

SCRATCHING TWENTY

Written by

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First draft

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INT. NYC BAR - NIGHT

CARY (19) and his girlfriend SARAH (19) sit at the bar as they discuss their love life. Cary is a J.Crew suburbanite, but the last two years he's spent in the city have assured that he doesn't stick out like a sore thumb in New York.

CARY

Well just gimme some idea as to when and I'll shut up already.

SARAH

You're so infuriating.

CARY

Oh, so I'm infuriating? Sarah, you sound like some...tenth grade girl writing to *Seventeen* about her asshole boyfriend.

SARAH

As if you're not?

CARY

Not what, an asshole boyfriend? No. I may be your boyfriend and I may be an asshole, but not in the same context, no.

Sarah looks at her boyfriend, waiting for something to give.

Cary smiles, she does, too, and he gives her a peck on the cheek.

CARY

I don't wanna come off as if I'm pressuring you to do something you don't wanna do.

SARAH

But isn't that exactly what you're doing?

CARY

Well yeah, but it's important that I at least acknowledge

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

for the record that I'm....forget it. I just think that...since you cheated on me, even if it was only two months into the relationship, maybe I want us to finally have sex. Not so I can lose my virginity, but so I feel a bit more...loved.

SARAH

You have to get over that. I was 18, and now I'm 19. I wouldn't have cheated if I thought we'd be serious and dating for ten months. I'm a lot more mature now.

A silence.

CARY

During this whole time...I don't think you realize how easy you've had it. My downstairs is on fire.

SARAH

What's "easy" about it? I wanna see you PMS-it for a month.

CARY

I didn't say you had it easy cuz you're a woman, I just said you had it easy. You didn't let me say why.

SARAH

That's fair.

CARY

Thank you.

(beat)

Cuz it is only once a month. You don't want to date a guy who jerks off -- which is some Puritan work ethic/Protestant Reformation bullshit, by the way -- but I also make like...three-and-a-half million sperm a day. On average.

SARAH

But there's no maintenance involved.
It's not like you have to tag them and
monitor their progress.

CARY

Yeah, but it's just the fact that
it's been sitting there. It's been
getting stored up since like...
January.

SARAH

You're just hormonal.

CARY

Of course I'm hormonal. Why else
would we be talking about this?

Sarah remains silent for a moment, searching Cary's eyes.

SARAH

I dunno what you want me to say.
Do you have anything you'd like
to add?

CARY

(beat)
I gotta work tomorrow.

INT. "PLUCK U." - DAY

Neighborhood locals grace tables at Pluck University, a small,
fast-food franchise where Cary works. He cleans a table similar
to the adjacent one where AARON (19) and KIRCHOFF (19) eat.

Cary and Aaron are sophomore roommates, but really, they're
"friends of convenience," having been placed together as *freshman*
year roommates.

AARON

So you got her on the ropes with
the sex thing and then you just
chicken out and say "I love you?"

CARY

I didn't chicken out, I was just trying to salvage what was left of the conversation.

AARON

Yeah, but if she goes home knowing you're pissed at her, she might realize you're not always gonna give in to what she wants.

CARY

So whaddaya want me to do?

AARON

Well you both gotta realize you're not kids anymore, so it's not a matter of "I'll wait til she's ready." I mean, you can wait for her --- and if you care you should wait -- but there's only a certain window of opportunity to get it done before shit starts falling apart.

CARY

So I basically have to make a window to save the relationship.

AARON

More like to preserve the relationship.

CARY

Kinda like a space shuttle only has a certain time-frame to re-enter the earth's atmosphere.

AARON

I guess.

Cary reflects on this as he makes his way to the register. Aaron and Kirchoff pick-up a previous conversation where it left off.

KIRCHOFF

So you think I should drop?

AARON

Well if you take a class for what it's worth there's no real reason to. That's what I never did. When I was thinking Philosophy I was thinking it was gonna be all ethical debates, lectures on like ... moral bankruptcy...

KIRCHOFF

And it's not?

AARON

It is, but it's more like...it's more like Danté, Purgatory, and Star Trek.

KIRCHOFF

Star Trek.

AARON

That's all we ever talked about. And they weren't even the one's with William Shattner and Spock or whatever. It was all Voyager, Discovery, spin-off shit.

KIRCHOFF

They're not that bad, actually.

AARON

Fine, but I never watched any of that before. You have to get into Star Trek organically. You can't just pick it up out of nowhere.

KIRCHOFF

So what happened?

AARON

Well the only reason I didn't drop was cuz I was lucky enough
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
 to sit next to the only cute
 girl, and we had this great
 conversation whispering back and
 forth to each other. So then I
 figured maybe I should stay, cuz
 usually where you sit during the
 first few days determines where
 you're gonna sit the rest of the
 year.

AS CARY WORKS the register, AMALIA (19) appears from the kitchen.

AMALIA
 Hi. Um...I'm Amalia. I started
 yesterday. You're Cary, right?

CARY
 Yeah.

AMALIA
 Right. Well...I guess I'll talk
 to you later. Nice meeting you.

Cary returns to his work without giving Amalia a second thought.

BACK WITH -- AARON and KIRCHOFF

AARON
 Three weeks later she asks me
 if I wanna hang out. So we're
 lying' in my bed watching' t.v.
 -- first girl I've ever had
 sit on it, much less lie down
 in it -- and we start going at
 it. So we're doing whatever
 and I'm thinking to myself,
 "Okay, the kissy-kiss shit's
 been fun for six innings, but
 now it's time to bring in my
 set-up man." So off comes
 everything north of the border,
 and no bullshit, this girl's
 got more hair on her chest than
 a fucking...caribou.

Listening in, Cary shakes his head in disapproval.

KIRCHOFF

That's crazy.

AARON

Well here's the most interesting part: I only knew her for three weeks and she's already taking' off her clothes. Now it's not like I'm some gorgeous guy where she feels compelled to do that, she's obviously done it before. Frequently. So what gets me is that all the other guys she's been with didn't exactly run outta the room screaming, cuz if they did this girl would've been so scarred she would've never taken her top off again.

KIRCHOFF

So what did you do?

AARON

I ran outta the room screaming.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The floor is covered with BEER AND SODA CANS, half-eaten INSTANT DINNERS, scattered LAUNDRY. POSTERS, ETC. decorate the walls. Cary and Aaron enter the apartment in mid-discussion.

AARON

She probably feels you would be so involved with the love aspect that sleeping with her would be a secondary issue.

CARY

But it's more complex than that.

AARON

Fine, maybe it's more complex. Maybe Freud or whoever-the-fuck
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)

-said-it was right and we just want nineteen-year-old versions of our mom's.

CARY

Where do you get this shit?

AARON

Just listen: when I was like eight, my mom used to make me stay inside for a couple of hours every day, and I had to memorize multiplication tables, practice my handwriting, whatever. All kinds of shit. Now fast-forward however-many-years to tenth grade when I dumped Anna cuz she didn't --

CARY

-- You went out with Anna?

AARON

Yeah, before we met. So listen: she asked me to read her Great Gatsby paper and I figured, "Sounds like a boyfriend thing to do," so I read it. Now in her first sentence she wrote, "Throughout the course of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, blah, blah, blah." Now I right away know somethings fucked up with the sentence, so I look back and see she put quotation marks around *The Great Gatsby*.

CARY

I don't get it.

AARON

you don't put quotations around novels. Plays get quotations. Short stories get quotations.
(beat)
Novels are italicized.

CARY
Your point being...

AARON
I dunno, I mean...obviously some
sorta value system was instilled
in me since I spent the better
part of my childhood learning
homonyms, but I dunno if it's
responsible for me being all...

CARY
Misogynistic?

AARON
I was gonna say hateful towards
Sarah, but yeah, that too.

CARY
You don't hate Sarah.

AARON
Yeah, I do. She can't spell.

CARY
So?

AARON
So that's the first sign of
a stupid person. I mean...how
smart do you have to be to spell
the same words you've been
seeing your entire life?

CARY
Plenty of people can't spell.

AARON
Whatever. Her intelligence is
suspect and her personality --

CARY
-- She's gotta great personality.

AARON
She has no personality. I've had
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
better conversations with like...
weathered tree stumps.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Clearly influenced by the graces of a woman's touch, Sarah's immaculate dorm room is a model of structured order.

Preparing to take a shower, Sarah reads to her roommate from a women's magazine. ROSE (19) is quite intelligent, and her perception of Sarah, though colored by friendship, is clearly affected by their differences in the intelligence department.

SARAH
"My newfound friend worked
wonders in enhancing my body's
natural treasure. Suddenly, with
a well-needed burst of confidence,
my love life was born anew."

Sarah hands over the magazine and proceeds into the bathroom.

After studying the article for a moment, Rose heads for the bathroom, KNOCKS on the door, and enters.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

ROSE
You didn't read the --

SARAH (O.S.)
-- I can't hear you!

