(resigned)

How much longer would you like me  
to cook it?

FLICK

Longer? Who said anything about how  
to cook it?

STEM

It's your ham, sweetheart.

FLICK

Fifteen, twenty minutes is all.

STEM

*Broil.*

Dell sighs, replaces the ham in the oven.

STEM (CONT'D)

So who's this guy your sister's  
bringing, anyway?

DELL

I don't know anything more than you  
do. She said she wanted us to meet  
him in person so we didn't get hung  
up on any pre-conceived notions.  
She wants us to keep an open mind.

FLICK

Open mind? Notions about what?

STEM

What's wrong with him?



After what feels like an ETERNITY:

DELL  
 (to MARCH)  
 Is that a new sweater?

MARCH  
 I've been trying out a different  
 look lately. A little edgier.

DAVID JOHN  
 March is so beautiful. She never  
 pulls punches when it comes to  
 style.

At the end of the table, Regis conspicuously OGLES David John  
 -- totally mystified. His gaze is unwavering as he gulps down  
 a glass of milk.

Dell shoots her slack-jawed parents a look -- *say something.*

STEM  
 So... David John. Where are you  
 from, originally?

March and David John exchange a glance, then:

MARCH  
 He's not a human, Mom.

STEM  
 (exhaling)  
 So you *do* know.

FLICK  
 Well, thank God for that.

MARCH  
 Of course I do!

March surveys the table, incredulous.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 You think I don't know what he is?

REGIS  
 Can he poop?

DELL  
 Regis, why don't you go play in  
 your room until dessert?

REGIS

Milton Bugle's dad's got one, too.  
She's got red hair and huge --

DELL

-- Now.

Regis grunts, stands, clears his plate.

STEM

This isn't -- you're all in on  
this. This is all a part of a joke.

(to MARCH)

Is this about last Christmas? Is  
this because I made that comment  
about the Nelsons' stuffed terrier?

FLICK

Reminds me of my cousin Mew. Went  
through a divorce at 47 and started  
doing all kinds of crazy stuff.

Turns out, the stress caused his  
brain to bleed slowly out into his  
nasal cavity. Slowly, but steadily.

(to MARCH)

Are you feeling any light-  
headedness?

MARCH

I feel fine.

STEM

(to DELL)

Have you heard of these things?

DELL

They're called LiveToys. Some  
people have them. And I guess some  
people might...

(struggling with it)

...spend time with them, too.

FLICK

(to MARCH)

Perhaps some spotty vision?

STEM

(to DELL)

Do you think she may be hysterical?

MARCH

Why are you talking about me like  
I'm not here?!

DELL  
Everybody calm down.

STEM  
Calm down?  
(to MARCH)  
This is absurd! Just because you're lonely doesn't mean you get to parade this lascivious thing around like a real companion.

DELL  
(to STEM)  
Stop it.

March takes David John's hand. He squeezes it in solidarity.

MARCH  
And what does "real" mean to you, Mom? You married Dad because you both had phantom-sleep-apnea and acute "phobophobia."

FLICK  
The fear of fear. Equal parts rare and debilitating.

STEM  
In case you haven't noticed, your father is a human being.

MARCH  
So what?! Every morning, I wake up beside a gorgeous man. For breakfast, I eat the food that I want. Over dinner, I discuss the topics that interest me. When I'm down, I have someone who supports me unequivocally. Someone who knows me inside and out -- my secrets, my fears, my goals. I have the sex that I want, *when* I want, *wherever* I want. And for the first time in my entire life, I don't have to compromise. Not ever. Do you have any idea what that feels like?  
(OFF silence)  
It feels like the real thing.

A beat, then:

STEM  
I want that thing out of here.

DELL

Let's all regroup for a minute.

Fed up, Stem stands.

March stands, too.

MARCH

No. That's fine. We'll go.

DELL

March, can we talk about this privately?

MARCH

("that depends")

Do you agree with her?

Dell hesitates. Doesn't know what to say.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Then there's nothing to talk about.

(beat)

I knew this would take some getting used to, but I didn't expect this level of narrow-mindedness from my own family.

DAVID JOHN

(to STEM)

You criticize March to feel better about your own choices.

STEM

(to DAVID JOHN)

...Excuse me?

MARCH

And you know what? I'm not even upset about it. In fact, I pity your myopic perspectives. I hope you take a mental snapshot. *This* is what it looks like to be on the wrong side of history.

With that, David John snaps the lid on the Tupperware, and the couple see themselves out.

INT. NELSONVILLE BAR & GRILLE - NELSONVILLE, NY - NIGHT

March and David John sip Egg Nog at a cheaply-decorated, near-empty local tavern -- the kind that serves microwaved kettle corn out of yesterday's Chinet.

By March's languid speech, we gather this is NOT, in fact, her first drink of the evening.

MARCH

Dell's always been critical. Holier-than-thou. She'd tell you she's concerned about my well-being, but deep down -- deep down -- I think she's threatened by my happiness. I think that's what Freud would say.

A beat.

MARCH (CONT'D)

You're quiet.

DAVID JOHN

Would you like me to engage more?

MARCH

(shakes her head)  
Sometimes being quiet together is nice.

They sit in silence for a few moments.

An overhead SONG fades out, leading directly into Fatboy Slim's "Weapon of Choice." The same video we saw earlier.

MARCH (CONT'D)

I love this song.

Another beat or so... then, David John's HEAD begins to twitch, ever-so-slightly.

March clocks the behavior, perplexed.

Moments later, he STANDS out of his chair. As if COMPELLED BY SOME UNSEEN FORCE, he moves to the center of the sticky hardwood. Nearby PATRONS eye him curiously.

*Is he short-circuiting?*

Finally, at the CRASH of the cymbals, David John LEAPS INTO STEP: He's reenacting Christopher Walken's choreography from the music video.

...Moreover, he's doing it PERFECTLY.

His commitment is staggering, even BIZARRE. At first, March isn't sure what to make of it.

David John maintains Walken's STERNNESS as he soft-shoes his way across the floor. Drunk patrons begin to CHEER, bemused. He lands a ROUND-OFF in stellar form -- a lithe machine designed with PERFECT RHYTHM.

After a few bars, March finally stands and JOINS HIM in the dance. They face one another, like a MIRROR IMAGE. Her moves are sloppy, if spirited. The two are going BALLS-OUT on the eccentric, pseudo-modern choreography.

They take to the tabletops, hands in the air.

By the time they've finished, March is SWEATING. Punch drunk.

