

Leaving Pete

Written by

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INT. THE BULLDOG PUB - NIGHT

It's mid-way through a popular trivia night at a cozy beer bar in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. The host, an aspiring comedian in a vintage suit, knows everyone and commands the room. They all love him almost as much as he loves himself. The top 3 teams are:

BECCA AND FRIENDZ: Three cute, fun, 20-something girls. The kind of ladies who, despite being college educated, still get "totes excited" about girls night out.

TERRY, 46, a team of one. A hyper-intelligent, scrawny loner, think Steve Buscemi in everything but Boardwalk Empire.

And our team, TAKING CARE OF QUIZNESS led by PAUL, 35, adorable, scruffy, slightly nerdy. He's joined by MURPH, a sloppy, girlfriendless party guy who has single-handedly devalued the high five, and DEAN, an endearing lawyer-type who - because he's married - still gets "totes excited" about guys night out.

The host reads all the questions out loud. Each team has a buzzer. The team to buzz in with the correct answer first gets the points.

HOST

Who earned infamy for saying: "A billion dollars isn't worth what it used to be?"

PAUL

I know I've heard this before...

DEAN

(to Becca N Friendz)
Hey, Becca N Friendz, no Googling.
(to the host)
Becca's Googling. She is Googling and/or Binging. Neither is acceptable.

MURPH

Hey, be cool to Becca.

PAUL

She's not gonna sleep with you Murph.

TERRY buzzes in.

HOST

Terry?

TERRY

J. Paul Getty.

HOST

Correct. What highly regarded American author wrote *Wings of a Dove*, *Washington Square* and *The Golden Bowl*?

The teams converse.

MURPH

(to Paul and Dean)
Golden Bowl, Golden Bowl, Golden Bowl.

DEAN

Why do you even bother?

PAUL

I got this one.

Paul buzzes in.

MURPH

(boasting to everyone)
Ooh, Paul knows this, suckers. He knows this, he's a writer.

PAUL

Henry James.

HOST

Correct! The points go to Taking Care of Quizness.

MURPH

(singing)
TAKING CARE OF QUIZNESS, EVERYDAY!

PAUL

I can't believe we let him pick the name.
It's embarrassing every time.

HOST

That's the first in five answers that hasn't gone to Terry.

MURPH

You're going down, Terry! Tonight.

Terry rolls his eyes.

PAUL

You can't threaten a guy you have no chance of beating.

MURPH

YOU have a chance of beating him and
we're together.

HOST

Next question: uxoricide is the killing
of one's what?

Paul's stumped.

DEAN

Why aren't you buzzing? You're supposed
to be buzzing.

PAUL

I don't know this one.

MURPH

OH, COME ON!

Becca N Friendz buzzes in.

BECCA

Uxor?

HOST

No, it is not the killing of one's uxor,
but Becca, I would love to know what you
think an uxor is.

Becca looks disappointed. She thought she had that one.

MURPH

We can figure this out. Uxor sounds like
Luxor, we stayed at the Luxor in Vegas
last year...

(suddenly excited)
...remember that waitress who was into
me?!

PAUL/DEAN

No.

Terry BUZZES.

TERRY

Wife. It's the killing of one's wife.

HOST

Correct.

Unphased by his victory, Terry casually takes a sip of
beer.

MURPH

(to Paul)

How did YOU not know that? If there's one word you should know.

DEAN

Murph's got a point there.

HOST

Final question: who was the first person to cross Antarctica?

Most teams look stumped but Paul buzzes in.

PAUL

Vivian Fuchs.

HOST

Correct! I'll announce tonight's top scores in a few minutes.

The groups talk amongst themselves.

MURPH

Okay, why would you know that?

PAUL

I wrote a book on it.

MURPH

THAT'S what your book was about? Why don't you write something commercial like a zombie soap opera?

PAUL

Because I'd hate myself.

MURPH

You already hate yourself.

PAUL

By the way, I started writing again.

DEAN

Wow. That's great, man.

PAUL

I feel good about it. I think I'm in a good place. I'm finally over Jane. Last week I even went to the gym.

DEAN

You went to the gym?

PAUL

I walked past the gym. I saw a guy on the treadmill in the window. He smiled. I smiled back...the wheels are in motion.

DEAN

It's nice to see you happy again.

PAUL

Thanks.

MURPH

You only sucked for a year.

DEAN

Give him a break. Divorce is hard. I read an article once that break-ups are more painful for people than a death in the family.

PAUL

Yeah, cuz when your mom dies you don't imagine her fucking all your friends.

MURPH

Don't worry, I would never have sex with Jane. I mean what a--

DEAN

(cutting him off)

Murph!

(to Paul)

Now that you're better, you can get into another relationship.

MURPH

No way, you need to plow the field.

DEAN

Paul isn't a plower, he needs to find someone and get married. A.S.A.P. Sooner the better.

PAUL

Why do you want me to get re-married so bad?

DEAN

Ever since you got divorced, Paige has been making us eat dinner with the Epsteins every week. Heard of them? No, you haven't, because you're not friends with any husband/wife real estate teams.

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)

One more dinner and I'm gonna lose it.
You gotta shack up again. For me.

PAUL

I'll do my best.

(beat)

So...Jane and I are going to lunch next
week.

DEAN

No. Bad idea. No.

MURPH

Mistake City.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's fine, I'm over her. She called and
wants to get lunch, I can handle it.

DEAN

You should not go to lunch with Jane.

MURPH

You know what you should do with Jane--
exoruxize her.

HOST

Alright the final scores: in third place,
with one correct answer, BECCA N'
FRIENDZ.

Becca and Friends let out a white girl "holla!"

DEAN

Cheaters!!

HOST

In 2nd place, Taking Care of Quizness.

MURPH

YES!! Oh wait, no! Not good enough.

HOST

And coming in first for the 6th week in a
row...

(deadpan)

Terry. Congratulations Terry, you win a
round of drinks for your whole team.

On Terry, flyin' solo.

HOST (CONT'D)

Way to go, Terry.

(under his breath but still
mic'd)

Suck the fun outta everything.

Terry smiles quietly. A WAITRESS brings Terry his winning PITCHER with one glass. Our team looks over at him.

PAUL
Every time. What a waste.

DEAN
The guy's all alone. Let him have this.

PAUL
I'M all alone, you guys never answer anything.

DEAN
But our companionship is what keeps you from being Terry. We're very important.

MURPH
If Terry was about to go to lunch with his ex-wife he'd have nobody to tell him that is the worst idea they had ever heard.

PAUL
It won't be that bad.

EXT. MANHATTAN POWER LUNCH SPOT - DAY

Paul looks out of place as business people shuffle in and out. He looks around then checks his phone, his lunch date is late. After a few beats, he sees her...his EX-WIFE, JANE PALMER, think Parker Posey. She wears a perfectly tailored black business suit and is flanked by a slick, handsome gentleman who's also in a suit.

PAUL
Hey Jane.

Paul goes in for a hug, which Jane wasn't planning on. It's awkward.

JANE
How've you been?

PAUL
I'm really good, I--

JANE
Great. Paul, I want you to meet Alan Levine.

PAUL
Oh...is this your...is this...

JANE
He's my lawyer.

PAUL
Oh. I thought we finalized everything.

JANE
We did, divorce-wise. Alan is a lawyer at
my publishing company.

PAUL
Your publishing company?

ALAN
Alan Levine. VP of legal, BEACON & PORTER
BOOKS. Shall we?

Confused, Paul follows Jane and Alan into the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT

Jane and Alan sit across from Paul. Paul fidgets and Jane gets right to the point.

JANE
I wrote a book.

PAUL
Really? I didn't even know you were
writing a book. When I was writing my
book you never said anything.

JANE
Come on, you don't write books you start
books.

PAUL
I've written a book.

Alan smiles to himself. Paul is offended.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, what's so funny?

ALAN
(to Jane)
He's being such a Pete.

Jane smiles, uncomfortable.

PAUL
What?

JANE

Paul, the reason we're here is because--
the book is about you. You're Pete. I
wrote about my path to restarting my life
after our divorce.

Before Paul can react, Alan launches into a cavalcade of pre-prepared legal jargon.

ALAN

All names have been changed. If you have
questions, please contact our legal
department.

(handing Paul a thick
envelope)

Here's all the paperwork you'll need. My
contact information is in there if you
have any questions, or if you feel like
losing a lawsuit.

Paul is speechless. He looks at Jane who refuses to make eye contact.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Now that we got that part over with, I'm
going to use the water closet.

Alan gets up, leaving Paul and Jane alone. It's tense.

PAUL

Come on, what is this?

JANE

Sorry Paul, but I don't feel comfortable
talking about this without my lawyer
present.

PAUL

Then I guess we'll have to wait for him
to get out of the water closet.

After a long beat of silence, the waiter approaches.

WAITER

Can I get you anything?

PAUL

No thanks. Don't bother asking her, she
can't speak to you without her lawyer
present, and he's in the water closet.

The waiter is about to walk away then--

PAUL (CONT'D)
On second thought,
(to Jane)
Your lawyer is paying for this, right?

Jane nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(to the waiter)
I'll take three steaks to go.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT.

It's a tiny studio. It feels unsettled, definitely the apartment of a divorced guy who had to downsize. It's apparent Paul is a writer and a history buff. There are cool antiques, globes, books and records piled up.

Paul, Dean and Murph eat the STEAKS. Murph plays with Paul's CIVIL WAR FIGURINES.

DEAN
I wouldn't worry about this.

MURPH
Yeah, who reads books?

PAUL
Everyone reads books.

MURPH
I don't read books.

PAUL
You don't read books because you can't read.

MURPH
I can read, I choose NOT to read books.
I read comic books.

DEAN
You LOOK at anime porn.

PAUL
I can't believe she wrote a memoir. When we were married she wrote Cosmo articles about foreplay. Because of Jane there are thousands of girls on Long Island giving the exact same blow job. THAT'S her contribution to society.

MURPH

What could it be about? How being an ice queen sabotaged her marriage? How she walked away from the best guy she ever knew?

DEAN

How she left me and Paige to have dinner with the Epsteins every week?

Dean flips through the legal papers.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(reading)

Leaving Pete: One Woman's Magical Journey to Leave Her Marriage and Go It Alone.

Magical? How was that journey magical? I was there when you moved out, not a magical day. Unless you consider it magic that she made half your shit disappear.

(comforting)

Listen--people write books all the time. It's not that big of a deal. Here's what'll happen: the book will come out, no one will read it, and you'll get to see Jane fail miserably.

MURPH

It'll be fun!!

MONTAGE: THE BOOK IS AN INSTANT HIT!

We see "Leaving Pete" become a record-breaking, world famous best seller a la Eat, Pray, Love.

--Copies of the book are in windows of bookstores everywhere.

--People wait on LONG LINES outside BOOKSTORES to buy it.

--POSTERS of JANE'S FACE are all over New York.

--The book races up the NY TIMES BEST-SELLER LIST from 12 to 5 to 1.

--PAUL sits on the SUBWAY, surrounded by WOMEN reading "Leaving Pete."

--PAUL lays on the floor of a bookstore trying to read it. He constantly shakes his head in disbelief. A woman stands above him and frantically grabs an armful of copies off the shelf.

--An AIRPORT TERMINAL: EVERYONE is reading the book.

--Clip of KATHIE LEE AND HODA going crazy for it on The Today Show.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

Paul sits on the couch depressed, watching TV. He clicks onto a channel and sees JANE on an OPRAH-type show.

OPRAH TYPE

We're so happy to have you here, Jane Palmer.

JANE

(disingenuous)

It's a great honor to be here.

OPRAH TYPE

So tell me about this journey.

JANE

Well, after my divorce I spent two weeks with a monk in Indonesia...

OPRAH TYPE

...And he offered you some spiritual guidance?

JANE

No, he was a total Pete. All talk and no action. He literally just sat on a mountain all day doing nothing. That was when I realized, they're everywhere. The only person you can depend on is yourself. Ladies, if your relationship isn't working, leave your Pete and GO IT ALONE.

The studio audience goes "Oprah" bat-shit. Paul turns off the TV.

--Clip of a religious conservative FOX News pundit talking about the dangers of women going it alone.

PUNDIT

You know who wasn't a Pete? Jesus Christ.

--Clip of a Spanish Jerry Springer show with ENGLISH SUBTITLES. A husband and wife are on set.

SPANISH JERRY SPRINGER
Estamos aqui con Javier y Carolina. Lo que Javier no sepa es que Carolina ha decidido a hacerlo solo. [WE'RE HERE WITH JAVIER AND CAROLINA. WHAT JAVIER DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT CAROLINA HAS DECIDED TO GO IT ALONE.]

--Paul is online. There are BANNER ADS for the book everywhere. He clicks on Amazon.com to buy a vintage copy of ULYSSES. The screen reads: "PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT THIS ALSO BOUGHT: LEAVING PETE."

--Paul clicks onto Facebook, it suggests he becomes friends with the book.

--Paul walks past a GAY GUY yelling at his BOYFRIEND.

GAY GUY
I am going it alone!!