Rose looks at the sink, and after a moment of debate, turns the cold water dial. Sarah SCREAMS and turns the shower water off.

SARAH (O.S.)
I just got my hair wet and now
there's no hot water.

ROSE
You didn't read what she said
later on. "I called my friend
(MORE)

ROSE (cont'd)

Melissa, a devoted Wonderbra wearer, who told me what I didn't wanna hear: that the guy she'd recently dated, who seemed to adore her, had suddenly disappeared after they slept together. She attributed the rejection to WDS -- Wonderbra Disappointment Syndrome."

Wrapped in a towel, out comes Sarah. She grabs a comb and begins combing the knots out of her hair.

SARAH

So what's your point? You subscribe to that "all guys want are boobs," theory?

ROSE

Subscribe, Sarah? I invented it. It's my only value proposition.

SARAH

It's just a bra.

ROSE

And by wearing' one you're just catering to what guys want.

SARAH

Rose, why do you have to be such a feminist about it? It's just a bra.

Rose picks up the garment in question and holds it up for Sarah.

ROSE

I would hardly call this "just" a bra. Anything that aids in the defying of gravity is not "just" anything. It looks like it was made by some perverted ...NASA flunky. And don't fool yourself into thinking these things are for the betterment of your self-esteem cuz they're

(MORE)

ROSE (cont'd)
not. They're for what guys call
"serious tit action."

SARAH
So whaddaya want from me?

ROSE
I just don't understand why you
read this stuff. I mean...what,
Cosmo can't sell an issue if
they don't show cleavage on
every cover?

SARAH
Well obviously that's what sells.

ROSE
To who? Perky twenty-somethings
with bad jobs and antidepressants?

SARAH
Well they're obviously reading it
for a reason.

ROSE
Yeah, for sex advice, sex fashion,
sex make-up, sex health, and sex
astrology.

SARAH
It's more than that.

ROSE
Like what? Fourteen Ways To Stay
Spunky on a Hundred Dollars a
Week? How To Avoid Sleepy Eyes?

SARAH
Rose, three million women a month
read this magazine. Now just cuz
every article sounds like it's
written by the same person, and
just cuz it's not the most high
brow intellectual thing out there
doesn't mean anything. I might be
smarter than a lot of those three
(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
million women, but just cuz I'm
smarter doesn't mean I'm better.

INT. PLUCK U. - DAY

With rush-hour now over, The Pluck is fairly empty, save a few scattered CUSTOMERS.

Cary washes a table with a rag, and as he polishes the table to perfection he accidentally knocks his can of soapy water to the floor, its contents spilling about.

Cary kneels down on the ground, takes the rag out of the can, and begins the tedious process of soaking the rag with spilled water, and squeezing it out into the can.

Somewhere around the third repetition of squeeze and soak, Cary sees the face of a helper -- Amalia.

Armed with a mop, she helps him clean up the mess.

AMALIA
I thought you left.

CARY
I did; I had to go home to
re-sign our lease.

AMALIA
Gotcha.

Cary senses an awkward silence, so he decides to end the conversation in the wake of further embarrassment.

CARY
I know we met, but I kinda
forgot your name. I'm Cary.

AMALIA
It's Amalia.

They shake hands.

EXT. STREET - DAY

On an empty side street populated by parked cars and occasional dog walkers, Aaron smokes a cigarette as he sits on the steps of an apartment building. Cary approaches from down the road.

CARY

Why are you waiting' outside?

AARON

He said he was gonna be here; I dunno where he went. Wanna go?

Aaron gets up and the two begin their walk home.

AARON

Did they say anything?

CARY

I told them I had to sign our lease. I feel bad, but I don't wanna do ten hours when finals are coming up in a few weeks.

Now that Aaron has brought up "work," Cary feels the waters are safe enough to mention the attractive girl he's met on the job.

CARY

There's a new girl. Amalia.

AARON

Amalia.

CARY

It might be Amalia; I don't remember where the accent is.

AARON

She good-looking?

CARY

I guess.

AARON

Well exactly how good-looking
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
are we talking about?

CARY
I dunno, however good-looking is
good looking.

AARON
Well...I've got four categories
of attractive women and I'll be
really impressed if she fits
two of them.

CARY
Like what?

AARON
Hot. It's the typical cheesecake
chick: Playmate of the Year or
calendar girl. Pretty's the model
type: Five-eight to five-eleven,
symmetrical face that may not even
be conventionally pretty, but the
fashion folks like it. Cute's my
personal favorite: There's more
emphasis on the face than body,
but --

CARY
-- I don't wanna listen to this.

AARON
Stop being lame... The body's more
of an overall pleasant shape than
it is a T-and-A exhibition. Then
again, some baby fat is implied,
but it shouldn't be all that
noticeable. What's that, three?
Adorable girls are kinda hard to
separate from Cute. They're the
ones you really don't wanna sleep
with, you just kinda wanna hug. I
dunno why, I guess sometimes you
just can't fuck a girl and feel
good about yourself in the morning.

CARY
Anyone cover all four?

AARON
(beat)
Elizabeth Taylor, Sophia Loren,
and the oldest girl from the Sound
of Music. Liesl or whatever her name
was.

CARY
I like Nancy Drew.

AARON
You mean Nancy Drew like the
detective girl?

CARY
In your eyes, she's probably the
biggest prude in the history of
young adult fiction, but it doesn't
mean she shouldn't make the list.

AARON
Didn't she at least have any minor
crushes or whatever?

CARY
Well she had a boyfriend, but it
was only for plot purposes.

AARON
So she did have a boyfriend.

CARY
Yeah, but I don't think it was
anything serious.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

A short time later, the boys casually shoot a basketball around.

AARON
So are you gonna like...talk to
this girl or whatever?

CARY

I dunno; I guess in passing.
(beat)
She's Puerto Rican.

AARON

What does that have to do with it?

CARY

Nothing; I just said she was
Puerto Rican. Why were you
insinuating I meant more than that?

AARON

Cuz you said it after this like
...deliberate pause.

CARY

A deliberate pause? As opposed
to what, an unintentional one?

AARON

I just said you paused, Cary.

CARY

Well you're the only person I
know who classifies degrees of
hesitation or whatever.

Aaron backs off. For a moment.

AARON

So is she like Puerto Rican-Puerto
Rican or what?

CARY

First of all, I don't want to know
what that means. Second of all, I
don't wanna talk about this.
It's stupid, Aaron. I already
have a fucking girlfriend.

AARON

You have a fucking girlfriend?
All evidence to the fucking
contrary.

CARY

Aaron. Listen to me: even if I had no attachments to anyone or anybody, the racial thing would never work. Hispanics are like ...really tight knit. And then they got like extended families and shit. If --

AARON

-- And that makes it worse?

CARY

Yeah, usually it's just the mom and dad you have to win over. Now it's like second cousins and great uncles and shit.

AARON

That's mildly fucking racist, man. Don't talk like that around me.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron enters from the bathroom, buckling his belt and fastening his zipper, while Cary flips through a magazine.

AARON

Okay. Hypothetically speaking --

CARY

-- I don't speak hypothetically. I have enough problems dealing with reality.

AARON

Cary...shut up. You're like the Lex Luthor of Paranoia. If you could just use your abilities for the forces of sanity, it's amazing what could be achieved.

CARY

I don't wanna talk about this.

Aaron goes to the fridge and grabs a can of soda. He opens it, takes a sip, and watches Cary with a slight grin on his face.

AARON

Make sure she doesn't have a boyfriend. Once they get a girl they'll fight you to the death to keep them.

CARY

The guys aren't bad, either. Antonio Banderas and what not.

AARON

That was totally unnecessary.

CARY

What was?

AARON

That was. "The guys aren't bad either." I made a tasteless joke and you come back with, "The guys aren't bad either." What is that?

CARY

I'm just trying to say that someone like Antonio Banderas is huge in America, but over there he's nothing's special. Now whether that means Hispanic women have a higher standard I dunno, but it means something. And if you're that insecure that you can't even say another guy's good-looking...

AARON

I'm just saying once in a while you make these comments that make me question your sexuality

CARY

It sounds more like once in a while I make these comments that make you question your own sexuality.

AARON

I'll allow that.

CARY

Name a guy you think is good-looking.

AARON

Why am I the one being put on trial? You're the one with the ethnic fetish -- you fucking name someone.

CARY

Does he have to be alive?

AARON

Does it matter? Why, what dead guy were you gonna say?

CARY

I dunno; I just wanted to know all my options.

AARON

Ray Fiennes.

CARY

That's yours?

AARON

He's got this aura about him girls seem to like. Older ones, at least.

CARY

Whaddaya mean by an aura? In relation to looks, I mean.

AARON

Well his face doesn't look like it's been sculpted like some other actors. He's got this intangible quality that sorta draws people to him.

CARY
Kinda like charisma?

AARON
Different.

CARY
In what way?