Also, regular-drunk.

She grins. He grins back.

*Bliss.*

INT. BEDROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Back at home, David John and March stand at the foot of her bed. She's in a NEGLIGEE. He pulls one STRAP, then the other. Watches it fall. Just like he was taught.

She takes him into her hand. He pulls her in for a KISS.

It's the exact same routine we saw on their first night... but this time, it reads NATURAL. Sensual. *Honest.*

They're in perfect sync with one another.

Without warning:

MARCH

I love you.

David John stares into her eyes. Ingests the statement, like any other.

DAVID JOHN

I love you.

...They move together for the BED.

FADE OUT.

THE NEXT MORNING

March wakes to a ringing PHONE. Rolls over, bleary. Off the cue of her physical motion, David John OPENS HIS EYES, too.

March reaches for her cell -- a voicemail from her sister:

DELL (VOICEMAIL)  
 (speaker)  
*March, it's me. Look, I'm really  
 sorry about the way things unfolded  
 last night. I may not understand  
 everything... but if you're happy,  
 then I'm happy for you. Really, I  
 am. Call me.*

She doesn't know what to make of it. Looks to David John.

DAVID JOHN  
 It's disingenuous.

MARCH  
 How do you know?

DAVID JOHN  
 Dell doesn't care about your well-  
 being. She never has.

She stares at the ceiling, chewing this.

Finally, she CLICKS OFF her phone. Tables it.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER SKATING RINK - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

*WHAP!* -- a long-haired, barrel-chested FABIO-TYPE TOY (30s)  
 shoots full-speed into the BUMPER WALL.

CLOSE BEHIND

Carbon looks on beside March and David John, who glide arm-in-  
 arm.

MARCH  
 I thought you said you bought him  
 last month. Shouldn't he be more  
 coordinated by now?

CARBON  
 Oh, he's very coordinated. He's  
 just never been off of his knees  
 before.

Carbon SNAPS her fingers, calls:

CARBON (CONT'D)  
 (to TOY)  
 Back here, Sergio. Right-and-then-  
 left.  
 (MORE)

CARBON (CONT'D)  
(to MARCH, re: TOY)  
Truthfully, I'm not sure I'm even interested.

MARCH  
Well, you shouldn't feel pressured to pursue a relationship if you don't want to.

DAVID JOHN  
Women deserve the same sexual liberties as men.

MARCH  
(OFF Carbon's glance)  
He's very progressive.

CARBON  
But that's just it -- even with sex, I don't feel like I've designed the perfect partner yet. I've tried different races, builds, genders... no matter what, it always feels like I'm settling.

Sergio rejoins the foursome, struggles to stay on his feet.

CARBON (CONT'D)  
Anyway, how is Hope feeling about the Orwell project?

MARCH  
Good, I guess. She hasn't asked to see a pass yet.

CARBON  
Really? She's usually such a hawk when she's excited about projects. When I was leading *Rebecca*, she practically pitched a tent outside my office.

MARCH  
(shrugs)  
I guess she trusts me.

CARBON  
Either that, or she's secretly replacing you. Right?

Carbon smiles -- *kidding*.

March laughs perfunctorily... seems to FLAG that comment.

Just then, Sergio swerves in a semi-circle, collides with a MOTHER and her SMALL CHILD.

CARBON (CONT'D)

*Shit.*

Carbon skates off after him, leaving March in THOUGHT.

MEANWHILE - UP ON THE PLAZA

Red, clad in his usual LINENS, traverses the sidewalk with an armload of BUCKWHEAT. Suddenly, a SIGHT stops him cold --

RED'S POV: In the center of the rink, David John pulls March up into an effortless LIFT -- his sinewy muscles protruding beneath his diaphanous V-NECK SWEATER. Nearby skaters can't help but APPLAUD the maneuver.

Red clouds at the sight -- crestfallen. *Who IS that guy?*

INT. KITCHEN, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

At the table, March scans a digital copy of *Animal Farm* -- seems mentally preoccupied.

David John closes the FRIDGE, which we notice is now EXCLUSIVELY stocked with SALMON PRODUCTS -- tartare, sashimi, filets.

When a nearby clock reaches EXACTLY 8PM, David John brings March's dinner over to the table. PERFECTLY-GRILLED FISH.

MARCH

(re: PLATE)

It's a little too charred, right?  
Around the edges?

David John PROCESSES, then:

DAVID JOHN

It's a little overdone.

MARCH

Then fix it.

David John dutifully takes her plate away. Returns to the fridge.

MARCH (CONT'D)

That was funny today, when Carbon made the comment about Hope pitching a tent outside her office.

(MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

She's always saying funny little things like that, isn't she?

DAVID JOHN

She's very witty.

MARCH

I think so, too.

A beat.

MARCH (CONT'D)

It was sort of a strange comment, though. Hard to say exactly what she was getting at. Was she trying to tell me that Hope isn't enthusiastic about my work?

(beat)

It's just interesting, in that a third-party observer might think she was trying to intimidate me.

David John PROCESSES.

DAVID JOHN

She was trying to intimidate you.

MARCH

You think so? I didn't know if maybe I was being oversensitive.

DAVID JOHN

She was probably just making a joke.

MARCH

But then again, you do have a point. After all, I have been climbing the ranks at work. It's only reasonable to assume she's noticed. Maybe she feels a little pressure to step up her game. Maybe she thinks that as far as Hope is concerned, it's her or me. Right?

(beat)

Or maybe she was just talking...

March returns to her work as David John PROCESSES this speech.

DAVID JOHN

Carbon's trying to have you fired.

MARCH

(stunned)

Oh my god. Do you really think so?

DAVID JOHN

She's threatened by your success.

MARCH

She probably is though, isn't she?  
Besides, you know what they say  
about jokes.

DAVID JOHN

Your Aunt Marnie makes dirty jokes.

MARCH

In every joke, there's a kernel of  
truth.

DAVID JOHN

In every joke, there's a kernel of  
truth.

David John brings over a NEW piece of fish.

MARCH

I can't think about food right now.  
Take it away.

March crosses to her room, slams the door.

David John idles in the middle of the floor, holding her  
plate.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

March walks briskly on her treadmill desk, gazes  
surreptitiously at Carbon. We may notice she looks a bit  
PALER than usual.

QUID

(reading from TABLET)

"'Comrades,' Napoleon said, 'Do you  
know the enemy who has come in the  
night and overthrown our windmill?  
SNOWBALL!' he roared, 'Here and now  
I pronounce the death sentence upon  
Snowball.' The animals were shocked  
to learn that Snowball could be  
guilty of such an action."

