

"Not" Series (Working Title)

Written by

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NOT PARTY

INT. DINER. A BOOTH.

Ann and Ben sit across from each other -- it's a WAR TABLE. Their eyes are narrow. They're coming together to set terms. A YELLOW LEGAL PAD, face down, is in front both Ann & Ben. *

ANN

Alright. We need to do something about this birthday party situation. This 'having the same birthday' thing is killing us.

BEN

Agreed.

ANN

Last year, we split all of our friends between two parties.

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party. Ann and two friends stand around in awkward silence.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party. Ben and two friends stand around in awkward silence.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER. THE SAME.

BEN

The year before, everyone came--

ANN

--Left--

BEN

halfway through.

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party. It's hopping! Ann and a boatload of friends are having a killer time. She is in just about to start making out with a HOT GUY when all of a sudden, everyone stops and whips out their phones.

PARTYGOERS

Oh man, this was a blast! We gotta go! Etc.

Someone yanks the hot guy away and everyone stages a mass, sudden exodus leaving Ann confused. She half-heartedly blows a party ...tongue thing?

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party but there's no one there. Ben, alone, has given up on this birthday. He's on the couch in his underwear, curled into himself, resigned & ready to just eat a bowl of cheetos and play a video game. He's sad. Suddenly, a huge mob of people arrive, startling Ben. The party has started!

*

CUT TO:

INT. DINER. THE SAME.

ANN

And the year before THAT, our friends were all so confused nobody came at all.

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party. Ann stands alone.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM.

Decorated for a party. Ben stands alone.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER. THE SAME.

ANN
This needs to stop.

A long pause.

BEN
You're not going to say it?

ANN
What?

BEN
(as Ann)
"Also, we're friends and we never
get to see each other on our
birthdays."

Ann rolls her eyes. *

ANN
On three, okay? *

Ben nods. *

ANN (CONT'D)
One. *

BEN
Two. *

BOTH
Three. *

They pull up their legal pads. On his, Ben has written JOINT
BIRTHDAY PARTY. Then, as an afterthought: ? Ann has written
MOVE YOUR PARTY TO JANUARY. *

As they hold up the legal pad, we pan out a bit to reveal A
WAITRESS standing over them. She flicks the light above them,
which has been low. It flickers back to life and we have a
less dramatic lighting scheme. The waitress wanders away. *

Half a beat. He sees her legal pad. *

BEN
No. *

She relents quickly and looks at his. *

ANN
...Like in college?

*

BEN
Yeah.

*

*

She considers.

*

ANN
Well. College is the last time I
think I had an actually effective
birthday party.

*

BEN
What the fuck is an effective
birthday party?

ANN
(ticking off on her
fingers)
One. People come. Two. People I
like come. Three. I come.

BEN
Wha--
(getting it)
oh.
(beat, shifting, hopeful)
And you don't think that's, like,
juvenile?

*

*

ANN
...sex?

BEN
No, having a shared birthday party
with your bestie.

ANN
Besties?!

BEN
You are *killing me* right now.
Answer my question!

ANN
No. Actually. I don't think it's
juvenile. I agree with you. think
it's necessary. I think that if we
have another pair of birthday
parties on the same night, we're
gonna wind up hating each other.

*

*

BEN
...Really?

A beat. More serious.

ANN
I mean, don't you kind of resent me
every time your party is empty?
Even a tiny bit?

He acquiesces half-heartedly.

ANN (CONT'D)
See?
(beat)
And ... I don't want to resent you.
I'm all you have.

BEN
No. Not true.

ANN
So. I'm in. Joint party. *

BEN
It's the only way. *

They stick their hands out to shake. Ben pulls his back a little.

BEN (CONT'D)
(warning)
You have to pull your weight.

ANN
(fake gasps)
How dare you.

They shake. We SMASH to credits.

NOT NERDY

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM. *

Ben sits on his couch with his laptop open, notebook out. *
He's researching places to have this party. He jots something
down then dials a number on his phone.

BEN

Hi there! I was just wondering if I can make a reservation for an event on the third?

(beat)

...What? Really? You're already -- really? At a gaming store? ...Okay, thanks.

He hangs up and crosses out something in the notebook. He turns back to the laptop and starts again...