AARON
I dunno. Whatever way you want.

CARY
Do I have one?

AARON
No. Not at all.

CARY
Well if you don't know what it
is how do you know I don't have
it?

AARON
You just don't.

CARY
So then why does Ray Fiennes
have one?

AARON
Cuz he is Ray Fiennes. That's
my whole point.

CARY
Well does he have an aura cuz
he's Ray Fiennes or is he Ray
Fiennes cuz he has an aura?

AARON
What is this, fucking Abbott
and Costello? I don't make the
rules. Well yeah, I guess I do.

The buzzer SOUNDS. Cary goes to answer it.

AARON
That might be your mom.

CARY
Why would it be my mom?

AARON
I think she left a message.

CARY
Are you fucking joking me? I
got so much shit to do!

Aaron gets up, grabs a magazine, and proceeds to the door.

AARON
Put something on the door so I
know when you two are done.

LATER

HELEN (45) belongs to the well-stocked pool of nagging moms and
dads across America. She and Cary eat dinner across from one
another at a small table.

HELEN
Did you invite Sarah over yet?

Cary picks at his food with a fork...

HELEN
Don't wait until the last
minute. It's not polite.

...still unnerved by the sudden appearance of dear old Mom.

HELEN
You should try to get some
kind of internship.

CARY
I already got a job.

HELEN
You work in a fast-food place.
(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)

That's not a job.

CARY

I work, they pay, it's a job.

HELEN

Cary, you go to an Ivy League school. Anybody will give you an internship. Mr. Roberts told us at the eleventh grade parent's night that he thought you were very gifted. Those are strong words and they were his exact words. "Cary's very gifted."

CARY

Ma, that was high school. Anyone who showed up to class was very gifted.

HELEN

I don't wanna talk about this.

Helen gets up and heads for her shopping bags.

She returns to the table and hands Cary a gift-wrapped package.

HELEN

It's from Josie. Send her a card.

Cary tears the wrapping paper, but before he can open the box...

HELEN

Don't tear it like that.

CARY

(confused)

What was I supposed to do?

HELEN

You were supposed to take it off gently so you could use it to wrap smaller things.

CARY

Ma, look at this place.

HELEN

What about it?

CARY

It's the bowels of humanity.

HELEN

So?

CARY

So does it look like we're the kinda people who save wrapping paper?

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sarah and Rose sit on a park bench drinking water, having just completed an early morning jog.

ROSE

you know when you see those ads for allergy medications or whatever, and they always have meadows and springs and --

SARAH

-- The vague ones?

ROSE

Exactly; you know why they're like that? I don't remember where I read it, but if an ad's for a drug or medication they're only allowed to say the name of the product or what it does, but never both.

SARAH

Why not?

ROSE

I guess cuz if they advertise shoes you can just go out and buy a pair of shoes, but if they say Prozac cures depression then

(MORE)

ROSE (cont'd)
people will ask their doctors for
Prozac when it might not be the
best thing for them.

SARAH
Makes sense.

ROSE
They can't advertise birth
control at all, cuz then women
who smoke demand it, and then
when they get cancer they sue
the hand that fed them.

SARAH
When you're on, how much less
of a flow do you have?

ROSE
That was a smooth transition.
(beat)
I dunno, depends.

SARAH
Cuz I don't get it at all. I
think it's called amenorrhea,
but I gotta find out if it's
normal.

ROSE
Why are you on the pill?

SARAH
I've been on it since high
school. After I broke up with
Evan I got so used to not having'
it that I stayed on. You knew
that.

ROSE
Sarah, that's not normal. Does
Cary know?

SARAH
Of course not -- it'd just add
fuel to the fire. But I have
(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
been thinking about it.

ROSE
Thinking about telling him or
thinking about sleeping' with him?

SARAH
I dunno, I mean...we don't get
along. Ever, really. That's
what he doesn't understand. I
keep telling him nothing's gonna
happen til I feel comfortable
that the relationship's actually
going somewhere.

ROSE
But if it's not going anywhere
what's the point of being in it
in the first place?

SARAH
That's what he says.

ROSE
But you are...

SARAH
Maybe tomorrow. It's my birthday
so...you know.

ROSE
you wanna do it on your actual
birthday?

SARAH
(beat)
It's cliché, isn't it?

ROSE
I was thinking more along the
lines of corny, but yeah, it's
also cliché.

INT. PLUCK U. - DAY

The kitchen is stocked with the usual amenities. Excessively large refrigerator, pots and pans, meat and dairy, etc.

Amalia cuts up vegetables as Cary stands nearby.

CARY

So uh...where you from by the way?

AMALIA

Oh, around here; just between Avenue B and C. What about you?

CARY

Originally, Long Island, but I go to Columbia so I got an apartment uptown.

AMALIA

Long Island?

CARY

It's not that bad. I mean...it is, but you get used to it.

AMALIA

What exactly...don't take this the wrong way or anything, but ...what exactly is there to do?

CARY

Nothing, really. Or nothing you can plan at least, so you kinda have to make your own fun. During Christmas we used to steal lawn ornaments from people's houses. Our trademark was taking Baby Jesus from the Nativity Scene and replacing him with a Santa Claus we got from another house. We thought it made some sorta statement on the commercialization of Christmas, but...

AMALIA

But in truth you just didn't have respect for anyone's property.

CARY

Basically. You ever been out there?

AMALIA

I've been to the Vanderbilt Planetarium. It's in Greenlawn, I think.

CARY

Yeah, it is. Actually, in high school I had this idea that it was the perfect place to take a girl cuz it was one of those places that didn't have the stigma of "date" attached to it.

AMALIA

And what are the advantages of that?

CARY

Well if I said to you, "Whaddaya doing tomorrow night?" and you said, "Nothing; let's hang out," it's hard to tell whether you said yes to hanging out as friends or if you said yes to hanging out as in like a date. So then if we went out I wouldn't wanna assume we were on a date in fear of coming on too strong. Eventually, guys get so used to acting as if they're not on a date that if they are in fact on one, they never know it.

AMALIA

But how does the Planetarium fit in?

CARY

Cuz something like the movies
(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
has "date" written all over it.
But the Planetarium I mean...
they used to take us there in
fourth grade. And there's the
key right there, cuz anything
having to do with elementary
school tends to erase any and
all sexual tension.

AMALIA
So do all guys think like this
or just you?

CARY
Oh, all of us. You should see
my roommate -- he's got notes,
maps, fucking...diorama's on
stuff like this. When he dies
the Library of Congress will
probably give him his own wing
or some shit.

AMALIA
But by telling me, aren't you
breaking some sorta fraternal
code of honor or whatever?

CARY
No, cuz that's just the way we
were when we were younger. You
could never ask a girl out; that
only existed on like...television.

AMALIA
So then how did you do it?

CARY
You swallow your pride, become
friends with them, and then hope
something happens from there. I
mean, you have no idea how many
friendships between sixteen-year-
old guys and sixteen-year-old
girls only exist cuz the guy
likes the girl and he's hoping
that eventually she'll come
around and feel the same way.

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
It's an awful truth, but it's a
truth, nonetheless.

Amalia nods her head in understanding, then cracks a smile.

AMALIA
I still can't get over the Baby
Jesus story.

CARY
Yeah, that was pretty crazy.

Amalia shakes her head, face still adorned with a slight grin.

AMALIA
So whaddaya doing tomorrow night?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cary walks Amalia home at a slow, deliberate pace. Absent of taxi-cabs and seven-story K-Marts, the neighborhood is slightly less developed than what Cary is accustomed to, but it doesn't appear to bother him.

He begins to answer Amalia's question from the last scene, but as we'll soon find out, the truth is no longer a valued commodity.

CARY
(hesitantly)
I uh...I was gonna hang out with
my friend, but he's got a
girlfriend and I think he's
doing something with her or
whatever. I dunno.

AMALIA
You don't seem too happy about
it.

CARY
Whatever. It's not a big deal.

AMALIA

I think a lot of people can kinda relate to that, though. You're friend's seeing someone and then you get upset when there's no time left for you. But then again if you were seeing someone you probably wouldn't feel that way.

CARY

It's just that I don't even think he really wants to do anything with her; he's just doing it cuz he's doing it. Cuz if you look at his life you see he's gotta solid girl and a solid career ahead of him, yet he's not happy. On paper it can't get much better...yet he's not happy. So lately I've been re-evaluating what I value, cuz given those facts it seems like you can't depend on all the big things to make you happy.

AMALIA

So what can you depend on?

CARY

I think it's the little things that are more important. Like everyday I have to look for something to make me smile even if it appears really insignificant or trivial or whatever.

AMALIA

And what have you found?

CARY

Little things. Winning the little lotto scratch-off games, the way my mom puts so much iced tea mix in my iced tea that you can't even dissolve all of it...lots of things.

AMALIA

(beat)

You remind me of this kid I used to know with who had this little mild obsession for knowing these...odd facts.