MARCH (O/L)  
 -- Are we still in the same chapter here? It's long. A lot of "Snowballs". Can we lose some of the Snowballs?

QUID  
 Would you rather I --

MARCH (O/L)  
 -- Process and repeat.

INCREDULOUS GLANCES from all. March catches herself.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 I mean -- please read it again with my adjustment.

QUID  
 "'Comrades,' Napoleon said, 'Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill?'"...  
 (to MARCH)  
 -- Sorry, what should I call him, then?

MARCH  
 He's a pig, isn't he?

CARBON  
 (to MARCH)  
 He's a pig named Snowball.

March's gaze BORES INTO Carbon.

MARCH  
 I know his name is Snowball, Carbon. I'm leading this project. Remember?

CARBON  
 What?

MARCH  
 (to ALL)  
 Moving on.

Carbon looks to Quid, confused.

MARCH'S OFFICE - LATER

March power-walks on her desk.

ON HER TABLET: A digital mock-up of the Orwell Pamph-Lit -- it indeed resembles a TRAVEL BROCHURE.

A KNOCK on the door -- Blush.

BLUSH

Hi, March. Sorry to bother you.  
I was just hoping... I wanted to  
get your advice something, if you  
have a minute.

MARCH

Yes?

BLUSH

Theoretically speaking, if you were  
a woman who was married to a  
wonderful man, but you were slowly  
coming to realize that you never  
wanted to have sex with him -- not  
even when you're intoxicated -- and  
in fact, you even become a little  
bit nauseated at the sight of his  
genitals and lower torso... would  
you consider getting a Toy?

MARCH

Yes.

BLUSH

(knew it)  
Yeah...

Blush turns to leave -- hesitates:

BLUSH (CONT'D)

Hey, March. Are you feeling  
alright?

March looks up -- suddenly on the defense.

MARCH

Why -- did Carbon tell you I  
wasn't?

BLUSH

What do you mean?

MARCH

What do you mean?

BLUSH

You look sort of... pale.

MARCH

I'm fine. Everything's fine. Better than fine. Everything's perfect.

Blush nods, bewildered. Exits out into the hallway.

Through the glass pane, March witnesses an exchange between Carbon and Hope. It's innocuous enough, but March clouds at the sight. Skeptical.

Her mind reels.

INT. ELEVATOR, THE-POINT-IS HQ - DAY

Later, March climbs into the elevator beside two INTERNS (20s), who fall conspicuously silent upon her entrance.

March bristles. *Were they talking about her...?*

LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

March emerges from the elevator, now visibly AGITATED. Beelines for the street. But just as she exits the building...

EXT. THE-POINT-IS HQ - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

...she spots DELL ENTERING through the rotating doors.

March persists, pretends not to see her. A confused Dell turns on her heel, emerges back onto the sidewalk.

DELL

(calling)

March!

March reluctantly turns.

DELL (CONT'D)

What was that?

MARCH

What are you doing here?

DELL

I've been calling you all week. I was worried about you.

(appraising her)

You look terrible. Are you sick?

MARCH  
I've been busy.

DELL  
I need to talk to you.

MARCH  
This isn't a good time, Dell.

DELL  
Did something happen at work?

MARCH  
You wouldn't understand.

DELL  
Try me.

MARCH  
Basically, I'm being victimized.  
Everybody's jealous of me, so  
they're trying to ruin my life.

Dell can't help herself -- LAUGHS at the childish conjecture.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
See? I knew you wouldn't get it.

March pivots, continues toward the train.

DELL  
What's gotten into you lately?

MARCH  
He was right.

DELL  
Who was right?

MARCH  
David John says you're an  
'emotional anvil.' He says you  
purposefully bring me down in order  
to boost your own self-image.

DELL  
That's insane.

MARCH  
He said you'd say that. In fact, he  
says that's the hallmark of an  
abusive relationship.

DELL  
Jesus, March -- he's a machine!

MARCH  
So, what?

DELL  
So, he'll say anything to please you. That's the point. That's *literally* what he was made for.

MARCH  
He knows me better than anybody. He encourages me to stick up for myself. To be the person I'm supposed to be.

DELL  
By agreeing with everything you say?

MARCH  
What's so wrong with that? Maybe the things I say are right. Maybe the things I *think* are right.

DELL  
And you really believe that's the basis of a healthy relationship?

MARCH  
So now you're qualified to give relationship advice? Last time I checked, you couldn't get your son's father to return your phone calls.

Dell's STUPEFIED by her vitriol.

A beat.

DELL  
I don't know who you are right now.

MARCH  
You wish you had what I have. But instead, you have nothing.

And with that, March turns and disappears down the block,  
Leaving her sister AGHAST.

INT. BEDROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

The CLOCK on the nightstand reads 3AM. March's bed is EMPTY...

because she's in the

LIVING ROOM,

Sitting white-knuckled on the couch. On the coffee table, a completed mock-up of *Animal Farm: A 500-Word Pamph-Lit*.

MARCH

...Carbon contributed most of the second half. Blush advised on direct quotations.

Beside her, David John looks EQUALLY STRESSED. A mirror image of her mounting anxiety.

MARCH (CONT'D)

They were my secondaries. I relied on them for everything.

DAVID JOHN

They've been sabotaging your work this entire time.

MARCH

What do I do?

DAVID JOHN

You can't present that to the board.

MARCH

The luncheon's on Monday.

DAVID JOHN

It'll ruin your career. You'll be a laughing stock. You'll never make it to the "Featured Read" table. Pretty soon, you'll have to move back to Dayton and sell corn out of your parents' Winnebago.

Then, a THOUGHT.

MARCH

(re: EDIT)

I could reassemble it.

DAVID JOHN  
You could start from scratch.

MARCH  
If I went back to the novel now,  
I'd have fifty-seven hours and  
forty-eight minutes to do another  
abridgment.

DAVID JOHN  
You could do another take.

MARCH  
A better take.

DAVID JOHN  
A cleaner take.

MARCH  
A safer take.

DAVID JOHN  
You'll make it perfect.

MARCH  
Do you think I look sick?

David John's MOTOR WHIRS.

She searches his gaze. Finally:

DAVID JOHN  
...You look just like Elizabeth  
Taylor.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - VARIOUS (TIME-LAPSE)

In a RAPID TIME-LAPSE SEQUENCE, we witness TWO DAYS PASSING  
as March pores over a full-length copy of *Animal Farm*.

