

THE MIRACULOUS YEAR

PILOT

by

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HBO

Revised

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Though much is taken, much abides, and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are,
One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

From "Ulysses"
Alfred Lord Tennyson

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

WICKED playbill.

Two lines of coke tapped out on it.

TERRY SEGAL snorts. Shakes his head. Messy hair and beard. Body's a wreck. Unhealthy lifestyle taking a toll. 40's.

CONNOR LYNN, the sexy young man he is trying to seduce, also snorts.

CONNOR
(re: WICKED playbill)
That's disrespectful.

TERRY
Junk.

CONNOR
Come on.

TERRY
Corrupt junk. Give them the
profound American mythology of THE
WIZARD OF OZ and they reduced it to
a fucking PETA billboard: be nice
to winged monkeys. All set to an
anodyne pop score composed with the
single intention of getting twelve-
year-old girls to lubricate, which
they do in droves every night at
the Gershwin, creating sanitary
nightmares that passeth all
understanding. Please. It's so
pedestrian it actually hurts me.

CONNOR
And sells more tickets than you've
ever done.

TERRY
And beat me for the Tony
nomination.

He licks the playbill clean of cocaine.

TERRY
Well, at least it's not Disney.

He tosses the playbill into a basket with other "corrupt"
shows: LES MIS, CATS, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, MAMMA MIA, JERSEY
BOYS, etc.

We're in Terry's Manhattan townhouse. He's a rich, snarky, manipulative, self-indulgent, and wildly self-destructive Broadway composer and lyricist.

On the plus side, he's a genius.

Terry lights a joint.

TERRY

How's it going for you, kiddo?

CONNOR

Knew it was gonna be hard but ...

She ... Fuck.

TERRY

Eloquently put.

Terry shares the joint with him. Moving in for the seduction now.

TERRY

They're not all Gorgons. Okay, they are. But she's Queen of the Gorgons.

CONNOR

I'm still new at this. Just wanna do my job and soak it all up.

TERRY

Good attitude, serve you well in the cut and thrust. Soak it up. Be open.

Connor looks at him.

He's a singer/dancer in Terry's new show. In his 20's, but there's unexpected depth behind the eyes. Buried substance.

CONNOR

They told me about you.

TERRY

Believe it.

CONNOR

I just ... I don't think you should fuck people you work with.

TERRY

I agree. Now come upstairs.

CONNOR
Seriously.

TERRY
If you were serious you wouldn't be here.

CONNOR
I was flattered, I mean -- it's you.

TERRY
All right. It's okay.

CONNOR
You're mad ... Did I just fuck myself?

TERRY
Kiddo...

CONNOR
Do you know my name?

TERRY
Yes. You're the cute one in the black shirt. Now come upstairs.

Connor laughs.

CONNOR
They weren't kidding about you.

TERRY
They rarely are.

CONNOR
Really. This has been fantastic, but I should go. Maybe we can do it again?

Terry stops.

Something changes in him. Completely.

TERRY
Say that again.

CONNOR
What?

TERRY
What you just said.

CONNOR
Maybe we can do it again.

TERRY
Do it again ... C B G E ...
(sings the notes)
Do it again. Dah dah dah dah.

Without another word, Terry rises and goes upstairs.

Connor waits, mystified.

Then we hear piano music from upstairs. The four notes. C B G E.

Connor goes upstairs...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Connor climbs the stairs. Posters from Terry's shows on the wall.

He goes into Terry's music room...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

Grand piano. Chairs. Chaise. Stacks of music composition.

A line of Tony Awards.

Terry stands over the piano. Working out a few bars of a song.

He's like a different person now. Intense. Sober. Inspired.

TERRY
The love song. End of Act Two.
Duroy to Susanne ... I've been
killing myself for the ending. So
far it goes...

He plays a bit of romantic music, narrating...

TERRY
He's finally professing something
like genuine emotion. No
complicated chords, no confusing
rhyme scheme, the lyric will be one
or two syllables, ABAB, like a
child. It's honest. From this guy.
(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's honest because he just realized maybe he's in love for the first time...

Connor moves closer, transfixed...

Terry is concentrating totally on his work. Plays music to demonstrate...

TERRY

So the music builds. And I'm looking for the resolution for weeks now -- then you say "Do it again" -- dah dah dah dah -- declining, falling -- without resolution because it should go dah dah dah dum. There should be another C to resolve the idea on the tonic. But there's not. There's no resolution. There's no release. There's no release because he needs her to complete the phrase: he needs her to release him!