CARY

What, like the volume of the Pacific or something?

AMALIA

No, it was less random than that. Like if we were talking about Moby Dick he couldn't say anything about the elements and themes we were supposed to know, but he would point out that Captain Ahab's peg leg was made outta ivory as opposed to wood. Or when McArthur said, "I shall return" when he left the Philippines, he didn't know the quote but he knew that McArthur sent their President guava marmalade as a Fourth of July present. He didn't really care about knowing that kinda stuff, but in some small way I guess it made him happy. And that's what it seems like you want -- something simple.

CARY

Well I think it's what everyone wants. Cuz with my friend and his girlfriend it seems like every little event has to be cause for either a major crisis or a major celebration. There's never any time for them to just breathe and enjoy each other's company.

They reach Amalia's place, and stop by the steps.

AMALIA

Maybe they need to re-discover what worked for them in the first place.

CARY

It's probably too trivial an issue for them to address.

AMALIA

Wow.

CARY

Then again, maybe I should shut up. I've never really been in a serious relationship.

(beat)

Well in eighth grade I was, but that doesn't really count.

AMALIA

My parents never let me go out with guys that young. Every time I wanted to they got a me a starter-pet to see if I was responsible enough.

CARY

Were you?

AMALIA

Well we had a cockateel for a couple months, but he died cuz I never filed his talons.

There's a short lull in the conversation. Wanting to end on a high note, Cary decides it's time to depart.

CARY

Well...I gotta go.

AMALIA

Thanks for the walk.

CARY

Thanks for listening. I guess
I'll uh, I guess I'll see you
tomorrow.

AMALIA

Yeah.

They stand facing each other for just a fraction of a prolonged second before Cary turns around and drifts away.

Amalia smiles before slowly turning to head up the stairs.

Cary stops and watches her disappear, then lingers for a moment.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

As Aaron searches the refrigerator for signs of intelligent life, Cary sits on the couch and flips through television channels.

AARON

"If you were seeing someone...
you probably wouldn't feel
that way." Those exact words?

CARY

I can't tell if she meant "If
you were seeing someone" cuz
she wanted to know if I'm
available, or if she said it
just to make a point.

AARON

Did she stress any of the
syllables?

CARY

It was just kinda nonchalant.
I mean, she said it like it was
no big deal, but that could
just mean she purposely said it
like that just to make it seem
like it was no big deal.

AARON

I think you're looking too much into it.

CARY

No, listen. Whenever a girl's nonchalant like that, whatever they say, even if it's the littlest thing, you can never tell whether they're saying what they're saying, or if there's something evil behind it. Cuz guys are dicks by nature but girls you actually expect some level of honesty outta.

AARON

Whaddaya mean by the --

CARY

-- Lemme think of an example.

(beat)

Okay. Jimmy says to his girlfriend Lauren, "Hey Lauren, let's see that new movie. Doesn't it seem really cool?" Nonchalant Lauren: "No, Jimmy; it's not."

Aaron gestures to Cary -- I don't get it.

CARY

"No Jimmy it's not" can be true, as in, "No, Jimmy; it doesn't seem like a really cool movie," or "No Jimmy it's not" can mean "No, Jimmy; I saw it last night with another guy, and after we went home together and I finished sucking him off, we both came to the mutual conclusion that the movie was shit."

Aaron takes this in as he shakes his head in disagreement.

CARY

you don't see what I'm saying? On
(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

one hand she coulda just been listening to my problems, but on the other she coulda been insinuating that my - well your relationship is a bad one. It's like the chicken and the egg.

AARON

Yeah, but you just passed over the most important part: my relationship. How can you take anything she said at face value when what she said was a reaction to a lie?

CARY

Well there's nothing's I can do about it now; it's done. There's no other alternative.

AARON

"There's no other alternative?" Whaddaya fucking Hamlet or some shit? The alternative is sitting down and shutting-the-fuck-up for a change, cuz this over-analysis shit is such bullshit in the end.

CARY

Well that's what we do, Aaron, we over-analyze. Take that away and whadda we gonna do, drink Mountain Dew and jerk off all day? I mean, I'm sorry, you're a good friend, but I'm already jerkin' off far more than the average American as it is.

That having been said, Cary (in a subtle fashion) shifts his attention back to the t.v. and changes the channel on the remote.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

Cary now sits on Sarah's couch and watches television.

SARAH
So whaddaya think it'll be like?

CARY
I dunno; nice, I guess.

SARAH
Nice?

CARY
We're gonna have fun. Don't worry.

SARAH
(thinking)
You know what we've been talking
about lately? What you've been
talking about?

Cary has no idea what she's referring to, but after a moment he understands. His face, however shows more concern than happiness.

CARY
Are you sure?

SARAH
I wouldn't have brought it up
if I wasn't.

CARY
Yeah, but...you can't just change
your mind overnight like that.
That's not how it works.

SARAH
One, it wasn't overnight. you may
think that cuz the last time we
talked about it I wasn't in
favor of it, but that's hardly
something you can blame me for.
Two, even if I didn't wanna
yesterday and now I do wanna
today, that's my decision. You
can't tell me "how it works."

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)

Cary doesn't respond. He's occupied with his own thoughts.

SARAH

Cary, talk to me. It may be just another cup of coffee for you, but this is my first time.

CARY

Look, I'm sorry for what I said or didn't say or whatever, but you gotta realize it's not about "your first time." I don't understand why you guys put so much emphasis on that. You're not gonna be changed by it, you're not gonna have this glow on your face to show all your friends, and --

SARAH

-- What is your problem?

CARY

My problem is, you think it's a one-time thing, as if once it's done it's gonna be smooth sailing from there on in.

Sarah still can't believe Cary's still offering resistance.

CARY

It's a big jump, Sarah. It's like the jump from triple-A to the majors. After the first time you lose your right to say "no" cuz it becomes an expectation more than anything else.

SARAH

Cary, don't think you're --

CARY

-- It's not me, and it doesn't matter if it's fair. I know it's not fair. But it's sexual

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
 politics and if you wanna do it
 you gotta really wanna do it.

SARAH
 I already started on the pill.

INT. PLUCK U. - DAY

As Aaron and Kirchoff eat, Cary walks from the register to chat.

CARY
 You guys get out early?

AARON
 Where's Selma Hayek?

CARY
 Who?

AARON
 It's the girl from Desperado.
 you didn't get it.

CARY
 Don't call her that again. It's not
 funny.
 (beat)
 She's coming later.

Aaron takes a brown paper bag on the table and nudges it towards Cary. The latter removes a box of condoms.

CARY
 What the fuck?

AARON
 It's a gift. Congratulations.

CARY
 (to Kirchoff)
 Did he tell you?

AARON
 You didn't say not to.

Cary put the condoms back in the bag and returns to work.

KIRCHOFF

I'm not gonna say anything; I don't even know her.

AARON

He doesn't care. It's their first time so he's a little tense.

KIRCHOFF

She's a virgin?

AARON

No, but she hasn't done anything since high school.

KIRCHOFF

Seth's girlfriend's a virgin. I think she's a freshman. He's all paranoid about the bleeding and crying and shit.

AARON

Sounds like fun.

KIRCHOFF

Y'know how they say vigorous exercise can tear the hymen? That's what he's hoping for.

AARON

Has she ever taken ballet?

KIRCHOFF

Not that I know of.

CARY

You guys are shit.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Cary and Aaron exit the diner and begin walking down the street.

CARY

Amalia might stop by later, so don't be surprised and don't say anything if she does come.

AARON

I'm not gonna say anything.

Cary removes the box of condoms and studies the side panel.

CARY

How do they test them?

AARON

Two hundred pounds of pressure per square inch. Water pressure.

CARY

Isn't that a lot?

AARON

Yeah, it's a lot. It's like the ejaculate force of a brontosaurus.

They stop walking. Aaron takes the box from Cary and removes one.

AARON

See what they do is, they figure out the specifications to -- are these lubricated?

CARY

I dunno.

AARON

I don't wanna get the juice all over my hands.

A "no" is confirmed by his examination of the box, so Aaron tears open the condom and blows it up, holding it out for Cary.

AARON

They make one good one, then set the rest of the machines to whatever it took to make that one. But since each piece of

(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
latex varies, the lab
technicians have to make sure
their particular ones don't go
under or over the two hundred
pounds.

CARY
Sounds like a shitty job.

AARON
Well there's a lot of pressure.

CARY
How much can there be? It's
condom regulation.

A PASSERBY offers a silent scoff at the blown-up condom that's
being displayed in broad daylight. Never one to censor his
opinions, Aaron mutters...

AARON
Get over it.

He releases the condom balloon, stuffs it in the box, and hands
the box back to Cary. He then lights up a cigarette.