We run through a SUPER SPEEDY MONTAGE-TYPE sequence of Ben researching, calling, and failing. Every once in a while we slow down and catch a snippet:

BEN (CONT'D)

Wait. The entire comic book store is booked? The entire thing? ... What about the backroom? Near the janitor's closet? ...There's a second party at the same time?!

Shot of Ben crossing out things in his notebook. Shot of Ben on the phone MOS. Shot of Ben dialing. Slow down: *

BEN (CONT'D)

You're booked for THREE YEARS? What are people doing there? *

Shot of Ben banging his head on the computer. Shot of Ben using the Yellow Pages. *

BEN (CONT'D)

How can you be hosting LAN parties that often?! It's not 1993! Who still has LAN parties?!

Etc. As we hurry through our MONTAGE, we see his notebook fill up with X's. He finally hurls it off the bed and we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM. LATER. *

It's a disaster. Ben lies on his couch watching a movie on his laptop. Game of Thrones books are scattered all over the bedspread. The system has broken down. ANN enters without knocking. *

ANN

So, I got your text. What the hell is wrong with you?

BEN
I am not who I thought I was.

ANN
What?

BEN
I'm having an existential crisis,
Ann.

ANN
You're having a mother fucking
cryptic crisis, Ben.

BEN
I've always been 'the nerdy guy',
but somewhere along the line, nerds
got 'cool'.

ANN
Did we? When did that happen? I
missed this.

BEN
I hate all of these 'cool nerd'
things. I watched Game of Thrones.
It's boring.

ANN
It has dragons!

BEN
Not enough!

ANN
It has THREE dragons? What
constitutes 'enough' dragons for
you?

BEN
I even tried reading them and all I
wanted to do was strangle George
R.R. Martin. So then I logged onto
reddit. It's supposed to be my
"guide-to-nerd-shit", but I HATE
the interface. No good designer
would make that. That was some frat
guy who wanted to make a webpage.

ANN
It's ugly Pinterest. For boys.
(beat)
You like Doctor Who.

BEN

Not since "mainstream Moffat" ruined it. It doesn't count as a nerd thing anymore.

ANN

Huh... I mean, he's leaving?

BEN

EVEN THAT THOUGH, ANN. Everyone hopped on the 'Moffat sucks' bandwagon!

ANN

I don't know how to argue this anymore?

BEN

Everything I was made fun of for in high school is "in" now and I'm lost; if I don't like dorky stuff, am I supposed to be cool? But what's cool if everything "in" is dorky? When do I get to nerdgasm again, Ann? *Who am I?*

ANN

Your counterculture got usurped. Okay, well. What about video games? World of Warcraft or Halo or something - you could probably pick that stuff up.

BEN

(holds up a finger)

Ah. Here: I tried WoW. But on teamspeak, I brought up how awesome Alan Tudyk was in Firefly, some fifteen year old got all excited about Transformers.

ANN

When I play those games, I get scared and just run really fast past all the monsters or whatever and never level up.

BEN

You're not a nerd either!

ANN

No, I am. My arena hasn't been commandeered yet. Books will never be cool. I'm safe.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

You are boned because companies can make money off of your "nerd loves". Or, I mean, if you actually liked any of the things you're meant to like. ...Your problem is oddly complicated.

BEN

Maybe I'm secretly a jock.

ANN

I don't feel like that's it.

(pause)

Look, you like enough legitimately dorky stuff to still be a nerd.

ANN (CONT'D)

X-files...

BEN

..was just revived because it's so popular.

ANN

...Battlestar...

BEN

...People sell notepads with the sliced corners, Ann. THEY SELL. THE NOTEPADS. FOR PROFIT.

ANN

comic books...

BEN

Are a multi million dollar movie industry now because they're so cool.

ANN

Okay! It's not like you have to like everything "nerds" like; at this point, they're really not nerdy. They're doofuses who don't realize that WoW is just D&D.

BEN

Which is hilarious.

ANN

Exactly! And it's your ability to recognize the irony of everything you were mocked for now being the mainstream activity of those who did the mocking that makes you a legitimate dork.

BEN
 ...Yeah. Yeah! Thank you. I think I
 feel better.