While March remains seated at the table, David John moves  
frenetically around our frame -- completing TWO IDENTICAL  
CYCLES of his DAILY ROUTINE --

He FLUFFS THE COUCH CUSHIONS, reads a BOOK, waters PLANTS,  
disappears from frame, does the DISHES, watches TELEVISION,  
stands at the WINDOW...

FLUFFS THE COUCH CUSHIONS, reads a BOOK, waters PLANTS,  
disappears from frame, does the DISHES, watches TELEVISION,  
stands at the WINDOW...

At the table, March is becoming increasingly RESTLESS as she works her way through the novel, slugs back COFFEE, readjusts in her seat.

The sun RISES and SETS and RISES and SETS, until finally we

RESUME NORMAL TIME (NIGHT):

March is still awake at the table, BLEARY-EYED. She's fighting sleep as she mumbles a PASSAGE to herself:

MARCH

(sotto)

"...Clover turned over the straw  
with her hoof..."

(revising)

"Clover turned over...the straw..."

Through a CRACKED DOOR, we can see David John VACUUMING in the bedroom.

The TICKING from an overhead WALL CLOCK seems to SWELL. Agitated, March picks up the REMOTE and turns on the TV SET -- as in a source of AMBIENT NOISE.

ON THE TV

Is the same saccharine Infomercial Host we've seen before. This time, she's standing clothed inside of a RUNNING SHOWER.

INFORMERCIAL HOST (ON TV)

-- *Who's got time to shower? You're gonna spend thirty-eight hundred hours of your life in the shower. You got thirty-eight hundred hours to waste?*

MARCH

Doubles down into her book...

But moments later, Host's chatter GRABS OUR ATTENTION:

INFORMERCIAL HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Five hundred words, folks. It only takes five hundred words to upend six years of employment.

March LOOKS UP --

-- finds the Host hawking a SELF-DRIVING GOLF CART.

INFOMERCIAL HOST (ON TV)  
 (reality)  
 -- *Five hundred dollars over six  
 easy monthly installments.*

March sighs. *She was just imagining it.*

She returns to her work.

Another beat, then the LANDLINE RINGS. March calls to the bedroom without looking up:

MARCH  
 (to DAVID JOHN)  
 Can you get that?

Phone CONTINUES TO RING, unattended.

March looks up, realizes the VACUUMING HAS STOPPED in the next room. David John has DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
 (calling)  
 ...Are you there?

A VOICEMAIL comes through from the machine:

FLICK (O.S.)  
 (speaker)  
 March, it's your father. Listen, I know you're going through a phase right now, but frankly, you're twenty-eight years old. You don't have all the time in the world to waste on this guy...

HOPE (O.S.)  
 ...You're wasting time in chapter three.

March looks back to the TV, where HOPE HAS NOW REPLACED THE INFOMERCIAL HOST. She addresses March directly, peruses a copy of *Animal Farm* from inside the self-driving golf cart.

HOPE (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
 We don't care about that horse.  
 Clover? Who's Clover?

March looks down, finds the REMOTE CONTROL IS GONE.

Spooked, she stands and crosses to the TV. Shuts it off manually. Rubs her eyes. She's DIZZY as she turns back for the table. But moments later:

HOPE (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
 -- NOBODY HAS TIME FOR CLOVER!

March SPINS AROUND, finds the TV IS BACK ON.

She PULLS THE PLUG FROM THE WALL, to no avail:

HOPE (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
 Efficiency isn't just our mantra,  
 March. *It's our brand.*

RED (O.S.)  
 -- A decade.

March TURNS to find Red speaking to her from the screen of her TABLET. He appears to have AGED FIFTY YEARS.

RED (ON TABLET) (CONT'D)  
 ...I wasted an entire decade of my  
 life with you. I could've spent my  
 twenties with a practical match.  
 (woeful)  
 Now, I'm just an old man.

MARCH  
 (calling)  
 David John!

The TRIO OF OVERLAPPING VOICES begin to SWELL, creating a DIZZYING SOUNDSCAPE as she staggers toward the bedroom.

FLICK (VOICEMAIL) (O/L)  
 ...In seven hundred and sixteen  
 days, you'll be thirty years old...

HOPE (ON TV)  
 ...If you can't learn to get to the  
 point...

RED (ON TABLET)  
 ...should've ended it sooner...

March THROWS OPEN THE BEDROOM DOOR, but David John's GONE.

MARCH  
 (crying out)  
 Where are you?!  
 (OFF silence)  
 I need you!

CARBON (O.S.)  
 -- For what?

March WHEELS AROUND --

Discovers CARBON'S VOICE coming through the INTERCOM.

CARBON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 A modern woman doesn't waste her  
 time with romance. If you'd worried  
 less about your love life, you  
 might be further along in your  
 career...

STEM (O.S.) (O/L)  
 -- It's your career, March. Move,  
 move, move! --

The cacophony of VOICES meld into a SHARP RINGING, like  
 MICROPHONE FEEDBACK.

March GRIMACES as she crosses to the intercom and YANKS IT  
 OFF THE WALL --

But the feedback only grows LOUDER --

Desperate, she picks up the TV and HURLS IT ACROSS THE ROOM --

MARCH  
 (screaming)  
 Stop it!

-- then the TABLET --

-- then her VOICEMAIL MACHINE --

March TEARS THE ROOM APART in an effort to SILENCE the  
 DEAFENING FEEDBACK, but it's NO USE --

Finally, she DOUBLES-OVER in the center of the now-DEMOLISHED  
 space,

Covers her EARS WITH HER HANDS...

Shuts her EYES...

DAVID JOHN  
 -- March?

March looks up to find David John standing over her with a  
 bag of groceries.

She GRABS HOLD OF HIM, sobbing.

MARCH  
 (screaming)  
 Turn it off!

David John smiles.

DAVID JOHN  
Why didn't you just ask?

He lifts her to her feet and kisses her softly.

Then, he reaches beneath her SCALP for a SHINY SILVER TOUCHPAD...

And, all at once,

Her EYELIDS FLUTTER SHUT.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE (REALITY)

March WAKES WITH A START at the table -- finds the space restored to normal. The dogeared book in front of her.

She exhales. *It was just a dream.*

On the adjacent TV, the music video for Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time." David John turns from his seat on the couch. Smiles placidly.

DAVID JOHN  
How'd you sleep?

A THOUGHT occurs to her.

She eyes her WATCH.