The gay guy storms off.

--A MORMON MOTHER OF 11 stands at the head of her family's dinner table. She rises:

MOM
Family, I have an announcement, I am going it alone.

--A MALE/FEMALE ICE SKATING PAIR in the middle of a program. Suddenly the GIRL skates away and starts to skate alone.

MALE JUDGE (V.O.)
What's happening? Ladies and gentlemen, I believe this is a first in the history of pairs skating, Tatyana Discoyev is going it alone.

FEMALE JUDGE (V.O.)
Good for her!

Tatyana's PARTNER stands baffled on the ice.

--Close-up on A MOVING TRUCK in BROOKLYN with an ad plastered on the side: "LEAVING YOUR PETE? ASK ABOUT OUR GOING IT ALONE DISCOUNT."

PAN OUT to see Paul, Dean and Murph looking at it.

MURPH
I really didn't think people were gonna read it.

DEAN
Tough break, buddy.

PAUL
I can't handle this.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits across from a BETTE MIDLER-type.

BETTE
So, Paul, why are you here?

PAUL
Well, I got divorced about a year ago.

BETTE
That can be a traumatic experience.

PAUL
It was, she broke my heart. But I was doing fine. Then I find out my ex-wife wrote this book making me out to look like a giant asshole. Which I'm not. And now it's this big hit. It's literally everywhere I go.

BETTE
Wait, are you Pete?

PAUL
I'm Paul. Technically I'm Pete but that book was full of lies. I was a good husband. The guy in that book is a fictional character. I am not a villain.

She sits forward in her chair, she's really intrigued.

BETTE
So tell me, how does it feel to be confronted with the truth?

PAUL
Were you listening just now? It's not the truth.

BETTE
Were you or weren't you unsupportive of your wife?

PAUL
It's not the truth.

BETTE
(condescending)
Pete.

PAUL
My name is Paul. I gotta go.

As he's leaving--

BETTE
It's just like Jane said, you can't
finish anything.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Paul is on the PHONE. He has a ton of BAGS with him.

PAUL
(into phone)
I had to leave the city. I'm going to my
parents place in Long Island to get away
from all this....I don't know, a couple
weeks maybe?

He hangs up. A woman walks up to Paul.

WOMAN
Mind if I sit here?

PAUL
Sure.

She sits down, immediately takes out JANE'S BOOK and a
HIGHLIGHTER and incessantly highlights passages.

Paul looks over to read what she's highlighting. The
chapter is entitled "LEAVE NOW OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR
PETE." The highlighted passage: "I get it, break-ups are
scary, but so is spending the rest of your life with a
Pete." Paul stares out the window of the train.

EXT. PAUL'S PARENTS HOUSE. LATER THAT DAY.

It's a quaint split-level upper middle-class suburban
home on Long Island.

Paul knocks. His mom CHERYL opens the door. His dad LOU
stands beside her. Cheryl is a typical emotional, overly-
involved mother, and Lou is the cool but resigned
husband. Think Blythe Danner and Richard Jenkins.

CHERYL

My baby!

She hugs Paul for a really long time. Lou gives him a knowing nod.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paul sits on the couch. His dad sits in his chair. Cheryl enters with a PITCHER OF ICED TEA. She pours three glasses. She's shaking a little bit. It's SILENT. Cheryl is about to burst.

LOU

She's waiting for permission to talk about it.

PAUL

We can talk about it.

Without skipping a beat, Cheryl plops down next to Paul and starts rattling off questions.

CHERYL

Why didn't you tell us she was writing a book?

PAUL

She told me a week before it came out.

CHERYL

I didn't even know she wrote books. Lou did you know?

LOU

I didn't know.

PAUL

I didn't know.

CHERYL

I just can't believe it. CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!

PAUL

Mom, no need to yell, I'm right here.

CHERYL

I'm sorry. All of this has been very stressful on us.

PAUL

Stressful on YOU? I have to live with this every day. I can't go anywhere and not see that book. Do you know how desperate I have to be to come here?

It's quiet. Cheryl's offended but she's gonna let it go.
Then--

CHERYL

(calmly)

Can I ask a couple more questions?

PAUL

Why not?

She grabs a copy of "LEAVING PETE" from a drawer in the coffee table. Most of the pages are marked and folded over. Cheryl read the shit out of it.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Mom you bought the book?!

LOU

I told you not to tell him you bought it.

CHERYL

What? He said I could ask questions.

PAUL

You gave money to a woman who publicly slandered me.

CHERYL

Well I'm sorry for taking an interest in your life.

PAUL

It's not my life. She's a liar.

CHERYL

Good. Because it upset me to read that you weren't there for her. And when she called you lazy. I read that and I thought "that gene does not come from my side of the family."

PAUL

When we were married I was always working. The only thing that ever stopped me from working was Jane asking me to help write her crappy articles about bedazzling vaginas.

Lou quietly laughs. Cheryl sits shocked.

CHERYL
She did the vajazzling??
(upset)
Oooh.

EXT. CHERYL AND LOU'S PORCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lou and Paul smoke cigars together.

LOU
(serious, fatherly)
You know son, when I was in high school,
Patricia Giardi told our entire class
that when I got intimate, I enjoyed the
sensation of a finger up my ass.

Paul is extremely uncomfortable.

LOU (CONT'D)
It wasn't true, and I told everyone it
wasn't true. Nonetheless, they all
believed it. It was horrible for me. To
this day, whenever someone gives me a
thumbs up, I think they're mocking me.

Long pause of silence.

PAUL
On top of the fact that I really wish you
hadn't told me that, it's not even
remotely as bad as what I'm going
through.

LOU
Oh yeah no, I can't imagine how you feel.
I just had no idea what to say.

PAUL
I can't believe mom read the book.

LOU
You know the first day she read it she
left me?

PAUL
Mom left you?

LOU
Just for a couple hours. I left a towel
on the bathroom floor she accused me of
being a Pete.

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

She got in the car and sped off, but I knew she'd be back. There was only a quarter tank of gas left and she doesn't know how to fill it up. I got to have a nice afternoon alone.

(beat)

Son, you're going to be okay. I know it's hard to believe, but this will all blow over eventually. Soon, something good will come.

From across the street we see their loopy, pilled-up NEIGHBOR PHYLLIS, think Cloris Leachman, in a bright one piece bathing suit. She waves at Paul enthusiastically.

PHYLLIS

Paul!

LOU

Oh no.

Cheryl runs outside to stop the interaction.

PHYLLIS

Your mom told me you were in a book!
Congratulations!

CHERYL

Phyllis, Phyllis, head on home. We're having some private family time.

On command, Phyllis turns around and stumbles back to her house.

PAUL

Mom, you told Phyllis?

CHERYL

She's been hooked on pills since her back injury in '92. It's like telling a styrofoam container.

LOU

It's true.

PAUL

But why would you tell her?

CHERYL

She's a family friend. She's always there for me.

LOU

When? Name one time.

CHERYL

The other day when I was upset. She came over and I felt much better.

LOU

She came over because she walked into the wrong house.

CHERYL

Well, I was upset and she was there.

PAUL

Would you please stop telling people?

CHERYL

She's the only one I told.

A CAR drives by. Cheryl knows trouble is coming. The car SLOWS in front of the house. A MIDDLE AGED MAN drives as his WIFE SNAPS PHOTOS of Paul from the passenger side window. Cheryl looks at Paul and mouths "Sorry."

PAUL

Nice work, mom. I think this little experiment is over. I'm going back to Brooklyn. Would you mind giving me a ride to the train?

EXT. STREET

We see Cheryl and Lou driving off with Paul in the back seat. PHYLLIS runs behind the car in her bathing suit.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Paul sits at his desk, attempting to write. "THE ATTEMPT ON SEWARD'S LIFE WOULD FOREVER BE OVERSHADOWED BY LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION. BUT ULTIMATELY, WHO REALLY GIVES A FUCK BECAUSE PEOPLE ONLY WANT TO READ BULL-SHIT."

He picks up the phone and dials.

PAUL

Hey Murph. Trivia night?

INT. TRIVIA NIGHT

Paul, Dean and Murph sit at their usual table.

DEAN

That was a long trip, Paul. I barely recognize you.

PAUL

Turns out it's worse there than it is here.

DEAN

We're glad to have you back, buddy.

MURPH

You can't hide from society because of some book. Which, incidentally, I read.

PAUL

You bought the book too?

MURPH

This is not just affecting you. All the ladies are going it alone. There's a pussy shortage all over the city. It's like that tomato recall all over again.

DEAN

It's true, did you hear the marriage rate is going down? No one is getting married anymore. I'll be stuck hanging out with the Epsteins forever.

PAUL

I'm so sick of hearing how this book is affecting other people. I went on a date with a girl I met at my coffee shop. Halfway through the appetizer I told her I was Pete and she excused herself to go to the bathroom. It must've been really far away because I haven't seen her in three weeks.

DEAN

Every woman in America hates you. It's like you're Murph.

MURPH

You know what I didn't like about the book? There's a whole chapter on how if I just look within myself, I'll realize I have all the answers. Like, if I had all the answers, then why would I want to buy YOU, book?

PAUL

THAT'S your problem with it?

MURPH

That and all the chapters that tear you apart.

(sweetly)

I didn't care for those either.

PAUL

Thanks.

HOST

Alright, time to get started. We have the Pinkertons...

Four HIPSTERS cheer.

HOST (CONT'D)

Becca and Friendz...

BECCA AND FRIENDZ has the same team as before but with a new addition, ABBY, 26, naturally beautiful, self-assured, think Rachel McAdams.

HOST (CONT'D)

Taking Care of Quizness and Apartment 3F.

Apartment 3F, a team made up of NINE 20-SOMETHING GIRLS AND GUYS, cheers.

HOST (CONT'D)

Since I'm sure any newcomers are wondering, YES, those people ALL LIVE in apartment 3F.

(to Apt 3F)

So at this point, do you guys just think of the bed bugs as extra roommates?

ABBY

(to Becca)

I thought there could only be four people per team.

BECCA

Doesn't matter, they haven't gotten a question right in six months. See the guy in the orange vest?

On a CHEESY GUY with a fluorescent orange vest, flip-up sunglasses and a handlebar moustache.

BECCA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I fucked him.

ABBY
You've been inside apartment 3F?

BECCA
Unfortunately, yes.

HOST
And our resident genius-slash-buzz kill, Terry. Alright let's begin. Question 1: what is the correct name for a rabbit's tail?

Taking Care of Quizness huddles up.

MURPH
Puff ball, cotton ball, cotton tail...

DEAN
I have nothing for this. I do not have any guess or answer for this question.

PAUL
I don't either.

MURPH
It's cotton tail. Peter Cotton Tail, I got this one.

Murph grabs the BUZZER from Paul and buzzes in.

MURPH (CONT'D)
(overconfident)
Cotton Tail!

HOST
Very wrong.

Terry is about to buzz in but Becca's friend ABBY buzzes first.

ABBY
Scut.

HOST
That is correct. Becca and Friendz apparently found a new, smart friend.

BECCA and FRIENDZ all high five. Paul looks over curiously. ABBY gives him a sly smile.

HOST (CONT'D)
Next question, what is the collective name for a group of beavers?

The ORANGE JACKET GUY from Apt 3F buzzes in.

APT 3F
Becca and Friendz.

BECCA
HEY!

HOST
Believe it or not, that is incorrect.

The guy from Apt 3F flips up his sunglasses and smiles at Becca. She's grossed out. Our team huddles up.

DEAN
A gaggle? A clump? A posse?

PAUL
It's colony.

Paul, Abby and Terry all buzz in at the same time.

HOST
Taking Care of Quizness?

PAUL
Colony.

HOST
Yes. The answer is colony.

Paul is pleased. Abby checks him out.

HOST (CONT'D)
William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor
Coleridge and Robert Southey are commonly
referred to as the what Poets?

Terry buzzes first.

TERRY
River poets?

HOST
Wrong.

PAUL and ABBY both buzz in.

HOST (CONT'D)
Taking Care of Quizness.

As Paul says his answer, we see Abby mouth the words. She knows it too.

PAUL
Lake Poets.

MURPH
Be nice if you cleared that with us first
before just buzzing...

HOST
Yes, the answer is Lake Poets.
Terry, so close with River Poets. What
happened? Mini stroke?

Terry looks up, he's neither bothered nor amused. Abby
looks over at Paul.

PAUL
Oh, this is on.

Off Paul's delight at discovering a worthy adversary, we
move into a **MONTAGE**.

UPBEAT ROCK MUSIC plays as Terry, Abby and Paul battle it
out, spit-firing answer after answer. Abby and Paul
exchange the occasional smile.

TERRY
Havana, Cuba.

PAUL
Charlemange.

ABBY
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

PAUL
Binary code.

TERRY
1961.

ABBY
Terra Cotta Army.

TERRY
Brigadoon.

PAUL
Murakami.

TERRY
Occipital lobe.

END OF MONTAGE

HOST

French writer Sully Prudhomme was the first winner of what prize in 1901?

It's tense. Abby, Paul and Terry buzz in but so does Apt 3F.