ANN
 Finally. Get up, let's do
 something.

BEN
 I was gonna watch Fringe, no one
 will ever think that's cool.

ANN
 Oh, did you not get the Facebook
 invite to my Fringe party?

BEN
 Goddammit.

As they exit the bedroom, Ann asks:

ANN
 What brought this nonsense on?

A beat.

BEN
 Oh, shit, our birthday...

*

We SMASH to credits.

NOT PRESIDENTK

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT.

Ben and Ann sprawl on the couch; they're watching a movie.

BEN
 What is this soundtrack?

ANN
 99% of their budget.

Ben looks around. Waiiiit a second.

BEN
 What the hell happened? I came over
 here to plan this birthday party
 with you.

She gives him A Look.

ANN

...plan?

BEN

Yeah! You're unbelievable - you think our birthday is just going to organize itself? We need to set a course of action.

ANN

Course of action. Like what? Buy a vegetable plate. Put out vegetable plate.

She dusts her hands.

BEN

...A vegetable plate? That's it?

ANN

...Yeah?

BEN

We need alcohol, music, decorations, napkins, tabl--.

Ann sits up and pauses the movie.

ANN

Stop. ...Decorations.

(beat)

Decorations.

BEN

I- yeah?

ANN

What, like Pin the Tail on the Donkey? We're adults, no one has decorations.

BEN

I just like them, okay!? It's festive.

ANN

Is this what you've been doing for the past four years? Decorations?

Ben shrugs.

ANN (CONT'D)

Man. Okay. Fine, we can get decorations.

She lays back down and presses play. Ben grabs the remote and presses pause.

BEN
We need a theme.

ANN
A THEME?!

BEN
Yeah, we have to come up with a theme and then have our decorations support that. Have you never had a party before?

ANN
I know what a theme is - I just -- okay. Let's. Find you a theme.

She sits up and reaches for a nearby laptop.

BEN
No dinosaurs.

Ann looks at him strangely but just jots it down without comment.

ANN
I don't know how helpful I'm gonna be. The only party themes I know are, like, space? Cowboys?

BEN
I did space last year an--

ANN
(disbelief)
--This is the best gift you've ever given me.
(dictates typing)
Did. Space. Last. Year! Ah-mazing.
(beat)
Okay - how about... Lasagna.

BEN
What?

ANN
It's delicious. We can eat lasagna. It's a food.

BEN
That isn't a theme.

ANN
 Sure it is. We have a lasagna at
 the party. Our theme is: we eat the
 lasagna.

BEN
 No.

Ann begrudgingly strikes out the idea.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Look, I actually had a thought--

ANN
 Of course you did.

BEN
 It's been such a crazy election
 year... What if the theme was
 Presidents?

ANN
 ...like. American presidents?

BEN
 Yeah.

He waits - he thinks this is a great idea. She stares at him.
 She thinks this is a bad idea.

ANN
 Dude, I don't know anything about
 presidents.

BEN
 ...What?!

ANN
 Like. Nothing.

BEN
 How can YOU not know anything about
 PRESIDENTS?

ANN
 I just don't care!

BEN
 You're blowing my mind.

ANN
 There are no chicks in that mess.
 How am I supposed to relate?

BEN

Deep.

ANN

And everything just seems so bogged down in the party system politics that nothing ever changes -- not within our lifetimes, at least.

BEN

You have an awful lot of opinions about this for someone who doesn't care about presidents.

ANN

I care about WHY I don't care about it.

BEN

I can't wrap my head around this. You like these sweeping epic socio-political series.

ANN

Yeah.

BEN

So it's not like you don't like politics as a concept.

ANN

...Yeah. I like theoretical politics. Like - Jamie Lannister should have absolutely ruled Westeros. He had everything that Ned and Robert both lacked. Military prowess and what seems to be - Cersei excluded - a level head. AND EVEN the Cersei "mishap" is tempered by the time you get to this last book.

*

BEN

So fictional rulers, you care about.

ANN

I guess so.

BEN

Who was the president during Watergate.

ANN

No idea. Don't care. But I did find Bartley a little eyeroll-y sometimes, didn't you? Like, I don't need THAT much liberalism crammed down my throat. Same era, right?