AARON
Whatever. It may be condom
regulation, but it's like...
socially significant. I mean,
the tap water that some shitty
bass player drinks in Seattle,
Washington, is the same water
that Bill Gates drinks in
Olympia, Washington. Water's
one of the few things other
than air that people from
different social classes can
share. Condoms are another. The
condom that stops trailer park
babies from bein' born is the
same one that's gonna stop
little Cary's, too.

Cary's still not convinced.

AARON

Cary, try taking responsibility for the sterilization of Western society and then tell me how much pressure there is. Member Larry Lee's brother -- graduated a couple years ahead of us -- went to MIT? you know what he's doing? Condoms. Inspector three-o-two and eighty-four thousand a year.

CARY

How do you know this kinda shit?

AARON

Movies.

Aaron and Cary resume walking. Moments later...

CARY

We don't even need them. She's got birth control.

AARON

Yeah, but it takes a while for it to kick in.

CARY

She has been on it for a while.

AARON

Why?

CARY

She doesn't get her period.

Aaron is quiet. Knowing his friend as well as he does, Cary is aware that this isn't a good sign; that something's brewing.

CARY

What?

AARON

I dunno. That whole explanation sounds kinda sketchy.

CARY

In what way?

AARON

I don't wanna step on any toes.

CARY

It's never stopped you before.

AARON

That's true. But don't interrupt cuz I'm just gonna play devil's advocate for a minute. Okay. Now what's more realistic: that a) Sarah had sex in eleventh grade on a consistent basis with her boyfriend, then held out for four years, and then when she has a boyfriend, you, she waits three months before doing anything. Three long months. And within the span of a coupla days she goes from "absolutely not" to "sure, sounds great." And she's been on the pill the whole time. Now is that what's happening, or is it b) that Cary lost his virginity in twelfth grade, slept with two girls freshman year, one last year, and now Sarah. So that's four for you. Now isn't it more possible that she had the sex in eleventh, slept with a few since, maybe one or two more than your four, and now doesn't wanna come off as bein' more experienced?

CARY

Well why would she wait three full months? Why not one or two?

AARON

I couldn't tell you.

CARY

Exactly. It's all speculation.

AARON

Listen, this has nothing's to do
With the fact that I don't like
her. I mean, you're gonna have
guy friends your whole life and
you never know if the girl you're
with is gonna be the one. And
becuz of that I wouldn't even
give a shit if you stopped
hangin' out with me to be with
her. I'm just telling you that
something seems a bit off with
this whole thing.

CARY

Well whaddaya want me to do?

AARON

Tell her you wanna use the
condoms. Why would she care?

CARY

But what would be my motivation
in wanting them? Theoretically I
wouldn't.

AARON

I dunno, make something up. If
she doesn't give you a hard time
then you're fine -- don't use them.
and I'm not saying she's not on
the pill and wants to get
pregnant, and I'm not saying
she's been fucking hundreds of
guys, but something smells fishy.

(beat)

No pun intended.

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

CUSTOMERS shop for everything from diapers to detergent in a
small, Genovese-type drugstore. Our argumentative couple,
however, address the recently explosive issue of birth control.

SARAH

Cary, you're the one who's supposed to not wanna use a condom.

CARY

But the pill's only like... ninety-four percent effective or something like that. So if we have sex an average of seven times a week, then within...I dunno, five months, there's gonna be a one-in-twelve chance at conception. Is that a risk --

SARAH

Cary, we're not talking about this anymore. Just bury it already.

LATER

The pair browse a different section of the store.

CARY

How about a diaphragm?

SARAH

I would, but it takes a few days to get one.

CARY

Well can't you like...I dunno, borrow someone else's?

SARAH

Cary, it's a diaphragm -- you have to get fitted for them.

CARY

Fitted? What're we getting -- contraception or a prom dress?

Sarah delivers a patented sigh, but Cary's not finished yet.

CARY

Whadda they fit it on?

SARAH

The cervix. Now can you not trivialize this?

CARY

I'm not trying to trivialize anything; I'm just wondering why you can't just stick it in there and let it go to work.

SARAH

Cary, why do you have to be like every other guy and always make everything so complicated?

CARY

Guys are complicated?

SARAH

Why do you always have to repeat what I say as if you didn't hear it the first time? Yes, guys are complicated.

CARY

(changing course)

Sarah, what's the most common insult one guy can say to another? "You have a small dick." And what's the best way for a guy to make himself seem cool? "I have a huge one." All this variation in dick size, Sarah, yet we manage to come together with a one-size-fits-all-dicks condom.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Cary, Aaron, Amalia, and Aaron's friend MORGAN (19) are all sitting around the apartment shooting the shit.

MORGAN

Well it's not a black-and-white issue; it all depends on what your definition of genius is.

AMALIA

I don't think he's saying he's a genius, I think he just meant that he has some genius qualities.

AARON

Exactly; I mean...where do you get two-thousand pounds of combustible fertilizer, the Internet? I didn't know where to get stamps until I was fifteen. And even if getting all the shit's not enough, he managed to not tell anyone.

CARY

It's called breaking the law. Not telling anyone's half the point.

AARON

Oh, please, Cary. The guy was planning the single greatest act of domestic terrorism on U.S. soil and no one knew about it. You got Baltic and Mediterranean in the McDonald's Monopoly game and five minutes later you're on the phone with your cousins telling them.

CARY

That's true.

AMALIA

Well granted, it's not easy to get all the stuff he needed to get, but just look at the way he got caught.

CARY

During the getaway. Which unless you're being chased by
(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
fucking...Batman, it should be
the easiest part.

AMALIA
Well that's not even what I
meant. I mean the actual way.
He was doing ninety-five with
no plates and a shotgun in the
passenger seat, and when they
pulled him over he said the
plates fell off.

CARY
How did they just fall off? Did
he have them attached with glue?

MORGAN
Well even if he got pulled over
for just the plates, didn't he
think having a shotgun was maybe
a bad idea? Why didn't he just
have a few open containers in
the back and get pulled over for
a little D.W.I.?

AMALIA
I still have my doubts the guy
even did it. He barely looks
like he could tie his shoes
without visual aids much
less bomb a federal building.

LATER

Cary enters the apartment to find Aaron laid out on the futon.

AARON
What did you get?

CARY
A bracelet.

AARON
you really don't need to get her
anything for only three months.

CARY

I kinda feel obligated to since she's letting me sleep with her.

AARON

She's not supposed to let you, she's supposed to want to.

CARY

Y'know what I meant.

AARON

What time are you gonna be back?

CARY

I dunno, but make sure you're as far away from here as --

AARON

-- I'm leaving in ten minutes to meet Dominic. We might stop in and talk to Amalia; she's pretty cool.

CARY

She is cool. That's what I was trying to tell you.

AARON

(beat)

How do you take a shit in space?

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's the anniversary dinner. Cary's picked out a quiet, romantic locale for the occasion -- dimly lit, candlelight, the works.

He nudges the bracelet box over to Sarah's side. She takes it and carefully takes off the wrapping paper. Once Sarah sees the bracelet, she's overwhelmed by Cary's kindness and generosity.

SARAH

Cary, it's beautiful. It's amazing; thank you so much.

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)

Cary crumples up the paper, and Sarah nonchalantly says...

SARAH

Don't throw it out.

Cary stops in his tracks. He looks at the wrapping paper, flips it over to reveal the plain white side, then flips it back again.

CARY

Why not?

SARAH

Because.

Sarah takes the wrapping paper from him and begins smoothing it out. Cary just watches her with his typical blank expression.

SARAH

Why is this such a big deal?

CARY

It's not, it's just that the only other person I've ever seen do that was my mom the other day, and I refuse to buy into Aaron's Great Gatsby theory that you're just a younger version of her.

SARAH

One, don't ever bring up Aaron when I'm around. He's probably never read the Great Gatsby and therefore has no business deriving theories from it. Two, your mom's wonderful. I wish I could be like your mom when I'm her age.

Cary takes the wrapping paper from Sarah and re-crumples it up. He grows dead serious, but in a way that is very comical.

CARY

One, my mother is insane. Two, once wrapping paper's done concealing whatever it is it's supposed to conceal, it tends to lose its status as wrapping paper.

SARAH

So then what is it?

CARY

(beat)
It's fucking garbage, Sarah.

INT. PLUCK U. - NIGHT

As Amalia tidies up we hear a voice that's apparently addressing her. It's Aaron, who follows her around with his soda in hand.

AARON

See...my friend's got this girlfriend and things aren't going that well with them, so all we ever talk about is her. And it's not that I mind it, it's that he asks me for advice but then won't act on anything I say to him.

AMALIA

Well whaddaya say?

AARON

That would take a while, but in short I basically tell him that he's gotta get to her before she gets to him.

AMALIA

I don't get it.

AARON

Well if a couple's not addressin'
The problems they're havin',
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)

some things gonna go wrong - one of em's gonna go nuts, or someone's gonna stop talking to the other person, or maybe one's gonna cheat. Cuz at the rate they're going one of em's gonna get shot or strangled by the other, and if that's the case it's better that he gets to her before she gets to him. That's why most failed relationships are the guy's fault. Cuz when stuff starts going sour we're usually the one's who put the nail in the coffin. We'll stop talking or start cheating or whatever.