APT 3F

Who farted?

They all high five.

HOST

No, Apartment 3F, the answer is not "Who Farted." As I've told you before, the answer will never be "who farted?"

Terry buzzes in.

HOST (CONT'D)

Terry?

TERRY

The Nobel Prize.

HOST

Correct.

Abby and Paul are annoyed.

HOST (CONT'D)

What technical word is given usually to the left side even numbered page of a book?

Paul and Abby buzz in.

HOST (CONT'D)

Becca and Friendz.

ABBY

Verso.

Paul looks at Abby and mouths "I knew that." Abby mouths "I got that."

HOST

Who drew the first cartoon published in an American newspaper?

Paul buzzes.

PAUL
(looking at Abby)
Ben Franklin.

HOST
Yes. Final question of the night and Becca and Friendz and Taking Care of Quizness are tied for 2nd place. Here it is: during his entire life, how many paintings did Vincent Van Gogh sell?

The boys huddle. Paul knows he needs to get this.

MURPH
Like a hundred thousand?

DEAN
A hundred thousand?

MURPH
Every time I go to a museum I see one.
You do the math.

DEAN
When have you ever been to a museum?

MURPH
We went to that one in Chicago.

PAUL
That was a Hard Rock Cafe.

The guys are interrupted by a BUZZ. Paul looks over at Abby, she's chimed in. He can't help but smile at her.

ABBY
One.

HOST
The answer is one. Just one painting.
Final scores: Terry in #1, in a twist,
Becca and Friendz in 2nd place and in
3rd, Taking Care of Quizness.

Becca and Friendz rejoice. Murph pounds his fist on their table, furious. Paul approaches Abby and shakes her hand.

PAUL
Good game.

ABBY
You too. It was a better game for Terry.
I'm Abby.

PAUL

Paul. You should come here more often,
your friends could really use you.

ABBY

I would, but I live in Manhattan.

PAUL

Why?

ABBY

Because I'm self-assured enough to not
have to live in Brooklyn to prove that
I'm cooler than everybody.

PAUL

(smitten)

Can I buy you a drink?

ABBY

Sure.

Paul stops the COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

PAUL

Two...

(looking to Abby)

Manhattans.

ABBY

(also smitten)

Perfect.

INT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Several cocktails later, Paul and Abby are in their own
world.

PAUL

I can't believe Van Gogh only sold one
painting.

ABBY

Tragic, isn't it?

PAUL

I don't know, he painted for the sake of
painting. It wasn't about becoming rich
and famous.

ABBY

He was also mentally ill.

PAUL

Right well, there's that too.

They're suddenly distracted by MURPH who's wasted and mercilessly hitting on a HOT GIRL. The hot girl scoffs at him and walks away.

MURPH

(shouting after her)

It's because of the book isn't it?

HOT GIRL

What book? Your pants are falling off.

Murph looks down. They totally are. Paul looks at Abby.

PAUL

Well, Murph's pants are down. In these parts, that means it's last call.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Paul and Abby giggle as they exit the bar.

PAUL

I guess we should get you to a cab.

ABBY

Yeah. I guess we should.

PAUL

It was really great meeting you, Abby.

ABBY

Yeah.

PAUL

Yeah.

They both smile, unable to break eye contact.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S STUDIO - THAT NIGHT

Paul and Abby enter, making out furiously. After a beat of kissing, Abby squirms out from Paul's arms to check out his place.

ABBY

I want to look around your apartment.
Judge you by your stuff.

PAUL

Judge away. Welcome to chateau alimoné.
You're in the sitting room which is also
the bedroom, the guest bedroom, and don't
get intimidated, the home theater.

Paul motions to a small, old TV. Abby notices his Civil
War figurines and goes right for them.

ABBY

Figurines, huh?

PAUL

These are my roommates. They're Civil War
re-enactors.

ABBY

Oh I get it, you're a nerd you just
happen to be really good looking.

Pointing out a few...

PAUL

This is George Custer, you might know Mr.
Sherman, Robert E. Lee, and this WAS
Major General John Buford, but I made him
a wig out of felt and I pretend he's
William Seward because, A) I'm weird, and
B) he's immensely under-appreciated so
I'm writing a book about him.

ABBY

Isn't he the guy who got shit for
purchasing Alaska?

PAUL

He also spoke out against slavery long
before the Emancipation Proclamation. He
was sort of a badass. A lot of people
don't know that about him. Or about me.

ABBY

(looking around the
apartment)

I was just thinking, a real badass must
live here.

She walks over to his overflowing book-shelf and stands
in front of it in awe.

PAUL

This is the library.

ABBY

It's the sexiest thing I've ever seen.

PAUL

Shh, we're in a library.

He stands behind her. She turns around. They kiss again. It's awesome.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Paul and Abby are spooning. He squeezes her tightly. She looks over at the clock. It's 8 A.M.

ABBY

Oh God, I gotta get to work.

Abby jumps up and rushes to get dressed.

PAUL

Oh God, me too...just kidding, I get to go back to bed right after you leave.

ABBY

Unemployed, huh?

PAUL

Taking a semester off. I teach English at the New School. Once in a while I'll tutor a rich kid.

Paul grabs Abby as she's trying to get dressed and kisses her. She lets him. She stops and looks over at a FIGURINE that appears to be staring at her.

ABBY

Robert E. Lee is a perv.

PAUL

Well, he hasn't been with a woman in 150 years.

As she's about to leave--

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey...I think you're my new favorite person. Let me take you to lunch today.

ABBY

I'd like that. 1 o' clock? I'm at the Asher building on 52nd.

PAUL
See you there.

She leaves. Paul smiles to himself.

EXT. ASHER BUILDING - ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. ASHER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Paul walks up to the security desk.

PAUL
Hey, I'm here to see Abby Green.

SECURITY GUY
15th floor.

INT. ELEVATOR

Paul looks nervous/excited. The elevator opens. In huge letters, the back wall reads BEACON AND PORTER BOOKS. To the left of it, there's a giant poster with JANE'S PICTURE. She's holding a copy of "Leaving Pete" and the bottom of the poster reads ONE MILLION COPIES SOLD.

Paul jumps back onto the elevator and double-checks the floor number. It's 15. He's in the right place.

PAUL
Dammit.

He walks out of the elevator and sees a RECEPTIONIST.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(terrified, whispering)
Uh, I'm supposed to have lunch with Abby Green.

RECEPTIONIST
She's in a meeting.

The receptionist points to a CONFERENCE ROOM WITH GLASS WALLS. Inside he sees ABBY, who's taking notes in an assistant-like position, KAREN, Jane's publisher, think Robin Wright Penn, several other publishers and editors, and JANE.

PAUL
(to himself, cowering down)
Oh. Come on.

Paul takes a seat. Frazzled, he picks up a MODERN BRIDE MAGAZINE and opens it so it covers his face. After a beat he closes it, stands up and walks back over to the receptionist.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Just let Abby know I'll be waiting outside.

Paul presses the elevator button several times. The door opens and he runs on.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME

KAREN
I want to wrap this up. I can see Henderson getting the shakes. Time for his two martini lunch. We have eight weeks as #1 on the best-seller list and our PR department has you lined up for another round of morning shows. Good work, everyone.

As everyone gets up to go to lunch, Jane remains seated. She's waiting for something. Karen notices.

KAREN (CONT'D)
And let's give another round of applause to Jane Palmer.

Jane smiles, pretending to be humbled by her standing O.

EXT. ASHER BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Paul waits outside, fidgeting anxiously. Abby walks out.

ABBY
Just so you know, my receptionist said you were weird and you stole a magazine.

He holds up the stolen COPY OF "MODERN BRIDE."

PAUL
Sorry about that. I love-
(looking at the magazine)
-modern brides. They're so much better
than old fashioned ones.
(changing the subject)
So...hungry?

ABBY
Yes!

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Abby and Paul eat falafels on the grass.

PAUL

So what do you do at Beacon and Porter?

ABBY

I'm Karen Craft's assistant. She's a big publisher over there.

PAUL

It's a huge company. You must be involved with a lot of books and like a million writers.

ABBY

We usually are, but lately we're pretty focused on that book "Leaving Pete."

PAUL

I've heard of it. Got mostly mixed reviews, right?

ABBY

Oh no, it's our most popular book in six years. You haven't noticed that every woman in the city is reading it?

PAUL

Are they? Huh.

ABBY

You do go outside, right? Or watch TV? Or look at things?

PAUL

I exclusively read bridal magazines so...

ABBY

Wanna know a secret? I haven't read it.

PAUL

Really?

ABBY

What's to read? Pete sucks, it's okay to be alone. I get it. It's not ground-breaking. Besides, it's already a part of the pop-culture zeitgeist. Even if you haven't read it, you know what it's about. It's like Star Wars.

PAUL

Whoawhoawhoa it is not like Star Wars.
You take that back or I will not have sex
with you...until the next time you are
willing to have sex with me.

ABBY

So just to take a tally, you're into sex,
Star Wars and Civil War action figures.
We have a winner.

(announcing to people around
them)

Total package alert!

PAUL

Look, if we keep listing off all my
desirable qualities this could go on
forever. What about you? How long do you
think you'll stay at Beacon and Porter?

ABBY

I don't know. I took the job to learn
about publishing but I hate that we
peddle so much crap. I'm trying to learn
everything I can and get successful
enough to publish books that matter.

PAUL

So like, one more week? Two more weeks?

ABBY

Are you trying to get me to quit my job?

PAUL

Nooo. No. It's a great place to be.

Paul takes a big bite of falafel.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - DAY

Paul, Dean and Murph sit on bleachers, alone. REVEAL,
they're watching 20 and 30-something HIPSTERS play
KICKBALL.

DEAN

Why is this a trend? I don't get it,
they're grown ups but they play throw
back sports like we're in a school yard?
What's next? We'll start playing games we
played when we were 3? "Hey Murph, come
over, we're playing nap-time?"

MURPH

I'd come over for a nap.

(shouting to a player on the field)

Come on, Crosley, let's see you hustle.

PAUL

I can't keep going out with her. She works at Beacon and Porter.

MURPH

As an assistant. Means nothing. When I was an assistant I took a dump in my boss' desk. Doesn't. Mean. Anything.

DEAN

And where'd that get you?

MURPH

Oh, fired. How was I supposed to know they had cameras in a bank?

PAUL

Do I tell her? How would I phrase that: "Hey I'm the guy the entire world thinks is a giant asshole. Tell my ex-wife I say "what's up?" I can't tell her, right?

DEAN

Absolutely not.

MURPH

Fuck no.

DEAN

Does hanging out with her make you happy?

PAUL

Yes.

DEAN

Then keep doing what you're doing and you can deal with the rest later. Nobody reveals everything right when they start dating. When we started going out, Paige thought I liked pesto, but I didn't at all. Wasn't 'til a year into marriage where I said "Surprise honey, nu-uh. I'm not eating pesto anymore." What was she going to do? Leave me?

MURPH

This is the worst story I've ever heard.

PAUL

The good news is, she hasn't even read the book. She's probably the only woman in America. She said she got into publishing so she can publish books that matter.

MURPH

Oh, so you're both boring?
(taunting the same player from before)
Come on Crosley, you suck today!

CROSLEY

(upset)
My name isn't Crosley. Who ARE you?

Murph is delighted with himself. He turns to Dean and Paul for approval. Just then, a KICKBALL enters frame and smacks MURPH in the FACE. Dean and Paul laugh hysterically.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - NEXT NIGHT

Abby, in her bathrobe, is rushing to get ready. There's a knock on the door. She opens it. Paul's there with flowers.

ABBY

You brought me flowers?!

PAUL

It's cliche isn't it? Is it too cliche?

ABBY

I don't know, is it cliche that I'm not ready yet and you have to sit on the couch while I yell at you from the bathroom?

PAUL

Yes it is.

ABBY

Great, I'll be right out.

He takes a seat on the couch. Abby walks over to the bathroom to finish getting ready.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ABBY

So...how was your day?

PAUL

Look, I prefer my bathroom to couch dialogue to be a bit more substantive.

ABBY

Okay. Are you concerned about the amount of humanitarian aid sent to third world countries being commandeered by corrupt armies and sold on the black market?

PAUL

(looking at his phone)

What was that? Sorry, someone left a Yelp review for this restaurant we're going to and the spelling errors are infuriating.

ABBY

I don't want to eat where stupid people eat.

PAUL

(reading yelp review)

It does say that their, T-H-E-Y'R-E, lentil soup is the third best in Manhattan.

Abby comes out of the bathroom. She looks perfect. Paul stands up and smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wow. You look beautiful.

Abby blushes. The chemistry is palpable.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So...um...should we...

ABBY

Let me just grab my purse.

While reaching for her purse, Abby gets within inches of Paul. They instantly start making out.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - HOURS LATER

They're still on the couch but now they're lying naked under a comforter. Root beer and a half-eaten pizza sit on the coffee table.

PAUL

God, it is fun to be naked with other people.

They kiss again.