-- *FUCK.*

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET ROOM, THE RITZ - NEW YORK CITY - SAME

A PROJECTION on the back wall reads, "ThePointIs Welcomes the Board of Education." Various TPI departments -- Math, Lit, Science -- sit at dining tables sharing finger sandwiches with BOARD MEMBERS.

AT A 'MATH DEPARTMENT' TABLE,

Dice (from the Christmas Party) chews a BOARD REP'S ear.

DICE  
This year, we're tackling archaic nomenclature. For starters, the Pythagorean Theorem. Why not "The Triangle Rule?"

Rep nods his concerted agreement.

DICE (CONT'D)  
Don't even get me started on  
'Quadratic Reciprocity'...

AT THE 'CLASSIC LITERATURE' TABLE

Carbon hangs up her CELL, shakes her head at Hope -- *no answer*. The seat in between them is notably EMPTY.

Hope eyes her WATCH. Sighs. Finally STANDS.

AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Hope arrives at the podium, taps the MIC to bring the tables to attention.

HOPE  
As the director of the Classic Literature department here at ThePointIs Publishing, I believe that children are, indeed, our future. With the help of the Board, we've made it our mission to distill the American novel down to a length that our students can not only enjoy -- but also, tolerate. I'm proud to announce that as of last month, our publications have appeared on required reading lists in 923 of our 950 New York school districts.

Applause from all.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
Of course, it is not enough to rest on our laurels. As educators, we must constantly strive to make our lessons simpler. *Plainer*. More palatable. As such, I am proud to announce our latest initiative: The 'Pamph-Lit.'

A PROJECTION springs to life behind her: in the photo, a ROW OF STUDENTS read captively from a brochure-style *Odyssey*.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
At 500-words-or-less, these hyper-efficient publications will revolutionize the speed at which students ingest narrative fiction.  
(MORE)

HOPE (CONT'D)  
 One might enjoy Twain, Faulkner and  
 Fitzgerald in a single afternoon.

From the crowd, approving murmurs. HEADS NODDING in tandem.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
 But perhaps the best way to  
 demonstrate the Pamph-Lit's  
 potential is to read you all an  
 excerpt from our latest project.

At the table, Carbon clutches a printed copy of the Orwell  
 draft -- the approved pass. Prepares to stand.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
 Here to read from the soon-to-be-  
 published 'Pamph-Lit' edition of  
 George Orwell's *Animal Farm*...

Suddenly, something O.S. catches Hope's eye. She hesitates.

HOPE (CONT'D)  
 ...Ladies and gentlemen, our lead  
 editor, March Berger.

Carbon turns to discover a WINDED MARCH entering through the  
 double doors. She's DISHEVELED, white as a sheet. Looks like  
 she just went through a cycle on PERMANENT PRESS.

A few other editors -- including Blush and Quid -- nudge each  
 other to attention.

AT THE PODIUM

Hope shoots March a wary glance -- more CONCERN than anger.  
 She extends a copy of the edit, but March declines it:

MARCH  
 (to HOPE)  
 I've made some revisions.

March removes her WEEKEND EDIT from her pocket -- it's  
 transcribed onto a piece of LINED NOTEBOOK PAPER.

HOPE  
 (whispering)  
 ...What is that?

But before she can intervene, March turns to the mic. Clears  
 her throat.

MARCH  
*Animal Farm*. By George Orwell.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)

"Mr. Jones locked the hen-houses for the night. The pigs were animals. The ducks ate rations. Pigs ate from a trough. By the autumn, almost every pig was literate."

March speaks earnestly. Thoughtfully. Like she may as well be delivering the STATE OF THE UNION.

MARCH (CONT'D)

"Pigs and troughs. Troughs, troughs and pigs. Mollie said 'Moo.' Napoleon sang. All that year, the animals worked like slaves. A period of misunderstanding, like snow on the ground. Malignant enemies ate from a trough. Pigs ate from a trough.

(beat)

As the animals gazed at the scene, it seemed to them that some strange thing was happening. Troughs in a row, from which they ate. The creatures looked from pig to man, and from man to pig. It was impossible to say which was which."

Silence.

*...That's it.*

March looks up from her sheet. Her heart BEATS OUT OF HER CHEST as she awaits the crowd's applause.

REVERSE ANGLE ON

A SEA OF BLANK FACES. The Board members are statues. Perplexed. For a long beat, NOBODY MOVES. Nobody speaks. March's expression clouds.

Finally, Carbon stands and crosses quietly to the podium.

CARBON

(to MARCH, whispering)

Maybe you should sit down.

March looks back to the audience -- genuinely perplexed.

MARCH

(into MIC)

That's the end. That's the end of the excerpt.

CRICKETS.

Carbon keeps a TIGHT SMILE as she turns to her boss.

CARBON  
(whispering)  
*Hope.*

But Hope's a deer in the headlights. MORTIFIED.

MARCH  
(to CROWD)  
Did you hear me?  
(to a MAN IN THE FRONT)  
Could you hear me?

CARBON  
(whispering)  
They heard you, March.

Carbon reaches out for her shoulder. March RECOILS. Turns to face her.

MARCH  
(to CARBON)  
You did this.

CARBON  
(whispering)  
You're embarrassing yourself.

MARCH  
Just like you hoped I would.

CARBON  
...What?

MARCH  
(to CARBON)  
You primed them all.  
(to CROWD)  
She primed you, didn't she? She told you all I was incompetent.

CARBON  
(whispering)  
*Sit down.*

Carbon grabs her arm -- but March brusquely SHOVES HER OFF. Carbon stumbles. A collective GASP from the crowd.

MARCH

(to CROWD)

Ladies and gentlemen of the Board,  
what we're dealing with here is a  
classic case of professional  
sabotage. I know this may be  
unpleasant to hear -- even *shocking*  
-- but the fact of the matter is  
that some women are incapable of  
supporting other women's successes  
in the workplace.

Quid jumps to Carbon's aid as she finds her bearings.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(to QUID)

And what about you, Quid? Did you  
help her out with this?

CARBON

With *what*?

MARCH

(to CROWD)

Quid resents me because I don't  
return his sexual advances.

QUID

Sexual advances? What sexual  
advances?

MARCH

(to CROWD)

Last week, he asked me if I wanted  
to go "*downtown*" with him.

ALL EYES shift to Quid.

QUID

(to CROWD)

...To the Whitney exhibit!

(to MARCH)

And I only asked you because you  
were standing with Blush.

Blush looks up from her seat -- *huh*?