BEN

This is a horrifying character trait you're revealing.

She shrugs.

BEN (CONT'D)

Here. Easy one. New Deal president?

ANN

(shakes her head)

James K Polk?

BEN

Holy - WHAT. How do you even know who that is? WHY do you know who that is?

ANN

(shrugs)

I think he's hot.

BEN

...Polk? Mexico stealing Polk?

ANN

...how do you STEAL a country?

BEN

Well-- you have to start with the understanding that "Texas" wasn't Texas and that slaveowners were migrating west into what was still free-territory Mexico...

*
*
*
*
*

He's about to go into it, but Ann, already knowing she's about to be bored, cuts him off.

ANN

But you know, I do sometimes think that there's something to be said for a Merkin Muffley kind of president: listen first, act later.

BEN

Who the hell is Merkin Muffley?

ANN

Doctor Strangelove.

(now she's on a rant)

And Morgan Freeman -- or James Marshall in Air Force One?! It's probably not great leadership to just ...kill people; there really should be due process, but you have to admit that his courage was pretty remarkable.

(beat)

What about Roslin?! You like BSG. Man, what a level headed leader in the face of military and political conflict.

Ben just stares, dumbfounded.

ANN (CONT'D)

Oo! Fictional president party?

BEN

... I don't know if I want to encourage this.

CREDITS.

NOT PARTY CITY

INT. PARTY STORE. PAPER PLATE & PLASTIC PLACE.

With a cart before him, Ben stands staring at a display of cups/plates/etc. Ann rounds a corner and joins him in the aisle. She has a party hat on her head and is typing on her phone.

ANN

Hey, we have a bunch of replies on the Facebook...

*
*

She scrolls and Ben looks over her shoulder.

BEN

Did you invite my mom?

ANN

She should know you're still having themed birthday parties.

*

BEN

...What is that banner?

INSERT: PICTURE OF ANN'S PHONE ON FB EVENT PAGE. THE IMAGE IS A CAT IN A BIRTHDAY HAT, OR SOME EQUIVALENT.

BEN (CONT'D)
That is not on theme.

Ann shrugs, peruses the phone.

ANN
Aw, what? Mike can't come.

BEN
Occasional sex partner, Mike?

ANN
Yeah. Let's reschedule.

BEN
The entire party? I'm not rescheduling an entire party because your fucktoy can't make it.

ANN
Ugh, you're the worst.

She plops the phone on a shelf, and turns to the display, then to Ben.

ANN (CONT'D)
Can't we just buy red solo cups?

BEN
They're plastic. Ann, plastic is terrible for the environment.

ANN
Ookay....

She looks again at the display.

ANN (CONT'D)
So your pitch is paper? *Trees*, Ben?! TREES?!

BEN
I think I read that paper is better for the environment than plastic.

ANN
That can't be true.

BEN
Yeah - plastic uses oil or something, so paper is preferable.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I guess because you can replant trees?

ANN

A bazillion bucks says the Paper Cup LLC is not replanting trees.

BEN

And Red Solo Cup Co. Is going back in time to make more oil from decayed dinosaurs?

Ann rolls her eyes.

ANN

There's glassware two aisles over.

Ben raises his eyebrows. They walk to the glass aisle. Ben picks up a glass and looks at the price. He quietly puts it back.

BACK TO:

INT. PARTY STORE. PAPER PLATES & PLASTIC.

ANN

I still think plastic is the way to go.

BEN

It's really not.

Both stand, hands on hips staring at the cups on the wall. A long, long silence fills the room. They look at each other. They look at the cups. They look at each other. They narrow their eyes. It's an old Western showdown -- what do they go for: paper? Plastic? WHAT DO THEY DO.

Ann lunges first & Ben races to grab his preferred cup. They both grab their cups and race to the front of the store to pay. Ben thinks better of it and grabs paper plates too. The delay means Ann narrowly beats him, but he throws his stuff on the counter anyway.

CASHIER

...All of this?

DUAL DIALOGUE:

BEN

No.

ANN

Yeah!

Ben rolls his eyes and looks at Ann. She looks at him. The Cashier rings them up.

CASHIER

14.42.

No one moves to pay, so Ben rolls his eyes and takes out his credit card.