AMALIA

I don't really agree with most of that, but there is some truth in it. Plus you get points for saying most bad relationships are the guy's fault. It's pretty big of you to admit that.

AARON

I'm not saying we think it's right; we just wanna do it to you before you can do it to us.

AMALIA

Well that's a bit childish.

AARON

Yeah, but if I was a child you'd find it endearing.

AMALIA

Maybe. Okay, so you say your friend won't act on your advice. But what would you do if it was your problem?

AARON

Well that's irrelevant. I don't really have a whole lotta

(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
problems, much less this one.

AMALIA
I'm sure you don't.

Aaron looks Amalia in the eye before a tell-tale smirk comes across his face. No one has ever challenged him -- until now.

AARON
Are you trying to antagonize me?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cary and Sarah enter the apartment and get down to business.

LATER

Cary lights a CANDLE. He pulls away, and the whole room is dimly lit by several candles.

The pair begin to kiss, and after they ease to the bed...

CARY
Are you sure you wanna do this?

SARAH
Stop; this is what you want.

CARY
That's not what I asked. I asked if you wanted this.

SARAH
Cary, you're just nervous. It's like when the groom gets nervous the day of the wedding.

She begins kissing him, and the pair continue on. Sarah's shirt is soon rendered as "excess clothing." Cary notices the new bra.

CARY
New furniture?

SARAH
It's a bra, Cary.

CARY
Well how exactly how does it go
about...enhancing what it
appears to be enhancing?

SARAH
"A delicate interaction between
the intricate wire mesh and plush
lycra spandex."

CARY
Whaddaya mean wire?

SARAH
Underwire.

CARY
That's so pretentious

SARAH
How do you categorize "wire" as
being pretentious?

CARY
Cuz you're not wearin' a
microwave, Sarah; it's a bra.

INT. PLUCK U. - NIGHT

Across a table from one another, Aaron and Amalia continue:

AMALIA
Well you say you're friend never
acts on your advice, but I think
you would kinda like that. Cuz
if he did everything you say
there wouldn't be any tension to
keep you guys going. You're foul
-weather friends and you need it.

AARON
It's fair-weather friend.

AMALIA

You're such a pretentious little asshole. I know what the phrase is, but what I mean by calling you a foul weather friend is that it seems like you're not interested in having friends unless they're suffering like you. Like if they're not within the acceptable range of your emotional state, then it kinda annoys you.

AARON

Well that's kinda true for everyone. But what gives you -- well not just you, everyone -- what gives you the idea that I'm this suffering, cynical person?

AMALIA

You're not cynical?

AARON

Not at all. If I think we're all gonna die so we shouldn't care about life, you may say that's cynical, but if I accept it as a reality and it doesn't cause me any undue stress, then I'm just being a realist. But whatever. You asked me what I would do and I said it's not me with the problem. But to you it is, so I'll tell you exactly what I'd do.

AMALIA

Make sure you wake me up for the important parts.

AARON

I'll pretend you didn't say that. Okay: Summer before college. I've been on-and-off with a girl for the last ten months. Mutually abusive relationship but for some
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)

reason we still care about each other. Come August, she starts getting close with my friend Billy and I convince myself that nothing's going on. Enter a third party who tells me Jules and Billy went to the beach with two of our other friends, Shawn and Sean. Same name, different spelling. So at the end of the day Shawn and Sean come back to the car and see the rear-view mirror tilted at a fucked up angle, then see the heads of Jules and Billy pop up from the back seat. They claim they were sleeping. At two of clock in the afternoon in an '83 Toyota Tercel hatchback, they claim they were sleeping.

(beat)

Our relationship was going sour, we didn't address the problems we were having, so something blew up: she cheated.

AMALIA

So she got to you before you got to her.

AARON

Technically, yeah. But she didn't know that I knew about her and Billy, so that created a loop-hole.

AMALIA

Which was what?

AARON

Well Jules's little sister was in ninth grade, and like most girls who's older sister's have boyfriend's, they kinda wanna --

AMALIA

Absolutely not.

AARON

Whaddaya mean, absolutely not?

AMALIA

You were a senior and she was like what, fourteen?

AARON

I only made out with her.

AMALIA

But that's horrible.

AARON

I know, but I was hurt and Immature. It's the worst combination but I had to let her know that after ten months you don't do stupid shit like that.

AMALIA

So you did something stupider.

AARON

Basically. It was worth it, though.

AMALIA

So you think you're friend has to do something like that?

AARON

No, he just needs to get a grip on things. Stop trying to please everyone but himself.

AMALIA

That's weird. I know I've heard something like that before. It's like *dejá vú*, but with a different person, different place, and different time.

Aaron's eyes narrow before the tiniest trace of a smirk appears.

AARON

Well then it's not déjà vú.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cary and Sarah are still doing their thing, (with a little less clothing) and are rapidly approaching their destination.

SARAH

Whaddaya thinking about?

CARY

Whaddaya mean?

SARAH

Well as we kinda reach the moment of truth...y'know, whaddaya thinking about?

CARY

Nothing.

SARAH

We're this close and you're not thinking about anything?

CARY

(beat, confused)

What am I supposed to be?

SARAH

Me. Us. I dunno, something.

She gives him a playful slap.

SARAH

You're terrible.

They begin kissing again. After a little while, Cary stops.

CARY

Rigor Mortis.

SARAH

What?

CARY

That's what I was just thinking about.

Sarah's waiting for him to elaborate.

CARY

The stiffening of the body after death. How long it takes a certain muscle type to fully contract, temperature loss over time...

SARAH

I know what it is.

CARY

Well you wanted to know.

SARAH

Okay, but we're in the middle of the most romantic moment we've ever had and you were thinking about death?

CARY

(beat, sincere)
I gotta test Monday.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

The girls assume the RINGING phone is Cary, so they let it ring. Sarah's calmed down from her upsetting night as she discusses the course of the events with Rose.

ROSE

He said that?

SARAH

That's what he thinks about.
Death. And of all things he
(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
could possibly...whatever.

ROSE
Rigor Mortis?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Cary and Aaron recap the action.

AARON
You're supposed to say, "You,
honey. The moment, honey." Not
fucking Rigor Mortis!

Not getting an answer from Sarah, Cary hangs up the phone.

CARY
Actually that's what got me
fucked this time -- or not
fucked, rather -- but I
remember once it was the large
intestine.

AARON
(taking interest)
Really.

CARY
Well in seventh grade we were
doing the digestive system in
science and my teacher said
that if you were to unravel the
large intestine it'd be sixty
feet, six inches.

AARON
That's the distance from the
mound to home plate.

CARY
Yeah, it's the exact distance.
That's why I think it's bullshit.

AARON
So whaddaya gonna do?

CARY

I have no idea.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen's a mess after the afternoon rush hour. Amalia ties up a garbage bag as Cary enters with some books.

AMALIA

I thought you weren't workin'.

CARY

I was just doing some homework.

(beat)

I was at the library but I came by cuz I wanted to know if you were doing anything tomorrow. My mom's inviting my aunt and uncle over for dinner and she wants me to come, so...

Amalia tries to phrase her reaction in as nice a way as possible.

AMALIA

Cary...you don't even know my last name and you want me to meet your family?

CARY

Well, yeah. I mean...for one, if I tell them I gotta getcha back to the City then it gives me a good excuse to leave early.

AMALIA

So I'm just a decoy.

CARY

Not at all, I mean...me and you are friends. I dunno how or why or to what degree...but we are friends even if it's just casually. And we had all those conversations about Long Island so I thought you might find it

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
fun. But I think if --

AMALIA
-- Was that whole thing a
prepared statement?

Cary reflects on Amalia's comment for a moment. Then with a straight face, he nods his head.

CARY
Basically, yeah.

AMALIA
(smiling)
And a pretty weak one at that.

CARY
Well did it serve its purpose?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron attaches a menu to the wall as Cary comes through the door.

CARY
Aaron.

AARON
Y'know for future reference,
when you walk through the door
you can just start talking and
I'm pretty sure I'll know
you're talking to me.

CARY
Just shut up and listen: you
know how I'm supposed to go
home with Sarah today?

AARON
I didn't know, but now that I
do I can definitely tell you I
really don't care.

CARY

Well I asked Amalia and she said she'd go.

AARON

To Long Island? Doesn't she have anything better to do?

CARY

I guess not. I told her my mom left her car Wednesday so we can drive there and then take the train back tonight.

AARON

Doesn't she think it's weird?

CARY

Well I wasn't about to ask.

AARON

I don't see why not; you fucking had the balls to ask her home in the first place.

(beat)

So what's the deal? I mean... you're not gonna honestly tell me you don't have an interest in her. Or are you?