QUID (CONT'D)

(to BLUSH, earnest)

If I've made any sexual advances,  
they've all been directed at you.

Blush BLUSHES, in spite of herself.

MARCH

(to CROWD)

Blush envies my relationship, so she's trying to punish me. She and Carbon have been working in cahoots together to ruin this presentation. She's mad that my partner is 7.3% More compatible than hers... and we actually have sex.

BLUSH

(to CROWD, defensive)

I'm suffering from clitoral atrophy.

(conceding)

...Undiagnosed.

At the increasing cacophony, Hope comes to attention, as if waking from a BAD DREAM. She finally steps forward.

HOPE

(private)

I think you should leave, March.

MARCH

You think I should leave? I'm the strongest editor you have. Most of your so-called "literature buffs" haven't read the tags on their tee shirts. I know more about books than anyone in this room. Including you.

Her audience is agog. FLASHBULBS from nearby cameras.

HOPE

You're fired, March. Collect your things and go.

MARCH

(to HOPE)

Fine by me. I don't need this job.

(to CARBON, QUID, BLUSH)

I don't need your friendship.

(to ALL)

I don't need any of you. I'm the most intelligent, sexy, confident woman in New York City.

(rallying)

In fact, I'm Elizabeth Taylor!

With that, March BLOWS DOWN THE CENTER AISLE toward the exit. HEADS TURN in unison as she passes.

Moments later, a MOUSY EXEC takes the podium.

MOUSY EXEC  
Ah, thank you, ladies. Turning now  
to our science department...

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

March rides home on the subway, visibly SHAKEN. She avoids the gaze of an O.S. passenger. Finally:

MARCH  
("Got a problem?")  
...What?

REVERSE ANGLE REVEALS --

-- A TODDLER gazing at her from his mother's arms.

EXT. MARCH'S BLOCK - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

March barrels down the block, looks like she's holding back TEARS. In her fervor, she sidesteps the choreographed foot traffic flow, runs head-on into a JUNKIE (17).

JUNKIE  
Get your shit together, lady.

AT HER FRONT STOOP

March reaches for her keys. Her HANDS ARE SHAKING.

INT. FOYER, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, March blows down the hallway and into the

KITCHEN,

Where she finds David John waiting at the table with CHAMPAGNE.

DAVID JOHN  
Congratulations, beautiful.

March takes one look at him and BURSTS INTO TEARS.

David John stands, hugs her tightly.

DAVID JOHN (CONT'D)  
You're upset.

MARCH  
It was awful...

David John PROCESSES. Scans his database.

DAVID JOHN  
Fortune favors the bold.

MARCH  
No. It doesn't. Fortune doesn't  
favor the bold. Nobody got it. They  
all looked at me like I was crazy.

DAVID JOHN  
Nobody understood you.

MARCH  
It was worse than that. I was  
fired. I'm an idiot.

DAVID JOHN  
You're brilliant.

MARCH  
No I'm not. I'm a loser.

David John PROCESSES, recalibrates.

DAVID JOHN  
You're a loser.

MARCH  
(bewildered)  
What?

DAVID JOHN  
You're a worthless human being.

March pulls away from him, SPOOKED.

MARCH  
You're making me upset.

DAVID JOHN  
I'm sorry, March.

MARCH  
Act normal.

DAVID JOHN  
I'm sorry.

MARCH  
Stop apologizing.

David John's MOTOR WHIRS as she shuttles from one response to the next. He's OVERHEATING.

DAVID JOHN  
When God closes a door, he opens a window.

MARCH  
Don't say things like that.

DAVID JOHN  
-- At the end of a storm comes a rainbow.

MARCH  
Stop it.

DAVID JOHN  
If at first you don't succeed --

MARCH (O/L)  
-- Stop reciting adages!

DAVID JOHN  
*Teach me how to please you.*

MARCH  
Shouldn't you know by now?

DAVID JOHN  
*Error code: Specify command.*

MARCH  
(snapping)  
-- Why should I have to specify a command?! Aren't you the perfect companion? I thought I didn't have to try. I thought that was the point of you. Of *this*. If you can't provide what I need at the moment when I need it, then WHAT DID I PAY FOR?!

David John PROCESSES for a long beat. When his pupils retract, he regards her pensively. Tenderly. Like for once, she may have ignited something REAL.

Then:

DAVID JOHN  
...It's always darkest before the  
dawn.

-- WHAP!

March WALLOPS DAVID JOHN ACROSS THE FACE with all of her  
might.

The shock is ABSORBED by his frame. Does nothing.

Conversely, the action looks like it KNOCKS THE WIND out of  
March. She STUMBLES BACKWARD, and --

-- **FHUMP**. MARCH COLLAPSES ONTO THE FLOOR like a bag of  
bricks. Out cold.

Is she unconscious? ...Is she *DEAD*?

David John looks down at her quizzically -- a lifeless heap  
on the floor. He stands at full attention, awaiting  
instruction. A static tableau.

He doesn't speak, doesn't move. Just stands there. Waiting.

Because, you know.

He isn't real.

THAT NIGHT

Nothing has changed. David John still looks down at her.  
March is still out. Like STATUES.

THE NEXT MORNING

Still no motion from either party. March is almost certainly  
dead... *right?*

About TWELVE SECONDS pass in silence.

Then, mercifully, a SOUND FROM OUTSIDE. That sound is a CAR  
DOOR SLAMMING.

The sound of BOOTS CRUNCHING THROUGH SNOW. Climbing the front  
steps.

Finally, the DOORBELL.

RED (O.S.)  
(from OUTSIDE)  
March. It's me, Red.

We REMAIN IN OUR STATIC TABLEAU over the following:

RED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (from OUTSIDE)  
 I just wanted to see if you still  
 had those old paint swatches  
 hanging around. If so, I'd love to  
 borrow 'em.  
 (beat)  
 Your lights are on, March. I know  
 you're in there.  
 (beat)  
 All right. Fine. I'm not here about  
 the paint swatches. I wanted to  
 talk to you. I wanted to sit down  
 and have a conversation, if you're  
 up for it.

A FLY circles March's head, comes to rest on her NOSE.

RED (CONT'D)  
 (from OUTSIDE)  
 That's fair. And I would feel the  
 same way if I were you.  
 (beat)  
 Can't we just talk for a minute?  
 All I need is a minute. I'm sorry --  
 all right? *I'm sorry*. Is that what  
 you want to hear?  
 (beat)  
 Well, if that's not what you want  
 to hear, then I don't know what you  
 do want to hear. But it is getting  
 cold out here. It's not what I  
 would call warm.  
 (beat)  
 I still have a key to the house.  
 I'm standing here with a key,  
 trying to be a gentlemen. But,  
 whatever you think. I guess I'll  
 take off now, if that's how you  
 really feel.