EXT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

Through the window we can see them in Abby's bed laughing and playing UNO in pajamas.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - SAME

ABBY

(playing Uno)

Skip, skip, draw two, draw two, reverse, wild draw four, UNO, green, bam I win! I'd give you a chance to redeem yourself but the sun is coming up.

PAUL

I can't tell if I really like you or if it's just all the blow I've been doing.

ABBY

Hard to say, I'm pretty fun to be with.

PAUL

That's true. But also I have really good blow. You should meet my guy.

ABBY

Aww, you want me to meet your guy?!

PAUL

Hey, can I ask you a serious question?

ABBY

Sure.

PAUL

What side of the bed do you sleep on?

Abby crawls into bed, on the RIGHT side. Paul smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yes!

Paul gets into bed next to Abby and reaches over her, turning off the light.

ABBY

Night Paul.

PAUL

Night Abby.

FREEZE on them in bed together spooning.

AS ABBY AND PAUL FALL IN LOVE, WE HEAR VOICEOVER OF THEIR DIALOGUE OVER A MONTAGE OF SHOTS OF THEM TOGETHER. Their relationship builds as they expose themselves to one another, from the most simple, even silly revelations, to heartfelt confessions.

--Abby's head rests on Paul's chest, as the morning sun comes through the windows of his apartment.

ABBY (V.O.)

Can I ask you a question?

PAUL (V.O.)

Anything.

--Paul and Abby eat at a trendy brunch spot.

ABBY (V.O.)

I have two sisters. I always wanted a brother.

PAUL (V.O.)

I'm an only child. I always wanted somebody to bitch about my parents to.

--Paul and Abby lie in the park reading.

ABBY (V.O.)

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, but I secretly love the remake of Thomas Crown Affair with Pierce Brosnan.

PAUL (V.O.)

Harlan County. Anything by Errol Morris. I could watch a documentary about anything, really.

--Paul and Abby sit on the steps of the New York library, kissing.

PAUL (V.O.)

I swear I almost drowned when I was seven but nobody remembers it except me.

ABBY (V.O.)

One time I ate mushrooms and bonded with a pack of matches.

--Paul and Abby are naked on the floor of his apartment, blissfully content. Paul kisses her body.

PAUL (V.O.)

What's that scar from?

ABBY (V.O.)

It's not a good story.

PAUL (V.O.)

Come on, you have a scar on your ass I want to know about it.

--Abby sits down on the subway as Paul stands above her and looks down lovingly.

PAUL (V.O.)

My marriage? I don't know, it feels like a lifetime ago. I was really young when we got married. I'd like to say that she changed but I think I just never noticed who she really was.

ABBY (V.O.)

I want to give brilliant people a voice. I just want to do something real and honest.

--Abby, Paul, Dean and Murph watch an outdoor movie at the park. They sneak a joint, laughing.

PAUL (V.O.)

I cry in movies when people get framed.

ABBY (V.O.)

I cry in commercials when families move into their first house.

MURPH (V.O.)

You guys, I think I forgot the word for vacuum.

--Abby and Paul are outside a Barnes and Noble. He sees a cut-out of Jane in a "Leaving Pete" display and lovingly pulls her away so they don't go in.

--Paul and Abby cook in Abby's apartment. Paul wraps his arm around her.

PAUL (V.O.)
What do you wanna do tomorrow?

ABBY (V.O.)
Go to Williamsburg and make fun of
people's mustaches.

PAUL (V.O.)
What about the day after that?

--Paul and Abby eat bagels on the stoop of a brownstone.
An old Armenian woman sits near them, staring off into
the distance.

ABBY (V.O.)
New Kids on the Block. 1992. My dad took
me and I had to leave early cuz it was
too loud.

PAUL (V.O.)
Neil Diamond Coming to America tour. I
wouldn't let my dad come cuz he was in
his cut off jean-shorts phase, and called
everyone "my man."

--Paul and Abby are in the shower. The shower curtain is
closed, and we see a silhouette of them behind it.

ABBY (V.O.)
Fine, I'll tell you how I got my scar. I
was in high school and I took a really
nasty spill during a decathlon.

PAUL (V.O.)
Oh my God.

ABBY (V.O.)
An academic decathlon.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - MORNING - WEEKS LATER

MONTAGE ENDS with a shot of Paul and Abby in bed
spooning.

PAUL
I was supposed to leave like a month ago
right?

ABBY
Let's get blintzes!

EXT. STREET

Abby and Paul walk arm in arm. Paul sees ANOTHER COUPLE, BETH AND KYLE, and suddenly gets uncomfortable.

BETH

Paul?! Hey! So good to see you. It's been a long time.

PAUL

Yeeah. It has.

Abby waits anxiously for him to introduce her. He doesn't.

KYLE

We've been thinking about you, man. Hope you're doing okay.

PAUL

(dodging the obvious conversation)

Yep. I am. Everything's fine. We should go put our names in for lunch because there's usually a wait.

ABBY

There's no rush.

(sticking her hand out)

I'm Abby.

PAUL

Oh. Kyle, Beth, Abby. Abby, Kyle, Beth. And...blintzes. Great seeing you guys.

Paul tries to walk away.

KYLE

Are we gonna see you at Dan's wedding next weekend?

Abby looks confused. This is the first she's hearing of this.

PAUL

I don't know if I'm going to make that one.

BETH

Jane won't be there.

KYLE

It'll be fun. It's everyone from college, including Dennis Richmond who is now DENISE Richmond, and I hear she's really unhappy about having to be a Groomsman.

PAUL

Yeah, I don't know--

KYLE

You're going to pass up a chance to see Dennis Richmond with tits?

PAUL

I think I can picture it. Doubt I'll ever stop picturing it.

(he pauses for a second)
Yup, still there. Well, I'll see you guys around.

Paul pulls Abby away. She's annoyed.

ABBY

Why were you being so weird?

PAUL

Was I weird? I just wanted you to get blintzes. I am bringing you to blintzes.

ABBY

(hurt but trying to hide it)
If you want to go but you don't want to bring me, that's okay.

PAUL

No. I'd bring you. I would definitely bring you. I don't know how much you'd like any of them.

ABBY

That guy seemed nice.

PAUL

Who Kyle? Please. No. You know what his nickname was in college? Date Rape. Guess why? Because he was accused of date rape a lot.

ABBY

Why do I feel like you don't want me to go?

PAUL

No I just, I...
(making it up)
...wanted to take you to Long Island this weekend to meet my parents.

ABBY

Really? Oh my God, I would love to.

PAUL

(uh-oh)
Yeah. I think they'll love you and you'll....get to know them.

ABBY

Okay!

She hugs him. We see HIS FACE. What has he gotten himself into?

PAUL

My mom's gonna want to know if you're allergic to anything, like peanuts, or boundaries.

INT. LOU AND CHERYL'S HOUSE. DAY.

Lou opens the door for Paul and Abby. Cheryl runs to them, pushes Lou out of the way and goes straight for Abby, hugging her tightly. Abby handles it well.

CHERYL

Lou, take the bags, I'm taking Abby.

Cheryl grabs Abby's arm and pulls her up the stairs so fast that Abby trips a little bit. Lou and Paul are left alone for a beat.

LOU

Don't worry, she knows not to say anything about the book. If there's one thing your mother won't sabotage with her big mouth, it's her chances of having grandchildren.

PAUL

Thanks, dad.

INT. PAUL'S CHILDHOOD ROOM

Abby and Cheryl enter. Abby looks around: there are trophies and #1 ribbons all over.

ABBY
Paul was an athlete?

CHERYL
Not exactly.

They look at the trophies more closely. They're all for winning spelling bees and debates.

ABBY
First place, first place, first place, uh-oh, 2nd place in the Roslyn Spelling Bee. What happened?

CHERYL
Uch, Yoshi Yakamura happened. Stupid Meadow Brook High. There was a lot of suspect recruiting going on at that school. We're supposed to believe there's a Yakamura family living in Great Neck? Come on.

Abby picks up a CUTE PHOTO OF PAUL.

ABBY
Aww he was soo cute.

CHERYL
You don't have to lie. You know how lucky we are he turned out to be good looking? For years I had to say,
(lying)
"Sweetie you look so handsome."

She makes a terrified face. Paul enters.

PAUL
You guys done yet?

Abby kisses him on the cheek.

ABBY
I heard all about Yoshi Yakamura.

PAUL
Don't you ever bring up that name again. Come on, let's go eat.

As they exit, Cheryl looks at Paul and makes a "she's so great!" face. She's flipping out. Paul smiles.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They bump into Lou.

LOU
(to Abby)
You doing alright?

Abby gives Lou a THUMBS UP. Paul takes her hand, puts it down and shakes his head "no."

PAUL
(whispering to Abby)
He hates thumbs ups. I'll tell you why
later. Actually I won't.

INT. CHERYL AND LOU'S DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

ABBY
These potatoes are delicious, Cheryl.

Cheryl drops her silverware and starts to tear up. Abby looks to Paul thinking she did something wrong.

CHERYL
She's so much nicer than Jane.

PAUL
Mom, please, not now.

CHERYL
I'm sorry but Jane was just such a--

LOU
--a cunt.

Abby covers her mouth with her napkin to keep from laughing. Paul bows his head shamefully. Suddenly there's a loud, sporadic KNOCK on the window. Abby looks up.

ABBY
Um, I think someone is--

Everyone turns around. It's PHYLLIS. She's in the bushes.

PAUL
Ohboy. This is where it goes downhill.
So close, we were so close.

CHERYL
(yelling, motioning)
Phyllis, go around! Go a-round!

ABBY

Who is that?

PAUL

That's their neighbor Phyllis. She likes pills.

Phyllis finds her way in through the door.

PHYLLIS

I can't open this bottle of wine! I don't know what the problem is.

She places the bottle on the dinner table. Everybody stares at it: a metal WINE BOTTLE OPENER is stuck in a SCREW-ON CAP. Lou takes the bottle and effortlessly unscrews the cap.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Lou! LouLouLouLouLou!

Phyllis stands over Lou and hugs him, her breasts smothering his face.

CHERYL

Take a seat, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

(just noticing)

Paul?!

PAUL

(begrudgingly)

Hey Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

Paul, I bought that book that book that was based on you. I couldn't put it down.

LOU

Phyllis let's not talk about--

PHYLLIS

When I read about that conspiracy. To think there were monks and Catholic priests killing people for secrets...

CHERYL

(realizing)

Phyllis thinks The Da Vinci Code is about Paul.

ABBY

Oh.

(beat)

Why would she think that?

Lou motions to the CAP lying on the table with the OPENER still jammed in it.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Aah.

Lou gives Paul a reassuring look. Paul is relieved. Phyllis turns to Abby thinking she's whispering when in fact, she's screaming.

PHYLLIS

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO GO TO BED WITH A CELEBRITY?!

ABBY

Um...

PHYLLIS

You know, Ralph Nader tried to make-out with me once.

ABBY

Really?

She leans in way too close to Abby.

PHYLLIS

Very well endowed. I saw the outline of his penis through his pants during a fund-raiser for children without faces or seat-belts or something.

CHERYL

(changing the subject)

Time to do the dishes.

EXT. CHERYL AND LOU'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Abby, Paul, Cheryl and Lou exit the house. Cheryl walks Abby to the car. Paul starts to follow them but Lou pulls him aside.

LOU

You gotta tell her.

PAUL

I know.

LOU

No. You got a good one here. If you want this to work, you need to be honest with her.

PAUL

I'm happy for the first time in a while.

LOU

If she finds out from someone other than you, you're going to lose her.

PAUL

Dad, I promise you, I'll tell her when I'm ready.

Lou and Paul look over to see that Cheryl has Abby trapped in a mom hug. Over Abby's shoulder, Cheryl mouths to Paul "I LOVE HER SO MUCH!!" Paul comes to the rescue and peels Abby away.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Sorry.

ABBY

No, it's cool, the broken rib will forever remind me of her love.

Paul hugs Lou and Cheryl. Cheryl goes in to hug Abby again but Paul intercepts.

PAUL

She's all good on hugs, mom.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Paul is at his desk writing. His "desk" is TWO MOVING BOXES piled together. There are books and papers everywhere--it's a mess, but it's his work space. He's productive and content. There's a knock on the door.

PAUL

(not looking up from his laptop)

Who is it?

The door opens and Abby walks in.

ABBY

It's me.

She's dressed in her work clothes and holding a take out bag.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I have some big news and--
(looking at his desk)
--Babe, it's time to get a real desk.
You're gonna kill your back.

PAUL
(still looking down)
If I unpack all my boxes and buy
furniture, I'll have to accept that I'm
35 and this is where I live.

POSS ABBY
You ARE 35 and this IS where you live.

Paul notices Abby is beaming. She has a bottle of wine
and a bag of takeout.

PAUL
What's all this?

Abby makes herself at home and plops down onto the bed.

ABBY
Like I was saying, I have some big news,
and I wanted to celebrate with you.

PAUL
Ohmygod, you're pregnant?!

ABBY
No.

PAUL
You're not pregnant?

ABBY
No. I mean yes, I'm not pregnant. But
more importantly...I got a promotion!