ANN

Wow, Ben. Paying with PLASTIC?

Ben stubbornly shoves the card back in his wallet and takes out a twenty.

BEN

No, in fact. With paper money.

ANN

It's cloth.

The cashier hands them a paper-in-plastic bag filled with their purchases. Hang on everyone's expressions. SMASH TO:

CREDITS.

NOT SAD

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT

ANN sits in a state of moderate disarray. A glass of wine is on the floor near her; she is putting Old-Relationship-Memories into a box. There is a knock at the door and she answers it, revealing Ben. He holds up another bottle of wine.

BEN

I know how much you don't want to clean your place and I know how annoyed you are with me for making you do it, so I figured we could clean and dr-- oh. You're already drinking.

ANN

Keep up!

She gestures to the assorted "memory" items, walking him through various things. As Ben wanders through things:

*

BEN
...uh. What...

ANN
Everything is in piles. These are things that I want to get rid of completely. These are too expensive to trash, so I don't know. This pile is stuff I use but still reminds me of him. This is unsorted ... And this is a pile of books I should get rid of but never will. Unrelated.

BEN
Wait. What?

He inspects a pile.

BEN (CONT'D)
Are these... Are these things from your ex?

ANN
Ye-up!

BEN
...What? We're.. Cleaning for a party. Why are you doing this *now*?

ANN
I know. I am. And then I saw the toaster he gave me and I remembered I never got rid of his stuff.

She picks up another item and tosses it into the pile.

BEN
I meant why are you doing this now, as in: I came over to clean for the party, what the hell happened in here, but sure.

Ann purses her lips and stares at him. 'Oh'. Ben looks through a few boxes of stuff.

BEN (CONT'D)
You want to just completely get rid of this? All of it?

ANN
Yup! TRASH IT.

She pours him a drink and takes a sip of her own wine.

BEN

Are you sure? I mean, you might want to remember some of this sometime.

ANN

Calm down, Lorelei.

(she thinks)

Aw, man. He gave me the Gilmore Girls DVDs.

BEN

(semi-sarcastically)

Well you can't throw those out.

ANN

I know you're mocking me, but no. You cannot.

They quietly sift through items until Ben holds up a dildo with a questioning expression on his face. She knocks it into the box quickly.

ANN (CONT'D)

Let's never speak of that again.

BEN

I can't promise that.

(pause)

Okay, there's no segue - does it hurt?

ANN

...with the dil-- what?

BEN

No, seeing all this stuff. I mean, you're finally packing it in, wrapping him up, are you going to move beyond casual hookups?

This catches her. She ...considers.

ANN

...What is that supposed to mean?

BEN

Nothing. You just - you've ... the different guy every night thing? I don't know, I think you're ignoring your feelings.

(beat)

And... I guess I'm proud of you for starting this healing process.

*

He gestures to the piles of stuff she's tossing.

ANN

(faux grossed out)

Okay, if you're going to be super
condescending right now I feel the
need to point out that YOU had a
freaking breakdown because you
couldn't find a 'not cool' cool
place to have our birthday party.

Ben raises his hands in a 'you win' gesture and she pauses.

ANN (CONT'D)

I may just be super drunk right now
but. Thanks.

BEN

...Sure.

ANN

No, I mean it. Thanks. Nobody else
would

(she gestures to the
stuff.)

With me and just, I dunno. *

BEN

I know.

ANN

Yeah. So.

BEN

So.

They stare at each other for a little while.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm turning 30.

ANN

I thought you were 28.

BEN

(shakes his head)

I lied.

ANN

Why the fuck--

BEN

I'm not, I don't know, I'm just not
where I want to be.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm not a dad, I don't have a girlfriend - I can't even find a girl on Tinder. I'm not where I want to be in my career, I'm not even sure I'm IN the right career.

ANN

But why did you lie?

BEN

Because when you're 26, 27, 28, it's okay to be a mess like that.

ANN

...thanks.

BEN

You turn 29 and you're supposed to get it together. You only have so many years of blaming the Recession and whining about loans before people forget you're a "young person".

ANN

So... This party matters.

BEN

Yeah.

ANN

And I've been kinda a shit.

BEN

Yeah.

Beat.