More BOOT CRUNCHING as Red descends the stairs again.

A CAR DOOR OPENING.

A CAR DOOR SLAMMING AGAIN.

*...Is he gone?*

Another long beat.

A CAR DOOR OPENING.

BOOTS CRUNCHING.

RED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (from OUTSIDE)  
 I'm coming in, March. I'm coming in  
 to talk to you.

A KEY in the front door.

RED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (from OUTSIDE)  
 Is this a different lock? I can't  
 seem to --  
 (beat)  
 -- Nevermind. That was my car key.

Off the FRONT DOOR OPENING, we

CUT TO:

INT. RECOVERY ROOM, BETH ISRAEL HOSPITAL - NYC - NIGHT

March sits in a hospital bed -- groggy, but indeed, ALIVE.  
 Her arm is connected to an IV. Red sits beside her.

A DOCTOR consults a CLIPBOARD as he addresses her.

DOCTOR  
 Hypoglycemia and dehydration are a  
 start. You haven't slept in seventy-  
 two hours and your blood sugar's at  
 sixty milligrams per deciliter.  
 (re: RED)  
 You're lucky he found you when he  
 did.

RED  
 No, Doctor. I'm lucky I found her  
 when I did.

Doctor -- *really, bro?*

DOCTOR  
 (back to MARCH)  
 Some bed rest and fluids should do  
 it. Try to avoid any stressful  
 situations.

As he's on the way out, Doctor's gaze snags on a stat:

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

By the way -- your mercury levels are off the charts. Are you eating a lot of fish?

MARCH

(bleak)

Salmon's... a superfood.

Doctor regards her quizzically, exits.

Red turns to March. Takes her hand.

RED

"Out of our direst ailments, we shall peel back the veil of past regrets, and gaze upon the truth. And in that truth, we will hath found that which we seek, those who shall be sought, and that which -- in seeking -- we shall come to have cherished."

(beat)

That's an old Sri Lankan quote, transcribed from Gautama Buddha. A paraphrase -- not the exact terminology, per se. Loosely direct.

(OFF March's confusion)

The point is that sometimes it takes a plummet to find out what's really important in life. And that's you.

MARCH

What happened to your girlfriend?

RED

It was a fleeting affair. Our Snap Code was great, but as it turns out, she did have a criminal record. Manslaughter. Involuntary -- but all the same, it was a tough pill to swallow...

("anyway")

These past ten months have been Hell without you. I missed you, March.

March sighs. Hates to admit it:

MARCH

I missed you, too.

RED  
 (distracted)  
 -- Can I get you a pair of pants?  
 Maybe a shirt?

WIDER REVEALS

David John sitting placidly on the other side of the cot.  
 Still entirely NUDE, save a poorly-fastened HOSPITAL GOWN.

RED (CONT'D)  
 (back to March)  
 Look, I know we might not agree on  
 everything. But that doesn't matter  
 to me anymore. We've built a *life*  
 together.

March chews this over -- clearly WAVERING...

RED (CONT'D)  
 Today, you could have died. But my  
 heart told me you were in danger,  
 and over I fled. That's how  
 connected we are.

March meets his gaze for the first time.

RED (CONT'D)  
 I want to make this work. I love  
 you, March. I always have.

MARCH  
 (conceding)  
 I know.

RED  
 And you know why?  
 (beat)  
 Because you're my *nice girl*.

-- The phrase lands on March like NAILS ON A CHALKBOARD.

She pulls away. Considers for a beat, then:

MARCH  
 Have you read my book?

RED  
 What?

MARCH  
 Have you read my book, *The Final  
 Comet*?

RED  
 (guffaws)  
 Of course I have. Many times.

MARCH  
 What's it about?

RED  
 You can't be serious.

She's serious.

RED (CONT'D)  
 Well, it's been quite a few years,  
 but if memory serves...  
 (reaching)  
 ...it centers on a... sort of an  
 astrological mishap.

MARCH  
 You never read my book.

RED  
 (revising his answer)  
 ...*Metaphorically*, that is. But  
*literally* speaking, it's about --  
 you know -- a woman... under  
 emotional duress.

MARCH  
 I was going to marry you, and  
 you've never read my novel.

RED  
 (relenting)  
 It was 212 pages long! What kind of  
 person reads *hundreds* of pages of  
 the same thing?

MARCH  
 Maybe not every story is a  
 soundbite.

RED  
 Huh?

MARCH  
 You don't know anything about me,  
 do you?

RED  
 Of course I do. I know you better  
 than anyone.

MARCH

Do you know I tried anal?

RED

What?

MARCH

Anal sex. I had anal sex.

DAVID JOHN

(affirming)

She did.

MARCH

And I liked it. I liked every minute of it. I also like whiskey cocktails and dancing in public.

RED

You hate dancing. It embarrasses you.

MARCH

You think it embarrasses me, because it embarrasses you. I love dancing. It feels great. In fact, I think I may be a latent extrovert.

RED

Maybe we should revisit this conversation later when you're properly hydrated...

MARCH

Don't you get it? You've never known me. Not really. You just decided who you wanted me to be, and then chose to overlook any pieces of my personality that undermined your 'vision.'

RED

That's absurd.

MARCH

And I was fine to go along with it. I was content to live my life as the walking emblem of your Puritanical, pseudo-mysoginistic ideals, because somewhere *deep down*, I'd convinced myself that happiness was just the absence of conflict.

RED

So what are you saying?

She looks to David John.

MARCH

Maybe love is an inefficient system. Maybe it was never meant to be solved, or cheated, or streamlined.

(beat)

It wasn't real with either one of you.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MARCH'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

March and David John sit side-by-side on the couch. In front of them, David John's SHIPPING CONTAINER lays open.

March looks to him, sighs. Considers...

CUT TO:

BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

A naked March SCREAMS IN ECSTASY as she and David John finish one last romp in the shower.

MARCH

YEEEEEEEEEESSS.

BACK TO:

LIVING ROOM

They're back on the couch, fully-clothed. *Now, for real.*

MARCH

(to DAVID JOHN)

I'm sorry about the things I said to you last night.

She puts a HAND on his knee.