PAUL
Wow, that's great. So what? You're moving
departments? Buildings? Companies?

ABBY
I'm gonna be the point person for Gwyneth
Paltrow's autobiography...

PAUL
Neat.

ABBY

And to get my feet wet, they're putting me in charge of the soon-to-be-published paperback release of "Leaving Pete!"

Paul is speechless.

ABBY (CONT'D)

You are no longer looking at a publishing assistant, you are looking at a...person who is in charge of stuff. They haven't given me a title yet, but I remain excited.

PAUL

Great. That's really great honey.

ABBY

Honey? Thanks DARLING.

PAUL

I just thought you wanted to work on books that matter.

ABBY

(confused, mildly annoyed)
I do, but this is a step up in a company where I can make that happen someday. Be happy for me, that's your job. And I brought dinner.

PAUL

You're right, I'm sorry. I was hoping to get some writing done tonight.

ABBY

Okay, I guess I'll take this home and eat my food...and eat your food.

PAUL

(realizing he's being a dick)
No, no. Stay here. Let's eat. Sorry. I'm happy for you. I was just in the middle of something.

ABBY

Here, I'll fix you a plate, you keep writing. I have to get some reading done anyway.

PAUL

Okay.

Abby fixes two plates of food. She lies down on Paul's bed with her dinner and a copy of "Leaving Pete."

Paul sits at his desk and gets back to work. He keeps looking over at Abby reading the book. It's killing him. He types an E-MAIL to DEAN. The subject: "FUCK." The message: "I'm fucked. Fuck fuck fuck."

ABBY

Wow, you're really on a tear.

PAUL

Yup.

He types another "FUCK."

INT. ABBY'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Her boss, KAREN enters.

KAREN

Morning. How are you feeling? This is big time stuff, same pay, higher stress, longer hours. You're officially being taken advantage of by the man. Did you guys celebrate last night? Bottle of champagne? Listening to "Let the River Run" on a loop?

ABBY

It was alright. Paul was writing so it wasn't a celebration exactly. It was pretty low key.

KAREN

Aah, "low key." In other words: your boyfriend wasn't as excited for you as he should've been due to feelings of resentment and inferiority.

ABBY

No. He's a good guy, he's just had a rough year.

KAREN

A lot of men can be unsupportive.

(pointing to a "Leaving Pete" poster on the wall)

I can recommend an immensely popular book on the subject.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby's in bed reading "Leaving Pete." She's into it. Paul is lying next to her motionless, staring at the ceiling.

ABBY

(turning a page)

So, this isn't the best book ever but it's a really fast read.

PAUL

Great. Whenever I'm writing I think to myself, "I hope someone reads this really fast."

ABBY

(turning a page)

There's no question she made the right decision leaving this guy.

PAUL

Oh?

ABBY

That marriage was not working out.

PAUL

I thought you finished reading that already.

ABBY

I did but I'm the point person on the book. I need to know it well. Plus, there's some decent advice in here. There's a reason every woman in America feels connected to Jane. She tapped into the American female psyche.

PAUL

How come no one in America wants to hear what Pete has to say about all this?

ABBY

Pete didn't write a book, did he?

That hits Paul, hard.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Hey, there's a work event this weekend...

PAUL

Oh?

ABBY

It's my first big event since my promotion and I really want you to be there. Plus, you can meet my boss, you can meet Shane, the gay intern who wears bow ties I always tell you about, you can talk to people who read the New Yorker, or at least keep it on their coffee tables so people think they read it, open bar sponsored by Bombay Sapphire. Tell me when it sounds too good to be true. Jane Palmer will be there too. I'm giving you six days notice so you can grow out your fuzzy "look at me, I'm a serious writer" beard.

PAUL

I was kind of hoping to write this weekend. And you don't want me there, I'm not good at fancy events. I always fondue the wrong thing.

ABBY

Paul, this could be a good opportunity for you. It's our company's 50th anniversary. Everyone will be there. I can introduce you to anyone you want to meet. These are people who can make things happen.

PAUL

I don't need any introductions. I just need to write my book.

ABBY

What if I want you there? This is a big night for me and I want you there holding my hand. Come on, it'll be fun. We can drink every time someone says something pretentious.

He's about to say "no" but sees the look in her eyes and acquiesces.

PAUL

Okay.

ABBY

Okay.

He takes "Leaving Pete" out of her hands, throws it on the floor and they start to make out. After a beat, Paul looks down at the floor and sees JANE'S PICTURE on the book jacket. He turns off the lights.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - ONE WEEK LATER

Abby's dressed for the event. She looks beautiful. Her cell phone rings.

ABBY
Hey, I'll be right down.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - SAME

Paul is sitting on his couch in a suit. His tie is undone.

PAUL
(into phone)
I'm not downstairs.

INTERCUT ABBY'S APARTMENT/PAUL'S APARTMENT.

ABBY
How far away are you?

PAUL
I'm still home. Abby, I can't make it.

ABBY
What? Paul, you promised me you would go to this.

PAUL
I know but I...

ABBY
Forget it. If you don't want to support me--

PAUL
(quickly making up an excuse)
I have diarrhea.

Paul can't believe he just said that.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Lots of it. It's bad. I'm on the toilet right now. I want to go with you but I'm afraid I'll end up shitting somewhere that's not a bathroom.

Paul bows his head, horrified that he's committing to this lie.

ABBY

(holding back tears, she
knows he's lying)

I don't know why you're doing this Paul,
but I am not going to let you ruin my
night.

She hangs up. She's shaking.

INT. CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Abby gets in all alone.

ABBY

48th and 8th please.

She gathers her strength. Her cell rings, it's PAUL. She turns off the phone and puts it in her purse.

INT. PARTY

Literati eat bacon wrapped dates and drink mojitos. There are a disproportionate number of models for a "literature" event. Abby walks up to Karen.

KAREN

Hey, where's your man? I thought this was our big chance to meet him.

ABBY

Oh, he's not feeling well so he stayed home.

Karen can tell Abby is lying but she brushes it off.

KAREN

We'll meet him at the next one. Men hate these things.

Abby smiles and nods. SHANE, the INTERN WITH THE BOW TIE walks up with a mojito. He's very gay and very excited to be there.

SHANE

How much fun are we having?! Did you see Mena Suvari is here? I can die now.

KAREN

Really? Because you saw Mena Suvari you can die now?

ABBY
(still having a hard time)
I'm going to use the restroom.

INT. BATHROOM

Abby composes herself. It's obvious she's been crying in the stall. AN OVERWEIGHT AFRICAN AMERICAN BATHROOM ATTENDANT hands her a KLEENEX. Jane exits her stall and sees her.

ABBY
Hey Jane.

Jane looks puzzled.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I'm Abby.

Jane still looks puzzled.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I'm the point person on the paperback. I sit in on all your meetings.

JANE
Of course.

Abby wipes her eyes with the Kleenex.

ABBY
Sorry, this is a little embarrassing.
I'm having a rough day.

JANE
Let me tell you what I tell everyone:
he's not worth it.

Jane walks out. Abby looks to the bathroom attendant.

ABBY
But I'm in love with him.

BATHROOM ATTENDANT
Don't look at me. Just because I'm a fat black lady you think I got wisdom to dispense? I work in a bathroom.

INT. ABBY'S HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Abby walks up to her door and sees Paul sitting down outside it. He looks upset.

PAUL

Abby--

He gets up.

ABBY

I guess your diarrhea cleared up.

PAUL

I'm so sorry.

ABBY

Paul, I'm tired. You know, I can't tell if you're jealous of my success or terrified of your own, but I don't understand the decisions you make sometimes.

PAUL

(raises his voice slightly)
I couldn't go. I didn't want to see
(he stops himself)
those people.

ABBY

(raising her voice)
You knew how much it meant to me.
(beat)
We can't have this conversation here.
It's late. I don't want to wake my
neighbors.

She takes out her key and walks into her apartment. Paul stands behind her about to follow. She turns around.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone.

She closes the door in his face.

INT. ABBY'S APARTMENT - SAME

Abby takes a deep breath. After a beat, Paul enters.

ABBY

What are you doing?

PAUL

I have a key.

ABBY

You don't get to use your key right now. This is a no-key situation. I'm mad at you.

PAUL

And I'm desperate for you not to be. I love you Abby. I'm an idiot and I'm really sorry if I hurt you tonight. That was not my intention.

ABBY

Why can't you go to your girlfriend's work event? Was it stupid? Yes. Was it mind numbingly boring? Sure. But it wouldn't have been with you there beside me. I can't wrap my head around why you wouldn't go. When it's just you and me you're so present and perfect but when it comes to everyday things that people do in the world it's like you can't manage to do them. As close as we are, I feel like there's this part of you I don't understand.

PAUL

You're right. I'm sorry. From now on, I promise, I will do those things. We can do those things. Literally right now, call all of your college girlfriends, let's get a karaoke room. I will be that guy.

She smiles and softens then takes a seat on the couch.

ABBY

You really hurt me tonight. I wanted you to be there.

PAUL

I know. I'm sorry. I love you, Abby.

They kiss. After a beat she stops.

ABBY

Paul?

PAUL

Yeah?

ABBY

I can't stand my girlfriends from college.

EXT. DEAN AND PAIGE'S BUILDING - COBBLE HILL - NIGHT

Paul and Abby buzz. Dean answers.

DEAN (V.O.)
YAY! I'll meet you at the elevator.

PAIGE (V.O.)
Just buzz them up.

DEAN (V.O.)
I told them I'd meet them at the elevator
I don't want to be rude...

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

ABBY
I'm excited.

PAUL
Look at this--we're doing a couples
night. We are a couple doing a couples
night. Very adult.

The door opens, Dean is right in the door of the elevator
bouncing up and down, EXTREMELY excited for their
arrival.

DEAN
I'm so glad you guys are here!!!!
(under his breath)
Thirty minutes after the Epsteins.

He drags them into the apartment.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Abby you look lovely.

He kisses her on the CHEEK.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Paul you're stunning.

He kisses Paul on the LIPS.

INT. DEAN AND PAIGE'S LIVING ROOM

Dean drags them inside to meet his wife Paige, and Jerry
and Sherry Epstein.

DEAN

Paige, this is Abby. Guys, this is Jerry and Sherry Epstein. Jerry, sorry I missed the end of your story. Paige'll fill me in later.

JERRY EPSTEIN

Don't worry we decided to save it for dinner. We didn't want your friends to miss out.

DEAN

(feigning enthusiasm)

Oh great. Perfect.

(giving Paul a look)

He's gonna save it for dinner. Get ready, it will probably be the best story about a brownstone going into escrow that you have ever heard.

PAUL

Oh right, you're a husband/wife real estate team?

SHERRY

Yes we are! _

She hands over a business card with a terribly cheesy photo of them on it. It reads: "'Til Death Do Us Sell."

PAUL

Ohwow.

He shows the card to Abby. She tries not to laugh.

ABBY

Oooh. Very cool. Raised font--you really went all out.

They nod happily.

DEAN

Paige, how about giving Abby a tour of the apartment. If there's anything she wants just let her have it. I'll get these two drinks. Abby what would you like?

ABBY

A glass of wine would be good thanks.

Abby and Paige walk off. Dean turns to Paul--

DEAN

Come help me fix some drinks in the kitchen. You two are cool, right?

The Epsteins nod. Paul and Dean walk off. A beat of the EPSTEINS ALONE in the living room oblivious to the fact that they're being ditched.

SHERRY

I told you people would notice the font.

Jerry nods in agreement.

INT. KITCHEN

Dean and Paul make drinks.

DEAN

(desperate)

Thank you for coming. What can we do to make you happy here? Paige knows not to say anything about the book. Any code words I need to know? Any people you've made up that I need to corroborate? Any other major life details you've lied about?

PAUL

Just the one.

DEAN

Not to worry. Anything you need--I am here for you. As long as you keep coming back here for me.

PAUL

Deal. By the way, I'm going to tell her.

DEAN

You sure about that?

PAUL

I'm in love with her. She needs to know. I should've done it by now I just couldn't.

Dean opens the kitchen door suspiciously to make sure no one's around.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The Epsteins are alone, quietly dipping carrots into ranch.

JERRY

(re: the ranch)

Mmm! Remember to ask where they buy this.

INT. KITCHEN

Dean closes the door. The coast is clear.

DEAN

Remember what I told you about pesto and how I waited to tell Paige that I didn't like it until she was ready? Are you sure Abby is ready to hear the truth about the pesto?

PAUL

At this point, the only thing left to do is be honest.

DEAN

(quietly)

Okay, but, hear me out: what if she finds out you don't like pesto, leaves you, and then you're single and I'm stuck with

(mouthing)

The Epsteins.

PAUL

She deserves to know.

DEAN

You're right. God, I'm scared. How are we gonna do this?

INT. HALLWAY

Paige leads Abby from the bedroom to the office.

PAIGE

And this is our office.

INT. OFFICE

The second they get in there, Paige shuts the door and shifts into lady-gossip mode.

PAIGE

You guys seem really happy, from the two minutes I saw you together in the living room. Dean said things are going well...