ANN

Okay. I'm sorry. Let's throw a good party. I'll, you know. Put effort in.

BEN

You're 27, you don't have to.

She makes a face.

ANN

26.

BEN

What.

ANN

We met in college. Someone said you were a senior, I thought you wouldn't talk to me if I didn't say I was older. Who cares, it's just a number.

*
*

She resumes packing things / cleaning.

*

BEN

God. Okay. 26 and ...30. Great.

Ben moves to help her by picking up one of the boxes. And he immediately throws out his back.

*
*

BEN (CONT'D)

Fuck! My back! Shit - own.

*
*

Groaning, he sinks to the floor. We see Ann overtop of him, looking down.

*
*

BEN (CONT'D)

Say. Nothing.

*
*

*

CREDITS.

*

NOT BOOTY

INT. BEN'S LIVING ROOM.

Ann & Ben are watching a movie. It's not late.

BEN

(wishfully)

I wish I could go back.

*
*
*

Ben's phone buzzes. And then again. He looks at it, then looks up confusedly.

BEN (CONT'D)

...It's seven thirty.

Ann looks over at him.

ANN

I have told you a hundred times, I will NOT call you 'Big Ben' just because you accurately have the time.

BEN
What? No. Look.

He shows her his phone.

ANN
"Hey! What're you up to right now?"

She looks blankly at him.

BEN
It's a booty call!

ANN
Ummm...

BEN
But it's seven thirty.

ANN
Right.

They stare at each other uncertainly.

BEN
How do I check without being an
ass?

ANN
...I don't think you can.

BEN
(typing)
'Nothin, you'.

ANN
Well, I resent that.

BEN
You came over to help with some of
this party stuff and we're watching
13 Going on 30 for the fifteenth
time.

ANN
It's a misunderstood classic! I
thought it would inspire us!

Ben gets up and puts on his coat.

BEN
You can stay and finish it if you
want.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I have an opportunity to live life
as a twenty-something one last
time. And if Jennifer Garner taught
me nothing else, it's that you have
to seize the age you want.

*
*
*
*
*

ANN

I DO want. And I'm glad you get
what I'm saying about this movie -
such a powerful lesson. But come
on! The Party!

*
*
*

She dangles a spreadsheet toward him. Ben gets another text.

BEN

Wait, listen: "Just hanging".

He stares at her.

BEN (CONT'D)

What does that mean?

ANN

I think it means she's hanging out.

BEN

But like, alone? With people?

ANN

Have you never had a booty call
before?

BEN

I have. At a respectable 10:30 to
11:15 pm.

ANN

Ben, that's still insanely early.
Booty calls are more traditionally
in the 2am to 3:30am range, after
the bars close and you've stumbled
home and realize you neglected to
pick anyone up at said bar.

BEN

What? No way. Ten thirty!? To go
out at ten thirty is EARLY?

ANN

Ohmygod. Listen to me, you megawatt
disaster of a dork: you should not
be going out for the first time
that evening to meet a chick to
fuck her.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

That's not what you should be doing. Let me explain to you what an ideal booty call should be: ONE, you go out to a bar. A different bar than the girl, because that would be a date. TWO, you get ragingly drunk. THREE, you Uber home because you're a responsible fuck. FOUR, you text a chick you've talked to before and ask her if she's busy. FIVE, she says no. SIX, she comes over. SEVEN, EIGHT, AND NINE you can figure out on your own I HOPE. Ten, you get rid of her.

BEN

But--

ANN

No. Anything else is a date.

BEN

What I--

ANN

It's a date.

BEN

But she--

ANN

Date!

Ben looks at his phone again.

BEN

Is this a date?!

She solemnly nods. He's deeply conflicted.

BEN (CONT'D)

It can't be.

ANN

It is. You'll see. There will be food ordered. It's actually WORSE than a date because you guys have skipped right to "deep relationship" somehow.

BEN

...Fuuuck.

His phone chirps again. He holds it up. It says "come over?"
Ann makes an 'I'm so sorry' face.

ANN
You're gonna go, aren't you?

BEN
I mean, it's sex.

ANN
Okay, well. Do you guys want a rice
cooker or crock pot? Oh- you know
what, I'll check the registry she
probably already set up.