He plays the full musical phrase. A simple melody that folds back in on itself...

He continues to play, to compose, toward a crescendo...

TERRY

She feeds back into his line, picks it up again. Keeps the suspense going. She's tempted, but she's not ready to resolve the idea. Not yet. But she's attracted to his melodic line. She can't help herself. He's overwhelming. The force of him is magnetic, the suspense, the non-resolution is intoxicating, like fucking forever. She can feel the notes rolling over her body -- dah dah dah dah -- dah dah dah dah -- like his hands moving over her, the small of her back, the nape of her neck, her throat her breasts her nipples her stomach her pussy it won't stop and in her mind they're fucking forever he's on top of her on and on--

CUT TO--

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - NIGHT

Terry and Connor are fucking.

Terry is panting for air, sweating, out of shape.

He fumbles in a bedside drawer. Pulls out a bottle of poppers. Inhales wildly. Snorts and coughs.

Connor is amused. Poppers. So old school.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

ROBIN enters. She's Terry's invaluable personal assistant/gatekeeper. She's sublimated her life to him and is devoted -- and resentful.

She looks over the wasteland of the night before. Glasses. Joints. Coke.

She glances up to the bedroom.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - MORNING

Robin marches in. Opens the drapes. Sunlight stabs in.

Terry groans and tries to hide from the light. Connor is gone by now.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BATHROOM - MORNING

Terry hauls himself into the bathroom.

Looks at himself in the mirror. Ugh.

Opens the medicine cabinet. Pills. Takes a selection.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-SHOWER - MORNING

Terry's in the shower. Tries to stretch. Ouch. Aches and pains. Age.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - MORNING

Terry smokes a cigarette as he goes through the motions of some morning exercises ... Gives up on them.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Terry lumbers down the stairs. Rumpled, shapeless clothing.

Robin meets him with a glass of juice and half a bagel:

TERRY
(re: the bagel)
Where's the butter?

ROBIN
In the fridge. Where it stays.

DUKE ELLIS sweeps in, all energy.

He's the anti-Terry. Young, handsome, crisp, straight.
Ambitious.

Duke is Terry's musical protege. Rehearsal pianist for his new show.

DUKE
Come on, come on, we're late
already..!

TERRY
She won't give me butter...

DUKE
(pulling him out)
Like I should care?

Robin hands Terry his shoulder bag and jacket just as they swirl out.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Terry and Duke swerve through the morning pedestrians. They are New Yorkers born and bred, know how to move quickly.

Terry munches on his dry bagel.

DUKE
... I was practicing the Follies
number, we gotta talk about the
chorus, we got five girls, but you
wrote it for three real sopranos,
so unless you want to rewrite it--

TERRY
We got three. Barbara, Shirl and
the other one.

DUKE

No no no, she replaced the other
one with a dancer.

TERRY

When?

DUKE

You were with Fidget.

TERRY

No one tells me anything.

DUKE

Don't whine. We gotta cab it. TAXI!

They divert to a cab--

INT. CAB - MORNING

They get into the cab. Duke pulls out musical charts.

DUKE

939 Eighth ... Look, I think you
can make it work with the two above
the line, it'll just be thinner...

Duke shows him some charts as Terry's cell phone rings. He
searches for it in a flurry.

Duke calmly pulls it from Terry's jacket pocket, hands it to
him.

TERRY

Hello?

CROSSCUT to:

FRANK MOSS, Terry's partner of nine years, is at a Wellness
Convention. He's a hardcore yoga instructor. Fantastic shape.
Early 30s.

Terry continues to study the charts, making some notes,
eating the bagel, as:

FRANK

(on phone)

Hey, honey, wanted to catch you
before work.

TERRY

(on phone)

Too late.

FRANK
(on phone)
I got an email from the Plaza, they
want a \$12,000 deposit.

TERRY
(on phone)
It's a year from now!

Terry makes some notes on the charts. Overlapping, Duke talks
to the cabbie:

DUKE
Don't take 57th.

CABBIE
You wanna drive?

DUKE
Take 55th and go up. There's
construction.

FRANK
(continues, on phone)
What do I know? You want the Plaza
for sure?

TERRY
(on phone)
Or some Courtyard Marriott? Of
course I want the Plaza!

FRANK
(on phone)
Okay, take it easy. You do your
exercises today?

TERRY
(on phone)
Almost passed out from the
exertion. Swear to you. Duke'll
swear to you.

DUKE
I swear.

FRANK
(on phone)
Such a liar. Talk about it when I
get home.

TERRY
(on phone)
Or not.