ABBY

We are happy.

(thinking for a second)

It's a good relationship. He's really, we're good.

PAIGE

I love Paul so much. He's smart and kind and you seem smart and kind. I realize I'm mostly judging on your look, but it's a good--smart, kind look. You match. Not in a bad way--I like it all.

ABBY

Thanks.

PAIGE

He looks happier than he's been in a while.

Abby smiles.

ABBY

I'm happy too.

INT. DINING ROOM

The table is set and food is on the table. Dean shuffles everyone around in hopes of getting the best seating arrangement. Dean makes sure he's sitting next to Paul and Paige, and not the Epsteins.

DEAN

Paul you go here. Abby here. Jerry, over there.

He moves Paige.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Paige you should be here.

PAIGE

I wanted to be close to the kitch--

DEAN

(stern)

Paige I let you cook, you let me do the seating arrangement.

(MORE)

DEAN (CONT'D)
(moving Sherry away from Paul
and Abby)
Sherry, you're over here.

Dean sits down and looks around, content. Jerry holds up his EMPTY GLASS.

JERRY
Dean, don't suppose I could get a refill
of that.

Dean passes the WINE. Everyone notices Jerry pours a very FULL GLASS.

SHERRY
So Abby what do you do?

ABBY
I'm an assistant at a publishing house.

PAUL
Don't be silly. She just got a promotion.
The first of many to come.

Abby blushes. Paul grabs her hand under the table. Dean and Paige share an "aren't they cute?" look. Sherry lights up and is about to say something. Jerry nods, signaling for her to go ahead.

SHERRY
I hope this isn't uncouth. But we have
been toying with a little book idea.
Happy Endings: Sherry and Jerry's Guide
to Buying Your First Apartment.

PAUL
Happy Endings. What do you think of that
title Abby?

Sherry and Jerry do not get the joke.

ABBY
(being polite)
That sounds like a fun idea. I have your
card, so...

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Everyone is done eating. They're tipsy and having a blast.

JERRY EPSTEIN

So I forgot to tell the real estate story.

DEAN

Ooooh?

JERRY EPSTEIN

Believe it or not, Sherry and I--well, our wild days are behind us. When we started out, we'd sell anything anywhere.

SHERRY

I'm telling you, we were in Harlem before Bill Clinton.

JERRY EPSTEIN

These perspective buyers called. They seemed very interested in a particular listing in Bushwick and in my head I think "Why would these two gentlemen want to live in Bushwick?" but then I'm thinking, "The gays move everywhere first." I said I'd meet them next Tuesday, they insisted on meeting that afternoon. So I juggle around my day to accommodate them.

SHERRY

We even skipped a Weight Watchers meeting.

DEAN

(could care less)

Really?!

JERRY

So they come to our offices.

SHERRY

I immediately knew something was wrong because this was not a type of gay I had encountered before. They had on the baggy jeans. Oversized t-shirts. The Yankees caps but in orange which I don't understand.

JERRY

(interrupting)

And they pull out a gun and force us into a taxi.

Suddenly everyone at the table is interested.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Now we're heading to the property and I'm thinking, "This is crazy," because we would've just met them there. We get out.

SHERRY

(disgusted)

Not before they made us pay for the taxi.

JERRY

The bigger guy has the gun to my back and forces me to unlock the apartment. We get inside and they make us stand against the wall. He starts ripping up the floorboards.

SHERRY

Beautiful floorboards. Original flooring. Ruined.

JERRY

And that's when we see the cocaine. Bags of it underneath the floor.

SHERRY

Very neatly packed.

JERRY

So they're collecting the cocaine in their nap-sack when two more buyers burst through the door. Unscheduled, mind you. And then, there is a shoot out. We hit the floor.

Mesmerized, Dean starts refilling his glass of wine.

SHERRY

(lovingly)

Jerry jumped on top of me to shield me from the crossfire.

Jerry shrugs.

JERRY

It goes on for several minutes. And all of the sudden it stops. Everybody has killed everybody.

ABBY

Oh my God.

JERRY

I know. So we take a second to re-group. We call 911. Sherry wanted to try the cocaine.

SHERRY

We were waiting there fifteen minutes, I was curious.

JERRY

Long story short, the police arrive including a lovely young officer named Patrick whose wife was, at the time, expecting.

SHERRY

So we gave him our statement and we sold him the apartment. Then end.

Everyone sits there in disbelief.

PAUL

I'm going to be honest, that was not the story I expected.

ABBY

Speaking of life threatening adventures, Paul, why don't you tell Jerry and Sherry about the time you found a dead mouse in your kitchen and you made ME come over and pick it up?

Everyone laughs. Abby looks at Paul lovingly as she gets up to go to the bathroom.

PAUL

What? She's better with animals.

Abby heads down the hallway to the bathroom.

PAIGE

Paul, she's awesome.

Paul smiles.

PAUL

I know.

DEAN

(psyched, motioning to everyone at the table)

So we're in. We're gonna keep doing this?!

JERRY

And you know, if you guys decide to move in together, maybe a place with room for three, you let us know...

He reaches for a BUSINESS CARD.

PAUL

We got the card.

SHERRY

You can take another.

Paul takes the card.

PAUL

Thank you.

DEAN

We're gonna be seeing each other every week anyway.

PAIGE

(to Paul)

Really--she's great.

He smiles, happy.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Abby walks out of the bathroom and notices a WALL OF PHOTOS. She examines each one as she walks by: photos from childhood, DEAN AND PAIGE on the beach, PAIGE AND HER BRIDESMAIDS at her wedding, then a series of photos of MURPH, DEAN AND PAUL in their 20s: at a baseball game, toasting at a bar, dressed as Ghostbusters for Halloween, and finally, a photo of DEAN, PAIGE, PAUL AND JANE.

Abby does a double take and looks more closely at Jane's face realizing, "ohmygod, it is her."

Abby **FLASHES BACK** to a series of odd moments that hadn't phased her before:

--Their 1st lunch date when Abby said "The receptionist said you're weird."

--Phyllis thinking Paul was in a book.

--Paul being unsupportive when Abby got her promotion.

--Paul asking "Why doesn't anyone wonder what Pete has to say?"

INT. HALLWAY.

Abby takes the PHOTO off the wall and slowly walks into the dining room. Paul looks up at her smiling but he can immediately tell something is wrong.

ABBY

What's this?

She puts down the PHOTO on the table in front of Paul. He looks at it. He's speechless. Abby is shaking.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I need to go. Paige, thank you for a lovely dinner.

(to the Epstein's)

It was nice to meet you.

She grabs her sweater from the back of her chair and walks out into the living room. Paul gets up.

PAUL

Wait.

He goes after her. We stay on the group in the dining room. Dean and Paige share a disappointed look. Confused, Sherry and Jerry try to sneak a peek at the photo.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abby grabs her purse and tries to leave.

PAUL

Abby--

ABBY

You lied to me.

PAUL

I didn't tell you because I was terrified everything would change. I was miserable for a year, then you came along and I was happy again. You make me happy, Abby. I didn't want to mess that up.

ABBY

Well you did. Were you ever going to tell me?

PAUL

I thought if I could make it past the stupid fucking book being everywhere we'd be fine.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Do you know what it's like to walk around knowing that everyone thinks you're a complete asshole?

ABBY

I'd rather have millions of people think I'm an asshole than the one person I love think I'm a liar.

PAUL

You wouldn't have gone out with me if you knew.

ABBY

Give me some credit, Paul. You're not the only smart person out there.

PAUL

If I had told you the truth, you would've had all of these false ideas about who I am.

ABBY

Or maybe it would've told me exactly who you are. A guy who doesn't finish anything, a guy who doesn't support people he claims to love. Jane was right, you are a Pete.

She walks out.

INT. DINING ROOM

It's tense. Dean, Paige, Sherry and Jerry are silent.

DEAN

(low voice)

Why was that photo still up?

PAIGE

I forgot. I feel awful.

INT. ENTRYWAY

Abby walks out. The door shuts behind her. Paul stands in the hallway for a beat, devastated. He walks into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Paul is about to cry.

PAUL
I'm sorry to ruin your dinner.

PAIGE
Paul, I'm so sorry.

PAUL
It's not your fault, Paige.

Paul exits. Dean follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dean gives Paul a long hug.

EXT. HALLWAY

As the Epsteins are about to get on the elevator--

JERRY
I forgot to ask where they got their
ranch. Should we go back?

Sherry shakes her head "no."

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - A FEW WEEKS LATER

It's dark and a total mess. Paul is lying on the floor
watching LOCK UP: RAW. Take out boxes and the same SMILEY
FACED DELIVERY BAGS are strewn everywhere along with
Paul's neglected book pages.

Paul's phone RINGS REPEATEDLY, he doesn't answer. He
listens to the message on speaker phone.

DEAN (V.O.)
Paul, it's Dean. Come on buddy, I'm
getting really worried about you. Call
me, or Murph...actually, don't call
Murph, he dropped his phone in the
toilet. Again. We love you.

Paul sighs, and presses "DELETE MESSAGE." He looks over
at his SEWARD FIGURINE.

PAUL
I know, dude I miss her too.
(pausing, as if he's
listening to it speak)
Yeah I know I ruined it, okay? I couldn't
have told her the truth.
(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

You don't get it, you're not from now. You think people thought you were an idiot for buying Alaska? You don't know the shit-storm you'd have to deal with today. Someone writes something down and the whole world can see it instantly. People read books on screens. You don't even need to have a book to read a book.

(beat)

I know, I don't think it's natural either.

Paul is interrupted by the BUZZER. Paul perks up a little.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's Carlos.

Paul opens the door. It's CARLOS a 30-something Puerto Rican DELIVERY GUY.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey Carlos! How you been?

CARLOS

I'm okay man.

(scoping out the apartment)

Are you? Sometimes I worry about you man. When was the last time you went outside?

Paul shrugs.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Hey, if it makes you feel any better, my sister read *Dejando Pablo*, that's the Spanish version of *Leaving Pete*, and she thought it was too long.

PAUL

Thanks.

CARLOS

It's real sad in here, man.

PAUL

Come on, you must see like fifty apartments a day. Mine can't be the worst.

He thinks for a second.

CARLOS

Well, one time I delivered to this lady. And when I got to her apartment, she had died. So I guess if I had to rank the worst, it'd be her, then you.

(beat, he's thinking)

But on second thought, her apartment was nicer than this. Listen, my buddy's having a party tonight.

(hesitant)

...You wanna come with us?

PAUL

Really? I was planning on...

He looks back at the apartment and makes eye contact with Seward.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yeah I should probably go to that.

CARLOS

You're gonna shower right?

PAUL

Come on, Carlos. Is that necesario?

CARLOS

Yeah man. Wash yourself.

INT. PUERTO RICAN FIESTA - THAT NIGHT

There's reggaeton (Puerto Rican rap) blaring. It's random but really fun. Carlos is talking to a group of friends. A girl walks up to him.

GIRL

Hey, Carlos, what's up with your friend?

On the DANCE FLOOR, everyone is grinding and having fun except PAUL. He's standing alone, slightly bopping to the beat while he chugs a 40 and cries a little bit.

CARLOS

Aww man.

Carlos walks over to Paul.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Hey Paul, I know I told you to leave your apartment, but, you should go back to your apartment.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

Paul is asleep on the couch in his clothes from the night before. It's even more disgusting in there now.

The BUZZER wakes him up.

PAUL
(confused)
Carlos?

He opens the door, it's DEAN and MURPH.

DEAN
Dude, where have you been?

MURPH
(looking around)
I'm pretty sure the answer to that is
"here."

PAUL
No, I've been out. I went to a party last
night.

DEAN
With who?

PAUL
With my friend Carlos. I have other
friends. We danced to reggaetone.

DEAN
Listen, I think we all need to sit down
and talk.

He looks around the room, everything is COVERED IN CRAP.
There's no where to sit.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Or we can keep standing, but we
definitely need to talk. You have to snap
out of this.

MURPH
After I read--
(carefully)
"Leaving Pete," I started reading other
self-help books. Turns out, they're are
like hundreds of these. There's a whole
section at Barnes and Noble. And I've
learned some stuff. We know you want Abby
back, but you can't control her.
(MORE)

MURPH (CONT'D)

What you CAN control is how you deal with the situation in front of you.

DEAN

(looking around)

You're not doing a great job with the dealing.

Murph takes out a very un-Murph-like moleskin notebook and reads from it.

MURPH

There's a saying "If you never get lost, then you may never be found." That was written by Ano Nymous.

Dean and Paul stare at Murph. Murph flips to another page.

MURPH (CONT'D)

"The burden of carting your past around, has made you weary, dear one...."

DEAN

Just clean up your fucking apartment.

Murph frantically flips to another page.

MURPH

Yes, because as I've learned, "Clutter is a physical manifestation of fear that cripples our ability to grow."

DEAN

(ignoring Murph)

You need to finish your book. It's time to pick yourself up and move on.

Murph flips through his notebook again.

MURPH

Yes. I had one about that too, wait.