BEN
Listen. You and I both know we
aren't planning anything tonight.
Relax. Eat my food--

ANN
Thank you I will.

BEN
Try not to ruin anything.

ANN
Thank you, I shan't.

BEN
And I'm gonna go have sex.

Ben waves and leaves.

ANN
(shouting after him)
With every string that's ever been
strung attached to it!

Ann looks at the TV and pauses it. She looks at the
untouched, under-completed plans for this underwhelming
party. She half-heartedly picks up a sheet and for a moment
starts to work at the party. *

Ben reenters, sniffing his shirt. *

BEN
I'm gonna go put on another shirt. *

ANN
Date. *

CREDITS.

*

NOT HOT

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT.

The doorbell rings. Ann, in her socks, slides to the door and flings it open.

SMASH TO:

Ben, on the porch, head to toe dressed as Abraham Lincoln. He's holding a few bags of decorations, all of which are clearly "presidential".

ANN

What. The. Fuck.

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT.

BEN

I wanted to try it out to make sure it was comfortable an--

ANN

I vetoed presidents and there is NO WAY I am wearing a COSTUME.

She's halfway to rage. He stops. Smiles.

BEN

You vetoed presidents?!

Blank stare.

BEN (CONT'D)

Vetoed.

Stare.

BEN (CONT'D)

As in, the presidential power over Congress?

ANN

Aaaargh!

BEN

Come on, Ann! You have to find a president to be!

ANN

This is sexist! There are no women! I have to dress as a man!

BEN

It's my thirtieth birthday party!

ANN

That's gonna fly for ONE YEAR, buddy. One year!

BEN

Ooo! You know what? Let's research good costumes for you!

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT. LATER.

ANN sits at a computer. BEN is on the couch playing video games. There are a handful of party items littered around, nothing is really "up". There is a long silence.

ANN

Hey. Psst. Hey. So. Stalin's goddamn hot.

BEN

What in the fuck are you doing?

ANN

Look.

(she shows him)

Hot. Like he wants to sit down in a Silverlake coffee shop and read Turgenov with me.

BEN

Stalin does not want to read Turgenov with you.

ANN

Yeah, I mean, I know. I KNOW. But still, look at how hot he was. Young Stalin, not like. Old gulag Stalin. That dude was bad news.

BEN

You're going to hell.

ANN

For thinking Stalin's kind of a
looker?

BEN

Yeah. He killed millions of people,
Ann.

ANN

I'm not saying he was a good
person.

BEN

Do you think Putin's hot?

ANN

God no. He's a Bond supervillian.
One day, Biden is going to have to
defear Putin to save Earth.

A pause.

ANN (CONT'D)

Ow-OW! Custer!

BEN

General Custer?

ANN

General mother-fucking-hottie
Custer!

BEN

You have to stop finding genocidal
historical figures attractive, Ann.

ANN

(waves off his question)
Maybe he didn't WANT to kill all
those Native Americans. Maybe he
was deeply tortured. Maybe the
Souix Wars weighed mightily on his
soul.

BEN

I'm pretty sure you're wrong.

ANN

It was a different time?

BEN

Stop talking.

ANN
Robert E. Lee?

BEN
...is not at all better.

ANN
I mean, if you try to shade the
Civil War as a disagreement about
state and federal rights instead of
about sla-...ver.. Y? ...

BEN
Yeah, please, don't keep going.

ANN
Ilse Koch?

She shows him a picture of the civilian Nazi Ilse Koch.

BEN
Jesus Christ, no!

ANN
Threesome?

Ben considers it and eventually concedes. He plays his video
games. Ann slumps forward onto the computer.

ANN (CONT'D)
Dude, is this what people do on
Saturdays?

BEN
Play video games and stalk dead
people instead of decorating for an
impending party? No.

Ann takes a glance around her half-completed apartment.

ANN
I don't think you can stalk someone
who's dead.

BEN
...wait. Should I go as Benjamin
Harrison instead? Because of my
name.

ANN
(helplessly)
Why are you asking me this?

BEN
 (to himself)
 No. No. No one would get that. Too
 obscure.

Beat.