FRANK
(on phone)
I gotta Bikram seminar. Call you
after. Love you.

TERRY
(on phone)
Love you.

Hangs up. Instantly back to Duke, scrawling on the charts:

TERRY
It'll work if you play this legato.
It's the Follies Bergere, not some
New Orleans fuckhouse. Check your
Fosse at the door, chief.
(writing on charts)
And remind me I want harp and
cello, like so. Remember: Paris,
1880s. *Belle Epoque*. Play
everything light and airy,
ebullient. *Belle Epoque*. Tattoo
that on your ass.

The cab arrives--

EXT. STREET-REHEARSAL BUILDING - MORNING

They emerge from the cab outside a building on 8th. Duke pays
as Terry bustles into the building--

INT. REHEARSAL BUILDING - MORNING

The elevator is broken. (It always is.) Terry and Duke climb
the stairs. It's a shitty old building.

Signs taped to the wall: BEL AMI. THIRD FLOOR.

Terry huffs and puffs.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - MORNING

Like all rehearsal rooms world over: dingy paint, dusty
windows, dilapidated furniture. Company scattered around the
room.

Terry and Duke slip in. Duke goes to the rehearsal piano.

PATTY ATWOOD -- the Director/Choreographer/Bitch Goddess --
is rehearsing a tap routine with the chorus. She's a
formidable and foxy woman in her 30's.

She lays into one of the dancers.

(They are several weeks into rehearsing a musical version of Guy de Maupassant's 1885 novel BEL AMI.)

Terry sits next to VERONICA ELLIS, Duke's mother and a famous Broadway diva pushing 50. Or so.

She's Terry's oldest friend. They've been through the wars.

TERRY
(whispers)
Since when do we have a tap
routine?!

VERONICA
Since this morning.

TERRY
Guy de-fucking-Maupassant does not
write tap numbers!

VERONICA
He does now.

She smiles wickedly.

Terry watches the dancers.

We see one of them is Connor, from last night.

He tries to catch Terry's eye.

Terry leans back. Sighs.

Fuck me.

INT. TATE MODERN MUSEUM-LONDON - DAY

From the noisy whirlwind of Terry's life to the cathedral hush of an art museum.

Matisse's magnificent work THE SNAIL fills the screen. We take in the swirling blocks of exuberant color.

A man stands looking at the painting. He's tall, imposing, saturnine. A man of power. Commanding and seductive.

He's ALEX. 70 years old.

His eyes carefully, lovingly, scan the huge painting.

It moves him.

Silence.

Then a YOUNG WOMAN enters the gallery. She stands by Alex, looking at the painting. They have never met.

A beat as they both study the painting.

ALEX

Do you know the story?

She looks at him.

ALEX

Matisse was dying when he painted it. And he knew he was dying. He was a true artist though, and wanted to record every emotion and experience in his work, even his own feelings about his decaying body and diminishing faculties ... Near the end he couldn't hold a paint brush anymore so he used scissors. He would cut up shapes and arrange them into collages. Then he couldn't even hold scissors. He couldn't get out of bed. So he has his assistants color the paper to his specifications and cut and tear it the way he told them, then they would arrange it on the ceiling above his bed and he would look up at it, tell them where to move the pieces. That's how he created this. The year he died. Lying on his death bed. Making art.

He is mesmerizing.

ALEX

To me there's no more moving story in the history of art. This man, eighty-four-years old, his body betraying him, shutting down bit by bit, had to create. How could it be otherwise? It was the only way he knew how to make sense of his life, and of his passing from it. And in the end his will to art was so powerful, so profound, that he kept death at bay just a little longer, just a little day, just a little month, so he could create this, for us, the flint-hearted world.

He look at her deeply.

ALEX
Can there be a greater heroism? Can
there be a more benevolent or wise
use of a life? To create, so
generously ... I wonder, are we
worthy of his graciousness?

A beat

He smiles.

ALEX
Here, let me compare it to another
painting...

He leads her across the gallery to the painting hanging
opposite the Matisse.

ALEX
Who painted this one again?

He puts on his glasses, looks at the signature, smiles to
her.

ALEX
Oh, I did.

CUT TO--

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Alex and the girl are fucking.

Very enthusiastically.

The spirit of Matisse moves them.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

MANDY VANCE isn't sure.

She walks through an empty house with her husband SCOTT.
Their kids LARA and CAMERON wander in and out.

A pretty REALTOR is giving a relaxed pitch:

REALTOR
... there just isn't that much
inventory left on the Cape.
Certainly not of this quality...