Murph can't find the page so he tries to go off memory.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Use your gift, for it is a present. And if you unwrap the present, inside is tomorrow. Wait no. The present is today, which is a present, or...shit!

(flipping through pages)

I knew I should've have xeroxed that one. I was trying to be green.

PAUL

(surprisingly agreeable)

You guys are right. Thank you.

(then, suddenly vicious)

Quick question: why would I listen to either of you? Murph, you read some stupid books and suddenly you're telling me how to run my life? You've never even had a girlfriend. You're thirty four years-old and your Nanna still pays your rent. Maybe you're not the best person to be giving anyone advice.

MURPH

Fuck you dude.

DEAN

Whoah. Paul, chill out, man, he's just trying to help.

PAUL

Oh, YOU want to defend him? Like your life is so much better? You've been whipped since you were twenty-three. All you've ever done is live vicariously through anyone having more fun than you. You were cool in college, now you're just another boring schmuck in a co-op who's gonna run errands 'til the day he dies.

They all stand speechless for a long beat. Best friends are suddenly divided.

DEAN

We should get going. Get yourself together, Paul. I know you're going through some stuff but don't take it out on us.

MURPH

The Ashtana says to forgive but, you're being a real shit-face right now.

PAUL

I didn't ask you to come here, just get out.

They exit. Paul picks up SEWARD and throws it against the wall, breaking it. The figurine's torso, limbs, and head fall to the floor.

INT. BAR

It's TRIVIA NIGHT. Paul is ALONE at a table with an empty pitcher of beer and several empty shot glasses. He's sitting closer to TERRY than usual. Terry has a BIG BOOK on his table.

PAUL

(to Terry)

I am going to beat you tonight, Terry. I don't have any distractions, it's just you and me. I will take you down. I will beat you to the floor with my mind powers.

TERRY

(alarmed)

Good for you, buddy.

PAUL

(to a waitress, holding up his 1/2 empty pitcher)

More of this!

HOST

Next question: which animal is capable of drinking thirty gallons of water in ten minutes?

PAUL

(to Terry)

Hey Terry, Terry.

TERRY

What?

PAUL

You suck.

Terry shakes his head then buzzes.

TERRY

A camel.

HOST

Correct. A camel can drink thirty gallons of water in ten minutes. Paul, have you ever considered drinking water?

PAUL

Have you ever considered wearing a suit from the 21st century?

HOST

Alright, next up: which NBA team won 9 championships in the 1960's?

APARTMENT 3F immediately woos and jumps up and down.

APARTMENT 3F

Celtics!!!

They all rejoice.

APARTMENT 3F (CONT'D)

We got one!

HOST

Yes you did, but you forgot to buzz first.

A random team buzzes.

RANDOM TEAM

Celtics.

HOST

Yes. First correct answer in weeks and you fucked it up. Way to go, 3F. Next question: name three Mickey Mouse Club members turned pop stars.

Paul buzzes in.

PAUL

Who cares? Stupid question!

(to Terry)

I don't know this one but you don't either, so suck it.

Terry rolls his eyes at Paul then buzzes in.

TERRY

Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake.

HOST

Correct.

PAUL

You got that?

TERRY

It's basic pop culture, Paul. I live in the world.

PAUL

I thought you were smarter than that.

TERRY

Smarter than knowing something?

PAUL

(re: Terry's book)

So what's that book you're reading? The collected works of Justin Bieber?

TERRY

Actually it's Hitler: The Pathology of Evil.

PAUL

You know, all these books just tear people apart. Anyone can write a book and smear someone's reputation and everyone will read it and just believe it. It's in a book, it must be true. How about a book from Hitler's perspective? Where's THAT book?

TERRY

First of all, I'm fairly sure there is one, it's called Mein Kampf. Second of all, Hitler's perspective has never been the subject of much debate.

PAUL

I'm just saying you can't believe everything you read. A lot of people are misunderstood.

TERRY

And I'm saying that when making that point, you might want to choose a better example than Hitler.

PAUL

Eat dick Terry.

TERRY

Your friends are the only things keeping you from being a giant asshole, Paul.

PAUL

I'm the asshole? You're the asshole. You keep all the fun people from winning every week.

TERRY

Yeah, because you're a real party.

The host walks over to Paul.

HOST
Come on Paul, time to go.

He escorts Paul toward the door.

PAUL
No, YOU ARE time to go, you Mickey Mouse Club fuck.

HOST
Aaaaand...that doesn't make any sense. Bye bye.

The door shuts behind Paul. The GUY FROM APT 3F in the orange vest and flip up sunglasses shakes his head disapprovingly.

3F GUY
That dude has gotta grow up.

As the mood returns to normal and the game continues, Terry glances outside and watches Paul stumble down the street. Terry pities him.

EXT. BAR

Paul is now wasted and has been kicked out of his happy place. He drunk dials ABBY.

PAUL
Hey Abby it's me, I just want you to know...

Right then CARLOS bikes by. He's on his delivery route.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey, Carlos! Carlos? Carlos.

Carlos hesitantly waves and keeps on biking. Still on the phone, Paul BARFS all over the ground. Then-

PAUL (CONT'D)
Sorry Abby....

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

He wakes up in his clothes from last night with traces of PUKE on them. He looks around at his foul apartment, then picks up his phone and checks his OUTGOING CALL HISTORY.

It's: Carlos, Carlos, Carlos Carlos, Mom, Carlos, and finally, Abby. Fuck.

He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul looks in the mirror. He's miserable and looks like shit. It's time to do something. He turns on the shower.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

Paul is on the phone.

PAUL

I'm really sorry about the other night and the calling. It's not me. I'd like to take you to dinner to explain...Carlos, please...Okay, I understand.

(beat)

Miss you.

SELF BETTERMENT MONTAGE

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

--Paul cleans and throws out insane amounts of take out bags.

--Paul picks up the Civil War figurines lovingly and puts them back on the shelves. He glues Seward back together.

--Paul puts an IKEA DESK together.

--We see Paul reading, highlighting and writing furiously.

--Later that night, he turns on the TV and watches THE JERSEY SHORE.

PAUL

(to Seward)

This is actually not horrible.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE.

Paul enters and walks past a CARDBOARD CUT-OUT OF JANE and the "LEAVING PETE" SECTION unscathed. He's doing okay.

EXT. TRIVIA BAR

We see Paul drop a note under the door.

INT. BAR

On the NOTE. It reads "Apologies for my behavior the other night. Please tell Terry I'm sorry I defended Hitler. -Paul"

END OF MONTAGE

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

Paul paces nervously and picks up his cell phone. After a beat, he dials.

PAUL

Hey...Abby, it's me. Listen don't worry, I'm not trying to beg you to get back together, I'm calling to tell you I won't be calling anymore. I want you to know how sorry I am for what I put you through. You don't have to call back, I just want to say that I messed up. I did what I did because I was afraid to not have you in my life. I hope someday you'll look back on us fondly. Because I do.

(beat)

So--yeah. Bye Abby. I hope you're okay.

He hangs up, takes a cleansing breath and gets back to typing. We see he's beginning CHAPTER 16 of his book.

INT. CAB - SAME

Close-up of Abby dressed in a suit. She checks her phone and is rattled when she sees Paul's missed call.

We see her listening to the message. She's so moved by it, she doesn't notice the cab arrived at her building.

CABBY

Ma'am, 51st and 5th.

Abby snaps out of it and hangs up the phone. PAN OUT to reveal Abby grabbing a LARGE CUT-OUT OF GWYNETH PALTROW. In the cut out, Gwyneth is holding a copy of her autobiography, "OVERCOMING ADVERSITY."

INT. KAREN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Abby enters and uses the Gwyneth cut-out as a puppet.

ABBY
(as Gwyneth)
Morning. Who's ready for Bikram?!

She notices Karen isn't amused.

ABBY (CONT'D)
What's up?

KAREN
Abby, we're concerned about the book. It feels a little self-important.

Abby rests the cut-out against a wall. Gwyneth and her frozen smile, feel like a bizarre third party in the scene.

ABBY
It's Gwyneth Paltrow's autobiography. If you didn't want it to feel self-important, we should have had it written by anyone other than Gwyneth Paltrow.

KAREN
Yes, well, that's what we're doing.

ABBY
What do you mean? I thought she wanted to write it herself?

KAREN
And that's very brave of her, but with books like this it's always a collaborative effort. Like "Leaving Pete." People want to read Gwyneth Paltrow's story but not 400 pages she crapped out between ruining country music and baking vegan muffins.

ABBY
Wait, what?

KAREN
Vegan muffins. There's no butter, they taste like shit.

ABBY
No, what you said about "Leaving Pete." Jane didn't write that book?

KAREN

Come on, the longest thing she had written was an investigative report about nipple hair. She came in with a sellable idea and the literary market was hungry for an inspiring female voice. She fit the part. There are writers who write books, and writers who sell books. You know this.

ABBY

She didn't even attempt to write it?
What was true?

KAREN

She turned in a couple chapters. Beside the fact that she wrote like a tween blogger, we read it and thought, "Wow, YOU look like the bitch in this story." So we embellished a little. We made him seem more unlikable, and we turned her into a hero every woman could root for. One year later, five million copies sold.

ABBY

But I thought....I...

Karen grabs the Gwyneth cut-out to drive home her point.

KAREN

I don't want to blow your mind here, but Gwyneth Paltrow didn't overcome any adversity. No one wants to read "Gwyneth Paltrow: Nothing Has Ever Been Difficult." People want a to see a protagonist go through trials and tribulations. If a writer doesn't come in with that, we help them find it.

ABBY

But that's dishonest.

KAREN

No, it's business. You can find all the great books you want, but...

(pointing to Gwyneth cutout)
...this is what's going to pay your rent.

Abby is about to talk but she's conflicted.

KAREN (CONT'D)

This is what we've worked for. We're looking at back-to-back best sellers.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

Leaving Pete in paperback and the first run of Overcoming Adversity both coinciding with New York book fair. We're striking gold here. I just need to know you're still on board.

ABBY

(sucking it up)

I'm on board.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Abby looks longingly at a picture of her and Paul together.

ABBY

Abby, just call him. First, stop talking to yourself, then call him.

She tries but can't. She puts down the phone and pulls her blanket over her head.

We see shots of Abby and Paul working:

INT. BEACON AND PORTER CONFERENCE ROOM

Abby gives a power point presentation to a group of colleagues.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

Paul types furiously at his desk. He glances over at his Seward figurine.

INT. ABBY'S OFFICE

Abby opens a HOMEMADE BASKET OF MUFFINS and a CARD that reads "Abby, Thank you for all your work. Namaste, Gwyneth." Abby takes a bite of a MUFFIN then scrambles for a Kleenex to spit it out. It's disgusting.

INT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Paul delicately examines OLD DOCUMENTS.

INT. ABBY'S OFFICE

Shane, Abby's gay intern, brings in a BOX of PAPERBACK COPIES OF LEAVING PETE.

INT. PUB - DAY

Paul's sitting with TERRY who reads a copy of his manuscript and takes notes but we can tell he really likes it. Paul pats Terry on the back, appreciative.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Paul prints out a full MANUSCRIPT. His book is complete. The PHONE rings. Paul picks it up.

PAUL

Hello.

(beat)

Murph? Where are you calling from?

EXT. STREET - SAME

Murph is on the last pay phone in America.

MURPH

(looking around)

Um, outside a piñata store? Anyway, sorry I didn't call you back sooner, Dean and I have been grieving. We both felt it was appropriate to establish boundaries so as not to encourage your behavior.

(suddenly child-like and sweet)

But we missed you man. We really missed you.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PAUL AND MURPH -

PAUL

I missed you guys too. Let's grab a drink. Wherever you want, I'll be there.

MURPH

Actually, I'd like to invite you to something that means a lot to me. It's been a big part of my recent spiritual growth. Dean has agreed to go as well.

PAUL
Whatever you want. Count me in.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PARK

It's a public Tai Chi class consisting mainly of ELDERLY ASIAN WOMEN all in similar TRACK SUITS. Paul and Dean are in regular gym clothes and Murph is dressed exactly like the Asian women. A boom box on the grass plays traditional Tai Chi music. Murph is especially focused. Dean and Paul attempt to follow along.

MURPH
(mid-movement, whispering)
You know, Tai Chi has been proven to alleviate stress and connect the mind and body.

PAUL
Did Murph just say alleviate?

MURPH
If everyone did Tai Chi, nobody would need medicine.

DEAN
That feels wrong to me.

The group shifts poses.

MURPH
Oh, this is a good one. Single whip.

Murph looks at Dean's form and corrects him.

MURPH (CONT'D)
(re: Dean's hands)
Hook fist.

DEAN
What?

MURPH
(demonstrating the proper hand position)
Hook fist, asshole.

DEAN
You want me to fist an asshole?

PAUL

Even though I have no idea what we're doing, it's great to be with you guys.

They shift positions again.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I finished my book. I decided to self-publish it.

DEAN

That's awesome, buddy. Congrats.

MURPH

I'm gonna read this one, man. This whole Tai Chi thing has given me so much focus.