BEN (CONT'D)
 But IS the president who supported
 the McKinley Tariff and Sherman
 Silver Purchase Act and possibly
 guided the nation into the economic
 collapse of 1893 REALLY too
 obscure?!

Ann, after feigning snoring, has pulled a picture of Harrison
 up.

ANN
 Nope. Do not go as whoever this is,
 he's not hot.

CREDITS.

NOT A PARTY

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT.

We pan slowly over the decorated apartment. It is a complete
 mismatch of schemes: presidents, sure, but also streamers in
 a color Ann picked, a hodgepodge of cups, nothing makes
 sense. And in one corner of the room, taped up on the wall: a
 single dinosaur.

Ben and Ann stand staring at their handiwork.

BEN
 This is a mess.

ANN
 I like it.

BEN
 Alright, well, I gotta change.

Ann turns to him.

ANN
 Uh, what? You're not wearing the
 Lincoln costume, are you?

BEN
No, I couldn't grow a beard.

He holds up a suit.

BEN (CONT'D)
Jimmy Carter.

ANN
...why...

BEN
Who are you going as?

ANN
Me. Future President of America:
me.

She wanders to the drink section and pours herself one.

ANN (CONT'D)
And since you made me decorate my
apartment two hours early, I'm
going to start drinking now.

Ben heads upstairs to change as Ann drinks.

BEN
Leave some for the guests. And find
a costume!

Ann, left alone, glances at the spread of alcohol, considers,
and then shrugs: nah. She drains her glass and pours some
more.

ANN
Not doing either of those things.

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT. LATER.

Ben, now dressed like Jimmy Carter complete with snowy hair,
sits at the table. Ann, not dressed up at all except for the
teeniest tiniest presidential flag pin, is perched nearby.

ANN
What time did we say to get here?

BEN
Eight.

ANN
What time is it?

BEN
 Nine.

ANN
 Jesus.

Time passes. We see our heroes in a MONTAGE OF WAITING in different places as the time passes. A CLOCK FX tick, tock, tick, tock. A new position for Ann & Ben every tick, every tock. Finally, we break and Ben - who is slumped over the couch - sits up sharply.

BEN
 Check the Facebook invite.

Ann pulls out her phone and does so. She scrolls. And scrolls. And scrolls. Concern begins to etch onto her face.

ANN
 ...Dude. What day is it?

BEN
 ...Tuesday.

ANN
 No, but like: is -- is it...

She puts the phone down and looks at him.

ANN (CONT'D)
 Is it Election Day?

And it hits him like a ton of bricks: it is. And he didn't vote.

BEN
 SHIT.

ANN
 It's weird you didn't catch that,
 Mister Political Process.

BEN
 I thought it was safe! It's a
 TUESDAY!

Ann drinks more.

ANN
 Wellp.
 (beat)
 Did you vote?

Ben erupts.

BEN

NO!!!!

Ben dashes to his phone and punches some stuff on the screen.

BEN (CONT'D)

CRAP, everything's closed.

ANN

Yeah. I bet they voted and just went home to watch the results.

(beat)

I dunno who's worse: them for skipping our birthday or us for not realizing it's Election Day-- scratch that: YOU for not realizing it's Election Day.

Ann's phone beeps. She hops off the table.

BEN

...Where are you going?

She waves her phone.

ANN

Uber. When I realized no one else was showing up, I texted Mike.

BEN

You what? What about...

He gestures around.

ANN

Ben. No one is coming to this. It's time to call it. Throw in the towel. It's okay. You failed. Everyone will be fine.

Ben takes this in, still looking at the empty room somewhat helplessly. Ann walks to the door. Ben calls after her:

BEN

What about next year?

She pauses and turns around. Her face is skeptical. But man, does he look pathetic.

ANN

Yeah, okay.

She shuts the door and sits down again.

ANN (CONT'D)
So I'm thinking an 'Alice in
Wonderland' theme...

We start to pan out & fade.

BEN
Oh! I like that!

DUAL DIALOGUE:

BEN (CONT'D)
Wait, why...

ANN
Cool, and we can put the
caterpillar area over in this
corner...

And we're out.

POST ROLL:

BEN
Hey. How long ago did you text that
guy?

ANN
I don't know, an hour?

BEN
That's a date.