It's a rambling old Victorian near the beach. They go into the well-appointed kitchen.

REALTOR
Stainless. Kohler. Terrazzo. All
the bells and whistles.

SCOTT
Wine fridge. Honey look.

MANDY
Mm.

Mandy's late 40s. Unashamedly looks her age. Rumpled. Uncomfortable with her body. Tension on her face.

Her husband takes better care of himself. He's older. Decaying handsome. Dyes his hair. Something of a dreamer.

REALTOR
This is a nice touch. Built-in
frozen yogurt machine. For those
lazy afternoons.

She wanders out.

SCOTT
(wry look to Mandy)
For those lazy afternoons.

Mandy shushes him and they continue.

INT. BEACH HOUSE-UPSTAIRS - DAY

They are climbing the grand staircase up.

REALTOR
... the staircase is extra-wide
because the house was originally
built for a Civil War officer who
used to hold "presentations." The
officers and their ladies would
promenade down the stairs side-by-
side.

SCOTT
(flirting?)
You're making that up.

REALTOR
I swear.

SCOTT
Honey, we can promenade.

MANDY
Wow.

Cameron, their son, calls up the stairway:

CAMERON
Can we go into town?

MANDY
Go ahead.

SCOTT
Be back in an hour.

CAMERON
Believe me.

Cameron and Lara go.

REALTOR
Two bedrooms on this level, the
master's one up ... And this is
sweet.

Shows them a little room:

REALTOR
This is the sewing room.

SCOTT
Honey! The sewing room!

EXT. CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY - DAY

Cameron and Lara are walking through the little beach town.

Cameron is about 17, sharp, theatrical, and busting to come
out of the closet. Which will come as a surprise to no one.

Lara is about 16, empathetic, quiet, almost withdrawn:
watchful. She's attractive, soon to be sexy. She got her
father's looks.

They get along great, tell each other their secrets. Allies
in a difficult family.

LARA
Let's go to the beach.

CAMERON
All that sand, no thank you very
much.

LARA
Lifeguards...

CAMERON
Bitch. See you back at the house.

They head off in different directions. He into town, she to
the beach.

EXT. CAPE MAY-TOWN - DAY

Cameron's wandering through the town center, listening to his
Ipod.

He stops in front of the local community theatre. Posters
advertising the upcoming production: HELLO, DOLLY!

CAMERON
(shivers)
The provinces.

EXT. CAPE MAY-BEACH - DAY

Lara sits alone. Watching some locals play volleyball.

She's at that age where boys fascinate her. She watches their
bodies and attitude as they move over the sand, diving for
balls, high fives, laughing.

The volleyball bounces to her. She tosses it back to the
game.

One of the locals leaves the game, goes to her. He's cute.
About her age. RILEY.

RILEY
You wanna play?

LARA
No thanks.

RILEY
Weekender?

LARA
My parents are thinking about
buying a house.

RILEY
Where do you live?

LARA
Short Hills.

RILEY
Been to the mall.

LARA
Everyone's been to the mall.

RILEY
You live in Short Hills why you
wanna move here?

LARA
Like a summer house. Second home.

He sits next to her.

RILEY
My name's Riley. I live here. All
year round.

LARA
Lara.

RILEY
Laura?

LARA
Lara. From Doctor Zhivago. It's an
old movie ... Tomb Raider.

RILEY
Right.

A beat.

LARA
Must be fun living here.

RILEY
In the summer. Winter's bleak. Not
so much volleyball in the winter.

LARA
So what do you do in the winter?

RILEY
I do diving. Plus plays at school.

LARA
You gotta meet my brother.

RILEY
He like diving?

LARA
Show queen.

He smiles.

She's nervous next to him, but excited too. She can feel the warmth from his skin.

RILEY
Come play. We don't keep score.
It's just fun ... Show us how they
do it in Short Hills.

She looks at him.

This decision has a special weight for her we don't understand. She's had some history with sex, not all good.

EXT. CAPE MAY-BEACH - LATER

The sun is setting.

Cameron watches from afar.

Lara is playing volleyball with the other kids. She's laughing. Having fun.

Cameron's expression is complex. He envies her ease and playful normalcy. But he's also apprehensive. Protective of her.

He sees Riley flirting with Lara as they play. She tosses her head and laughs.

Cameron finds this moment almost unbearably moving. He wishes he could capture it forever.

His sister. Happy.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE-PORCH - DAY

Mandy and Scott stand on the wraparound porch with the Realtor.

REALTOR
... it's going to go. The inventory
is so small, you understand. I
can't hold it.