DEAN

What about to Abby?

PAUL

I called and apologized. I haven't heard back. There's nothing more I can do.

MURPH

Listen, go on a book tour, meet some groupies. Get yourself a little Civil War pussy. Girls'll be like
(mocking high-pitched female voice)

"Oh Paul, tell me more about General Patton."

DEAN

That's World War 2 you fucking idiot.

An OLD LADY shushes Dean.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(pointing to Murph)

He said Civil War pussy. Where were you then?

PAUL

I think I'm "going it alone" for a little while.

They switch positions to where each of their faces are all uncomfortably close to the ASSES OF OLD CHINESE LADIES.

DEAN

Am I cheating on my wife right now?
Seriously, this can't count as a cheat. I
do not want to waste a cheat on this.

They shift back to a standing position.

PAUL

So listen, I'm gonna have a booth at this
book fair next week. It's nothing fancy,
but if you're not doing anything...

DEAN

I was just an inch away from nose fucking
an 80 year-old Chinese woman. Right now a
book fair sounds like Mardi Gras.

Murph extends into a new position causing his HAIRY GUT
to hang out for all to see. Then...

MURPH

(100% earnest)
I'm telling you, I've never felt
healthier.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT OF A CONVENTION CENTER

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

We're in the midst of the New York Book Fair. People walk
around. CLOSE-UPS on some of the booths:

--A nerdy middle-aged MYSTERY WRITER plugging his
slaughter series "Murder Diner."

--An extremely botoxed 75 YEAR-OLD WOMAN with her romance
novel, "Forgive Me Father For I May Sin." The cover
features a nun inexplicably standing next to a shirtless
Fabio-type on a horse.

--A young girl with a new Harry Potter-esque series, "The
Sorcerer's Sorcery."

--An Anne Coulter-type with her book "Being LEFT Behind."

--CAPRICE HAYWARD, a female self-help writer with a new
book "Journey into the YOUNIVERSE."

--Chris Meloni is there with his popular fitness book "My
Meloni Has a First Name It's C-H-R-I-S"

--The two biggest, most popular booths are Jane's booth featuring the paperback of Leaving Pete," and Gwyneth Paltrow's booth with her book "Overcoming Adversity."

--There's a LARGE SIGN advertising Jane's lecture: WRITING FROM THE HEART. FINDING YOUR TRUTH.

Tucked away in a corner at a small booth is PAUL in the self-published section. We see him in a cute new shirt nervously organizing and reorganizing copies of his book: GREATNESS UNTOLD: REVISITING THE HISTORY OF WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

A lit agent, Mike Drucker, walks up to the booth.

MIKE DRUCKER

Paul? I'm Mike Drucker. I'm a lit agent at The Kutner Agency. Looking forward to reading your book. We're primed for a good historical bio.

PAUL

Thank you so much.

Murph and Dean approach. Murph realizes Paul's talking to someone important and snaps into action.

MURPH

OH MY GOD. It's Paul Aaron. NO. NO. No way. When I heard you were gonna be here I was like WHOOOAH.

MIKE DRUCKER

You already have fans?

PAUL

What I have is alarmingly juvenile friends trying to make me look important.

MIKE DRUCKER

(side of mouth)

Not working.

(holding up the book)
I'll be in touch.

PAUL

Great.

He hands Paul his BOOK and walks away.

MURPH

How cool is this? You have a book.

Murph picks up a copy.

PAUL

Yes I do.

(grabbing it from him)

But I don't have that many, so
unfortunately, you can't keep that.

DEAN

I'm proud of you, man.

MURPH

Listen I gotta bounce. Caprice Hayward is
here. I want to get her to sign my chakra
points.

Murph pulls out a pen and runs off.

DEAN

(to Paul)

You need any help?

PAUL

No.

DEAN

You need me to stand here to make you
look more popular?

PAUL

Yes.

INT. LECTURE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

There are chairs set up for Jane's lecture. This is the
biggest room there. Huge banners with Jane's picture on
them (think Mao Tse Tung, but less subtle), hang from the
rafters.

We see Abby dealing with Jane. Jane is clearly being a
handful, wildly gesticulating, pointing, blaming. Abby
attempts to calm her nerves.

JANE

Where is everyone?!

Most of the seats are empty, aside from a few "cat lady"
types occupying themselves by knitting, reading, and
sifting through oversized tote bags.

ABBY

You don't go on for forty-five minutes.

JANE

This place better be full. Did you do enough advertising?

Abby motions to one of the GIANT BANNERS of Jane's face. Jane hands Abby a festival brochure.

JANE (CONT'D)

I should have been on the cover of the brochure.

ABBY

You mean where it says "New York Book Fair?"

JANE

YES.

ABBY

You have a full-page picture. There are three pictures in this entire thing. All these people wrote books, and they just get their name in there.

Abby flips through the pages of the brochure, trying to prove her point. The font size gets smaller as pages go on. Suddenly, on a page filled with name after name of never-heard-of authors, one jumps out: Paul Aaron. Abby smiles. He did it. Jane doesn't notice a thing.

JANE

At least get me some water. No ice. With lemon.

Abby is still focused on Paul's name. Jane SNAPS her fingers in Abby's face.

JANE (CONT'D)

Excuse me. I said I would like water.

ABBY

(can't take it anymore)
Get it yourself.

JANE

Excuse me?

ABBY

I'm sorry I gotta go.

Abby takes off with the brochure in hand, leaving Jane standing stunned and alone. Abby walks into the sea of booths looking for Paul. She turns a corner in a rush, and bumps into KAREN.

KAREN

Abby, hey. I thought you were with Jane.

ABBY

I'm done.

KAREN

Abby, Jane doesn't start speaking 'til 2.

ABBY

No, I mean I quit. I can't do this. I can't deal with her, and I can't deal with people like her. You've been really nice, but...

KAREN

I understand.

ABBY

...she is SUCH a bitch, and she's not even a writer, and I...

Abby realizes that Karen isn't arguing.

ABBY (CONT'D)

You do?

KAREN

I think you are wise beyond your years, and you're passionate. If you're gonna follow your heart, the time to do it is now.

ABBY

Really?

KAREN

Which is why you shouldn't leave.

ABBY

I'm sorry, I'm confused.

KAREN

Look, Jane's piece of crap has made us enough money to focus on smaller books. Better books. The kind of books I think you can bring us. You'd operate independently, we'd finance limited first runs, see how they do...

ABBY

Oh my God, thank you. Thank you. I'd thank you more but I'm looking for someone.

KAREN

You know who you should be looking for?
See all those independent writers out
there?

Karen nods to the independent author section.

KAREN (CONT'D)

99% of them are garbage, but if anyone
can find a hidden gem, it's you.

Before Karen can finish Abby has already taken off.

ABBY

(back to Karen)

I already found one!

INT. BOOK FAIR - CONTINUOUS

CHERYL (O.C.)

Excuse me, can you tell me where the
famous author section is?

We see Cheryl, camera in hand, barreling through the crowd
near Paul's section. She's on a mission. Lou follows
behind her obediently. Dean and Paul see Cheryl snapping
photos as she makes a beeline for the booth.

PAUL

Oh no.

Cheryl sees that Paul has spotted her and waves, flapping
her hand aggressively, and pointlessly, considering
they've already made eye contact.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(feigning enthusiasm)

Hey...you're here.

CHERYL

I am not here for you I was just
wandering. Doing some shopping of my own.

She holds up a stack of mom books including a copy of
"Gwyneth Paltrow: Overcoming Adversity."

LOU

I tried to keep her from coming but she
was relentless.

PAUL

It's okay. I'm glad you're here.

Cheryl puts her arms around Dean and Paul.

CHERYL

How nice is this? We're all here
supporting you.

LOU

I think we got one more comin'.

Lou motions for Paul to turn around. It's ABBY, a few
booths over.

PAUL

Oh my God, Abby.

CHERYL

OH MY GOD, ABBY.

Abby hears her name, looks up and sees Paul. She smiles
and walks toward him. Just as they're about to embrace,
Cheryl runs past Paul and hugs Abby first.

LOU

Cheryl!

Cheryl backs off. Paul and Abby come face to face. The
connection is immediate and palpable.

ABBY

Hi.

PAUL

Hi.

Cheryl snaps a photo and Lou immediately grabs the camera
out of her hands.

ABBY

Look, I...

PAUL

If you're about to explain yourself in
any way you need to stop because you owe
me nothing. And I owe you everything.

ABBY

I missed you.

PAUL

I missed you every day, Abby.

(beat)

I finished my book.

Abby holds up the book fair pamphlet.

ABBY

I saw.

PAUL

And I got a desk.

ABBY

I don't know which one to be more proud of.

PAUL

Well, assembling the desk took longer, but...

Abby smiles. She can't stop looking at him. Cheryl tries to get the camera from Lou but he won't relent.

ABBY

May I read your book?

PAUL

As a matter of fact, I have a copy for you, if you'd care to navigate a gauntlet of intrusive friends and family.

They walk behind the booth. Paul grabs a book and hands it to Abby.

ABBY

It's real.

She opens THE BOOK and lands on THE DEDICATION. It reads: "For Abby. Don't worry, this book isn't about you."

They KISS.

Cheryl grabs the camera from Lou and snaps photos.

INT. BOOK FAIR - LATER

Jane is in the middle of her bullshit lecture.

JANE

Just because you're not being physically, or verbally, or mentally abused, does not mean you're not in an abusive relationship.

REVEAL: Abby and Paul walking into the back of the room hand in hand.

JANE (CONT'D)

People say to me "Jane have you ever had cancer?" and I say "No," "Have you ever had AIDS?" I say "No." But you know what I have had? A Pete. And when you test positive for Pete, as frightening as the diagnoses may be, remember, there is a cure.

Jane sees Paul and Abby, and stumbles a little.

JANE (CONT'D)

This book is the cure.

The crowd applauds.

JANE (CONT'D)

(visibly shaky)

Does anyone have any questions?

ABBY

(to Paul)

You know you could go up there right now and put an end to all of this. You'd finally get to tell your side.

PAUL

No. She can have this. I have everything I need.

Paul and Abby exit. Jane sees this and is relieved.

INT. BOOK FAIR - CONTINUOUS

Abby and Paul walk out hand in hand.

ABBY

(still holding Paul's book)

We should probably get home so I can read this and start giving you notes.

PAUL

(moving closer to her,
smiling)

Oh yeah?

ABBY

Yeah.

He kisses her, and keeps kissing her. In a sea of passersby, it's as if they're the only two people there.

AS WE ROLL CREDITS --

INT. JANE'S LECTURE - SAME

Cheryl, still standing in the audience, raises her hand.

CHERYL

Excuse me! I have a question.

Jane notices Cheryl but ignores her. Cheryl talks anyway.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Hi everyone. Cheryl Aaron, mother of Pete.

Everyone turns around, intrigued. Cheryl sashays towards the front of the room. On the way, she grabs a COPY of LEAVING PETE from a RANDOM AUDIENCE MEMBER.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I'm just wondering why you never mention any of the positive things that Pete did. Because you say all throughout the book that he's unsupportive, but was he unsupportive when you were on bed rest - after an elective procedure, mind you - and he took care of your cat that was menstruating all over the apartment?

(aside to crowd)

He's allergic to cats but she got one anyway.

(returning attention to Jane)

Was he unsupportive when he wanted to give \$500 of his book advance money - yes, book advance money - she doesn't mention that he's actually a very good writer - to the Red Cross after the tsunami but you convinced him to spend it on those stupid boots you wore to Thanksgiving?

The audience is enthralled. Cheryl arrives at the stage, walks up the stairs and grabs Jane's MIC. Jane looks to the side of the stage to KAREN, who's waiting in the wings. Karen shrugs, she's going to let this continue.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Maybe you shouldn't call it "Leaving Pete," maybe you should call it "Pete tried to stick around and make his marriage work, even though his wife was mean-spirited and his parents didn't care for her."

Cheryl walks out into the audience.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
THAT should've been the title. You know
the real reason she goes it alone?
Because she's unlikeable.

She's about to stop, then -

CHERYL (CONT'D)
By the way, if any of you want to read a
good, honest book, my son Paul wrote one
about the man who purchased Alaska. Thank
you.

Cheryl drops the mic on the floor and struts to the back.

JANE
(composing herself)
Any other questions?

EVERY HAND in the room goes up including MURPH'S.

MURPH
(annunciating clearly)
Yes, a stupid bitch says what?

JANE
I'm sorry, I can't hear you. Someone else?

DEAN
(loud, over-enunciating)
He said "a stupid bitch says what?"

Murph picks up the mic from the aisle.

MURPH
In the book, you call one of Pete's
friends a fat lazy slob. To whom were you
referring? Because I know all of Pete's
friends and none of them fit that
description. Dean's in great shape.

DEAN
Thank you, buddy.

MURPH
And I do Tai Chi which eliminates me from
the running.

Lou walks up to Murph.

LOU
May I have that?

Murph hands Lou the mic.

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LOU (CONT'D)

Hi Lou here. I have a question: FUCK YOU.

THE END