CARY

There's an interest but it's not like it's some ill-fated crush. I just like being with her.

AARON

That's such a cop-out.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Cary and Amalia drive.

CARY

See...all Long Island really
(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

is -- and I don't mean Queens or even Nassau County, I mean the desolate suburban part -- all it is is green lawns strung in-between gas stations and diners. There's never anything good to do so you just end up driving around all night. Eventually you run outta gas and end up seeing a movie. I don't even think anyone actually wants to see the movie, I think they're just paying ten bucks to make the time go by faster.

AMALIA

So what was being a kid like here?

CARY

Same as anywhere else, I guess. you had your friends, family, neighbors, all of that.

(beat)

It's just a little more weird than the suburban towns you find in the rest of the country. something about having the intensity of the city to the left and the placid five-hundred miles of the Atlantic to the right just takes a toll on your personality. It kinda twists people's psyches inside out.

AMALIA

Like in what way?

CARY

Well I used to have this friend, Tom Ismail, and my parents hated him cuz of his older brother, which I perfectly understand. I once watched the guy eat an entire bowl of artificial fruit just so he could see what it was like to have his stomach pumped. But Sam isn't

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

his brother. I was sleeping over his house once when we were around nine, and I'm lying in the dark worrying that his brother was gonna come in and hack me to death with an ax. All of a sudden I hear Sam crying, so I ask him what's wrong and he says, "Nothing." And that's the thing: nothing was wrong. He just cried himself to sleep every night outta habit. The kid was so conditioned to grief that if he doesn't have any, he can't even sleep. I mean...how can you possibly dump on a guy who has to deal with that kinda shit?

(beat, reflecting)

Anyway, my parents acknowledge the truth of the situation and I'm sure deep down they do feel for bad for him, but the kid's still not allowed in our house.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - DAY

A car movies down the road of an upper-middle-class suburban neighborhood. Abundant foliage, wide roads, and manicured lawns are all the eye can see. Cary and Amalia exit the car and find themselves overshadowed by the house that Cary calls home.

AMALIA

You have a beautiful house.

CARY

I didn't pay for it.

The pair make their way to the front door. Cary RINGS the bell.

CARY

Listen to the bell, Cary; It Tolls for thee.

AMALIA

Hemingway?

CARY

I'm not sure. Maybe.

The front door opens and we once again meet up with Helen.

CARY

Hi, Ma. Listen: this is my friend Amalia. Amalia this is my mom.

They shake hands. Helen has a big smile on her face and is an incredibly cordial host. Everyone's friends here.

HELEN

Well, hello. How're you?

AMALIA

Hi, it's a pleasure to meet you.

HELEN

You, too. Come in, come in.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Helen takes off to busy herself with other matters, and Cary introduces Amalia to ANDREW (11) and MEGHAN (7). Meghan is all smiles and dimples. Andrew, however, with a devilish smile and ruffled hair, has mischief written all over him.

CARY

These are my little monsters:
Andrew and Meghan.

MEGHAN

Hi.

AMALIA

Well how're you?

MEGHAN

I'm eight years old, and I live on Baylor Drive.

(MORE)

MEGHAN (cont'd)

Cary gives Andrew a soft whack on the back of the head.

CARY

Say hello to Amalia.

ANDREW

Where's Sarah?

INT. MEGHAN'S ROOM - DAY

Meghan shows Amalia her dolls, introducing them by name.

MEGHAN

This is Nathaniel, and this is Duke, and this is Mrs. Potter. Do you wanna have tea with us?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Cary discusses Amalia with his mom in her bedroom.

HELEN

I didn't raise you to be irresponsible, Cary! I think you're bringing Sarah but you show up at my house with a Dominican girl. Cary, I don't know any Dominicans.

CARY

She's Puerto Rican, Ma. And be quiet; she's right in Meghan's room.

A DOORBELL is heard in the background. Helen drifts away to answer it, simultaneously lecturing Cary.

HELEN

Don't tell me to be quiet. I'll be quiet if and when I wanna be quiet.

INT. MEGHAN'S ROOM - DAY

Amalia and Meghan have tea with the dolls.

MEGHAN
Cary's my biggest brother.

AMALIA
He's very nice.

MEGHAN
Does he talk a lot?

AMALIA
A real lot.

MEGHAN
He talked a lot when he was
little, too. But I wasn't born
then so I didn't know him.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

An elaborate dinner complete with candles is set on the table, and everyone's eating, drinking, and talking. MORTY sits at one head of the table, while the other is used by Helen, currently in the kitchen. To her left sits Amalia, and on her left is Cary. Opposite Cary and Amalia are UNCLE LEO and AUNT JOSIE.

LEO
Where does Cary go to college?

JOSIE
Columbia.

LEO
I thought he went somewhere else.

JOSIE
He goes to Columbia.

LEO
I'm aware of that now. I was
(MORE)

LEO (cont'd)
simply commenting to myself that
I thought he went somewhere else.

Helen enters the dining room with yet another dish. She places it down on the table before heading for her seat.

CARY
Ma, this wasn't necessary.

HELEN
(to Amalia)
"Isn't necessary." Can you believe him? My son calls me once a month and spends all his time at school, and then when he comes home he expects me not to make a nice dinner. Can you believe it?

LEO
You should appreciate this. She's doing this for you.

JOSIE
I'm sure he's very much appreciative of all of this.

CARY
Can everyone try avoid talking about me in the third person?

Cary's father tries to break the ensuing tension.

MORTY
So Amalia -- Cary tells me you're Cuban.

AMALIA
I'm actually Puerto Rican.

LEO
The Cuban Missile Crisis was the biggest scam perpetrated on the American public since -- actually, I take it back -- Farrakhan's parade was an even bigger insult.

CARY

It was a march Uncle Leo, and
it wasn't so much a support of
Farrakhan as much as it was --

LEO

-- A march? I didn't see anyone
marching. They might've called it
a march, but I saw it on t.v.
and everyone I saw was standing
still. That's a parade.

Helen tries to focus the dinner-table conversation on Amalia.

HELEN

What's the government like in
Puerto Rico? Is it a democracy?

AMALIA

It's actually part of the U.S.

CARY

It's a U.S. territory.

HELEN

That's not true.

CARY

Then why the hell did you ask?

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Cary stands at the sink, washing his hands, talking to himself in the mirror. Though easily flustered, he never quite reaches the end of his rope. He's re-establishing his "grip" by talking to himself in the mirror, always a foolproof plan.

CARY

You can handle this. You've
dealt with them for the last
twenty years of your life, so
all you have to do is put up with
them for a little while longer.

Cary dries his hands, then continues his dialogue with the mirror.

CARY

Now in the dining room, the girl who you may or may not have a mild crush on is desperately trying to fend off the Spanish Inquisition.

(beat)

It'll be over before you know it.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Cary returns to find the conversation in full-stride.

LEO

So how're you're grades?

CARY

The semester hasn't ended yet.

LEO

you gotta be careful. There aren't a lot of opportunities.

CARY

Leo, this guy I know went to MIT and now he's working with... semiconductors or something. I dunno what you're talking about, but there's plenty of stuff.

LEO

Yeah, well with a degree from MIT you figure he should know what he wants to do with his life as opposed to --

CARY

-- As opposed to what? Doin' something useful?

As the elders continue their discussion, Amalia offers Cary a coy look -- Is he serious? Shaking his head with subtlety, Cary leans over a bit and explains softly to Amalia...

CARY

A few years ago, Leo and my dad go down to Washington for the I-dunno-what anniversary protest rally against Vietnam, okay? Now the night before they leave, Leo gets drunk and tells my dad he feels guilty that he never fought. So I said, "What's the deal, Uncle Leo? In wartime you wanna be a pacifist and in peacetime you wanna be a soldier. It took you thirty-some-odd years to find out you don't believe in anything?"

INT. DORM ROOM - SAME TIME

Back in New York City, Aaron sits on Sarah's couch as she sits opposite him. Rose stirs spaghetti and listens in.

AARON

So uh...you doing okay?

SARAH

"Okay's" a relative term, Aaron.

AARON

I...guess it is.

SARAH

(beat)

So am I gonna hear it or not?

AARON

Hear what?

ROSE

The bullshit that's supposed to make you feel better.

AARON

(turning to Rose)

Well I figured I'd start with the small-talk bullshit first, then work my way up to the feel-better bullshit. But if that's not alright with you, maybe you could just butt-the-fuck-out so me and Sarah can finish our conversation.

Aaron turns back to Sarah. There's a pause in their chat that suggests the pair are about to get to the heart of the matter.