MARCH (CONT'D)

Your functionality far exceeded my expectations. Across the board, really. I want you to know that this decision is in no means reflective of your ability.

(MORE)

MARCH (CONT'D)  
I've made a note of that on the  
form, for whatever it's worth.

*Welp.* This is it.

March stands. David John stands.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
Thank you for everything.

She leans in... plants one last TENDER KISS on his lips.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
I'd like you to please forget all  
preferences.

DAVID JOHN  
*Are you sure you would like to  
forget all preferences? This action  
cannot be undone.*

MARCH  
(sighs)  
Yes.

David John's PUPILS DILATE -- this one takes a minute.

DAVID JOHN  
*Your preferences have been  
forgotten.*

March reaches behind his scalp, hesitates.

MARCH  
Actually... could you climb into  
that box on your own? If it's not  
too much trouble.

David John PROCESSES, complies.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
That's fantastic. Thanks.

IN THE BOX

He pivots onto his side, pulling his KNEES up to his chest.  
Gaze straight ahead.

March kneels over him a moment. Brushes the hair from his  
forehead.

Then, with one swift motion, she slips her thumb into the  
rubber groove and POWERS HIM OFF.

His eyelids FLICKER SHUT.

FADE TO BLACK.

**CARD: "THREE YEARS LATER."**

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Late fall in Manhattan. Quiet and trashless. Impeccable sidewalks.

MARCH (V.O.)  
*And as the familiar chill of autumn  
 descended upon the city,...*

INT. BEDROOM, BLUSH AND MOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Blush and Mole's WEDDING PHOTO rests on the night stand.

MARCH (V.O.)  
*...she found that everywhere she  
 turned, she witnessed the retreat  
 of these celestial bodies.*

Mole gazes at it from his pillow. Moments later, Blush wraps her arms around him from behind, kisses his cheek.

BLUSH  
 (earnest)  
 I love you.

A BLEAK SMILE from Mole.

BIRD'S EYE REVEALS

That on the other side of Blush is a LiveToy that bears a striking resemblance to JOE MANGANIELLO. The three apparently share a bed together.

INT. KITCHEN, QUID'S APARTMENT - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Quid eats breakfast -- takes a WOMAN'S HAND across the table.

MARCH (V.O.)  
*They were spinning outward from one  
 another at a rate that would only  
 increase -- hurdling forth into  
 their own private pockets of the  
 galaxy...*

REVEAL: he's cohabiting with a LiveToy modeled after BLUSH.

INT. BEDROOM, CARBON'S APARTMENT - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

We TRUCK PAST A LINE OF TOYS sitting propped against the wall. Among them -- a BRAWNY TOY, Sergio, a BLACK TOY, an ASIAN TOY, a HIPSTER TOY...

CARBON (O.S.)  
Yes -- yes -- yes --

MARCH (V.O.)  
*...Until finally, she mused, there would be nothing left to orbit. No gravity left to pull the planets toward each other.*

Finally, we find Carbon in her bed, having sex with a TOY that's been MODELED AFTER HERSELF.

CARBON  
(orgasm)  
...YEEEEEEEESSSSSSSS.

She collapses into the arms of her IDENTICAL PARTNER.

EXT. PASTURE - DAYTON, OHIO - DAY

A cow grazes in a pasture. A low sun over middle America.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAYTON, OHIO - DAY

March -- now brighter, notably HEALTHIER-LOOKING -- stands at a podium, finishes reading an excerpt from her new FULL-LENGTH BOOK.

Beside her, a poster reads, "*Celestial Bodies: A Novel by March Berger.*"

MARCH  
*...And on that day, she would look out over the quiet Manhattan skyline, and wonder where all of them had gone.*

She closes the book to APPLAUSE.

REVERSE ANGLE

A small crowd has gathered for the reading. Among them, March's parents, Dell, and Regis (still in his headset).

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAYTON, OHIO - DAY

March is the last to leave, waves goodbye to a YOUNG COUPLE as they head for the parking lot.

GOZ (O.S.)

Any chance I can get an autograph?

March turns to discover GOZ PEERMAN holding a copy of her book. He's literally CHEWING A PIECE OF STRAW.

MARCH

...Goz?

GOZ

I brought my own pen, but I'm gonna want it back.

March grins.

MARCH

What are you doing back in town?

GOZ

I live here. Peerman & Son is now Peerman & Sons.

MARCH

Since when?

GOZ

(shrugs)

Around the same time some girl called me a pussy.

MARCH

Yeah?

GOZ

In case you're wondering, the date was pretty much downhill from there.

March laughs. Grimaces.

MARCH

Yeah.

GOZ

Yeah.

A beat.

GOZ (CONT'D)  
Still waiting on that signature,  
though.

MARCH  
Oh -- right! Yes.

She takes his book, SIGNS IT.

GOZ  
How long are you around for?

MARCH  
I'm not sure yet. Probably as long  
as I can tolerate my parents.

GOZ  
Fair enough. Well, maybe I'll see  
you around.  
(re: BOOK, joke)  
Decent stuff. B+.

He smiles, turns toward the parking lot.

March hesitates a moment, then:

MARCH  
Hey, Goz.

He turns.

MARCH (CONT'D)  
Would you maybe want to get a cup  
of coffee?

GOZ  
I'm not much of a coffee drinker.

MARCH  
Oh... alright.

GOZ  
(pointing)  
...But that place does a great  
burger.

March smiles. *Shithead.*

MARCH  
Burgers are good.

The pair cross the street.

MARCH (CONT'D)

(re: STRAW)

So tell me, did you pluck that just  
for the occasion?

GOZ

You don't like it? Women find it  
very sexy.

MARCH

Do they?

FROM THE SIDEWALK

We watch as March and Goz enter the restaurant.

Soon after, they're sat at a table by the WINDOW.

For a few beats, we watch them laugh, chat. Though we can't  
hear their conversation, it's clear they're rekindling a  
SPARK.

Finally, we --

INT. RESTAURANT - DAYTON, OHIO - DAY

-- JUMP OUR LINE into the restaurant, where we're flooded  
with the AMBIENT SOUND of other diners.

In WIDE, we may recognize SEVERAL FAMILIAR LIVETOY MODELS  
dining at the restaurant -- several of which resemble  
iterations of DAVID JOHN.

We may also notice that our soundscape is DOMINATED BY THE  
OVERLAPPING CHATTER OF ARTIFICIAL VOICES.

These voices begin to SWELL,

Until finally, we...

SNAP TO BLACK.

**THE END.**