AARON

So. Um...I dunno, I mean...I'm from Jericho, Cary's from Babylon. Not much difference in the towns to begin with. Then I move to Babylon the summer before senior year, change high schools, and then half-way through senior year me and Cary meet. And we weren't really anything more than acquaintances, but when we both decided to go here we started hanging out. Then we get here and we realize this wasn't what we imagined college to be like at all. We thought we were gonna have a bunch of friends, four girls, five guys, just like at most schools. But here, I mean, everyone's so... urban. All our friends at normal schools were having a great time, but most of the people here hated high school, probably cuz they got the shit kicked outta them every so often. Whatever. So then he met you and it was something to hold on that was familiar. It just reminded them -- and me, too -- of like, all that he said/she said stuff from high school.

SARAH

So is there another little girl

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
in his life?

AARON
Did I just tell that whole story
for nothing's?

SARAH
I wasn't paying attention.

AARON
Whatever. Sarah...you gotta
realize even if there was...
relationships don't really end
cuz of infidelity. It's just a
symptom that something else's
wrong.

ROSE
Well that symptom's fucking her
boyfriend.

AARON
Rose, honestly. Shut the fuck up.

ROSE
Why don't you just leave?

AARON
You want me to leave?

ROSE
No, I'm telling you to leave.

AARON
Whatever.

As Aaron gets up and makes his way to the door, he turns to Rose.

AARON
You know...if you had any self-
respect you wouldn't have even let
me in here in the first place.

ROSE
Oh please, Aaron. you think
you're some kinda messiah and
(MORE)

ROSE (cont'd)
you're really not; you're a
bitter asshole with no tact or
manners.

AARON
Fine. But just remember...as
pissed as you are at me...you'd
still blow me if I asked you to.
And all three of us know that's
true.

ROSE
You keep telling yourself that.

And with that vintage display of his assholery, Aaron leaves.

EXT. DUCK POND - DUSK

Cary and Amalia watch ducks on a pond. Exciting. The environs are rather serene, as evidenced by the absence of pigeons and taxis.

AMALIA
You've lived here all your life?

Cary turns to Amalia. They face one another with only about a foot between them.

CARY
It's different here. I remember wanting to be a long reliever for the Kansas City Royals. Long relief only cuz you get to be a baseball player without all the pressure that comes with playin' an important position. But about three weeks into Little League I realized I was never gonna be much of a ballplayer and it kinda hurt for a while. I mean, it didn't ruin me the way it did some of the other kids, but I think it created a fear of failure.

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

Amalia says nothing, and Cary's run out of things to talk about. The moment is tense. Silence is in the air. Figure out the rest.

AMALIA

Why'd you lie about your girlfriend?

That's not what Cary expected. He turns and walks a bit away from Amalia, collecting himself and preparing an appropriate response.

AMALIA

you know why a white lie is worse than a big one? Cuz if you kill your wife and seven years later they find out, no one wonders why you lived a huge lie all that time. Of course you did -- you killed your fucking wife. But when it's a white lie it begs the question of why you lied. What the lie signifies.

CARY

I dunno. Talking to you was weird. We talked about shit I'm not used to talking about. It was actually conversation as opposed to the constant arguing I usually do. And if you knew I wouldn't have felt free enough with myself to actually talk about that shit.

AMALIA

Cary, I dunno what we have, but I do know that it's too important for you to bullshit me with what you just said.

Amalia's got him figured out. And Cary knows it.

CARY

Well...you know those soccer moms who play around on the Internet with their kid's

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)

computer? First they learn a little solitaire and minesweeper, then move on to chat rooms, and soon they're exchanging e-mail with a some nice, unattached man in Boston. And even though the whole thing's harmless they somehow forget to mention their husband and kids.

AMALIA

But it's not harmless.

CARY

But look what happens: when those women talk to their girlfriends it's not about General Hospital anymore, it's about the nice man from Boston. Suddenly everyone involved has something new and exciting to talk about: "Hey, have you heard about Peggy and that guy from Boston?" And so the same thing happened with me: the last week me and my friends have been talking about this. Now when I started talking to you, I knew from the first minute the shit I was about to step into, yet I still stepped in it. Why? Cuz it was something to do. Just like the Planetarium here or cow-tipping upstate you get so used to creating your own experiences like it's some sorta instant nostalgia, that you end up doing it inadvertently. I think I lied cuz somewhere in me I knew it would lead to a some sorta... perverse adventure of some sort.

Amalia reflects on Cary's confession. Moments later...

CARY

So did you know before or after I asked you to come?

AMALIA
Before.

CARY
Aaron?

AMALIA
Yeah.

CARY
I never should've told him. We've developed such a weak, pathetic familiarity that talking to him is like talking to myself.

AMALIA
He didn't just blurt it --

CARY
-- Don't worry; I'll talk to him later about it. Extensively.
(beat)
So...why would you wanna come?

AMALIA
Mainly to see if you were telling the truth about everything else. You and Aaron have this habit of relating everything you say to these little stories --

CARY
That's cuz all our accomplishments are in the past.

AARON
Whatever. I just wanted to know if they were made up or not, too. On one hand I thought they couldn't be since all the little details were so intricate, but then again maybe they were too intricate to even be true.

Cary approaches Amalia and closes in to the same distance they were before. He dips his eyes to meet hers and smirks.

CARY
So you like my stories?

AMALIA
I do like your stories, Cary.

CARY
(still smiling)
What else do you like?

AMALIA
That's about it.

Amalia chuckles, then grows quiet for a moment. Soon, however...

AMALIA
You know...I hope we both feel
this way after today. After we
leave this moment...I just hope
we keep this.

CARY
Well...what exactly is "this?"

Amalia moves closer to Cary. He bridges the rest of the distance and they softly kiss.

AMALIA
I only did that cuz it's what I
wanted at that particular moment.
Otherwise...don't read any more
into that than you should.

CARY
I'm not gonna.
(beat)
You look nice.

AMALIA
(smiling)
Come on, Cary. you can't flatter
me with some cheap come-on.

CARY

It wasn't a come-on...it was
more of an opinion.

AMALIA

Well then thank you.

CARY

Any time.

A car HORN is heard, because...

EXT. LOOKING GLASS - DAY

...Cary and Aaron are in N.Y.C., having a few drinks after their
long and relatively exhausting weekend.

AARON

So that's it?

CARY

Whaddaya mean, "that's it?"
What more do you want?

AARON

Well what else happened?

CARY

What else was gonna happen?

AARON

That's true. Everything kinda
ends badly or else it wouldn't
end.

CARY

(shaking his head)
You know...see you bitch and you
complain and you tell me these
things...and if you think you're
preparing' me for hard times,
thank you, but...

AARON

But you gotta be a hero. you
wanna be a champion. Well
lemme tell you, Cary, people
don't wanna champion. They
wanna eat cheese fries, play
the lotto, and watch football.

CARY

How did you get like this? I mean
seriously, I wanna know.

AARON

Well...it wasn't one thing, I
can tell you that.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Moments later, Cary and Aaron have left the bar and walk home.

AARON

I just don't really feel like
living' in a place that embraces
and nurtures apathy as if it
were some sorta virtue.

CARY

Well you're no different. You're
no better than anyone else.

AARON

I didn't say I was different or
better. I am the problem. I'm
the very definition of apathy.
That's why I wanna leave -- cuz
this place does nothing's but
encourage my flaws. And I
sympathize completely -- apathy
is a solution.

CARY

See...you should listen to
yourself. You say...that the
problem with people is that
people don't care. So I don't

(MORE)

CARY (cont'd)
care about people. Now that
makes no sense. You know why?

AARON
You care.

CARY
I do.

AARON
And you're gonna make a difference.

CARY
Whatever. The point is that I don't
think you wanna leave Columbia and
leave the city cuz you believe these
things, I think you wanna believe
them...cuz you're leaving.

(beat)

You know...you want me to agree with
you, and you want me to say, "Yeah,
you're right, it's all fucked up,
it's a fucking mess, we should all
go live in a fucking log cabin."
But I won't. I won't say that. I
don't agree with you. I do not.

(beat)

I can't.

AARON
Whatever.

They walk until Aaron notices something across the street.

AARON
Hold on.

He crosses the street and approaches the window of a restaurant.

Aaron KNOCKS on the window.

GIRL, eating with GUY, didn't hear it. Aaron KNOCKS again.

Guy motions for Girl to look out the window.

She sees that it's Aaron who's the knocker.

He waves.

Girl waves back to him.

Aaron walks away from the window and re-crosses the street.

He and Cary begin their walk, and continue for a moment in silence.

CARY

Who were you waving to?

AARON

Girl in my Physics class.

CARY

She good looking?

AARON

No.

Cary winces a bit.

CARY

I wonder if we're gonna be friends after college. Or even in a year.

AARON

(beat)

We're not.

CARY

You don't think so?

AARON

No. You're outgrowing me. Right?

CARY

I don't know about that.

(beat)

I just don't know if I like you very much.

AARON

Exactly. You have moral dilemmas. I
don't. You're a better man than me.

(beat)

Or at least you will be. One day.

The pair continue walking in silence. As they make their way
home, we...

FADE OUT.

THE END