SCOTT
Just give us a week, okay? For me.

REALTOR
(smiles)
For you. Three days.

MANDY
And this price is...?

REALTOR
Carved in stone.

SCOTT
Thanks, Janet. We'll be in touch.

REALTOR
(shaking hands)
I look forward to it, neighbor ...
Mrs. Vance.

She goes.

SCOTT
So?

MANDY
We don't need it.

SCOTT
We don't need anything.

MANDY
Two mortgages...

A beat.

SCOTT
You know the Lobster King's gonna
re-up.

MANDY
Scott.

SCOTT
I'm telling you. I'm that close.
You believe me, right?

MANDY
I believe you.

She's heard this before. There's a faint hint of desperation to him.

MANDY
Even with that.

SCOTT
It's a beautiful house.

MANDY
House is great.

SCOTT
No, there's great and there's great. This is lazy afternoons making frozen yogurt, you're up in the sewing room, I'm promenading...

MANDY
Honey. I just ... Let's think about it.

SCOTT
It'll go. We can't think too long.
(beat)
Would be good for Lara ... Get her away.

This last strikes a chord with Mandy.

MANDY
I need to think about it.

SCOTT
We need to think about it.

Mandy doesn't answer. She sees Cameron and Lara returning.

They go down the steps to meet the kids at their car:

SCOTT
Okay, guys, what do you say? Should we buy it?

LARA
God, yes.

She gets into the car.

CAMERON
They're doing HELLO DOLLY.

He gets into the car.

Scott looks to Mandy:

SCOTT
Split decision.

He gets into the car.

Mandy takes another look back at the house. Unsure.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Buzzing Broadway crowds. In and out of theatres and restaurants.

Terry and Veronica Ellis, the Broadway diva, make their way through the busy evening foot traffic.

She's a star here. People notice her.

VERONICA
... that's not what I mean. I can
sing it eight times a week, I'm
just saying two-show days will be
challenging as I'm no longer a dewy-
eyed ingenue, in case you haven't
noticed, you self-obsessed
egomaniac.

TERRY
What? I wasn't listening.

She laughs as they turn into Angus's on 44th, where everyone eats.

INT. ANGUS'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The molecular energy changes when Terry and Veronica enter. Theatre royalty. A little buzz through the place.

They are shown to their table as:

TERRY
You want fewer songs or easier
songs?

VERONICA
I want more songs. Especially that
Second Act love song. No reason it
couldn't be a trio!

TERRY
 Aside from dramaturgical logic.

VERONICA
 More poetry, less logic. If I had a
 nickel...

They join Duke Ellis, who is waiting at Table Number One.
 Right at the front window in the corner.

With him is FREDERICK HUNTER. Once a lion among Broadway
 composers, now bloated by alcohol, sickness and excess.
 British. 60's.

This grand wreck of a man was once Terry's mentor. He has a
 decaying flamboyance, somehow poignant now.

FREDERICK
 (kisses Veronica)
 Look at you, enchanted one!

VERONICA
 Don't stop.

TERRY
 Freddy.

DUKE
 Hey, Mom.

TERRY
 Get this: she wants the Second Act
 love song now.

DUKE
 Oy.

The waiter arrives unbidden with their drinks. A standing
 order for Terry: big martini.

TERRY
 (to Frederick)
 Where's ... whatshisname? The kid.

FREDERICK
 Gone.

TERRY
 Sorry.

FREDERICK

Apparently didn't want to waste his golden youth on yours truly: all those blissful days spent huddled by the mail slot, eagerly waiting for royalty checks to appear...

Meanwhile...

Way in the back of the restaurant ... Not the front room ... Nor the middle area ... But the back room, Siberia...

Connor and some of the young members of the COMPANY watch Terry and the others at the front window. (And dream of sitting there themselves.)

CONNOR

We should say hello.

WOMAN

She won't talk to me in rehearsals.

CONNOR

That's professional. We're off-duty now.

MAN 1

No such thing.

CONNOR

It's not like we don't know them!

But still. No one moves.

WOMAN

What do you think they talk about?

CONNOR

The show ... What else is there?

MAN 2

Is that Frederick Hunter?

WOMAN

Who?

CONNOR

Ouch.

MAN 1

Frederick Hunter. Wrote the score to SUNRISE and COME THE SPARROWS a thousand million years ago.

MAN 2

Back in the cave man days.

WOMAN

I was in SPARROWS in High School.
Crap book.

MAN 2

I thought he was dead.

CONNOR

No, just doomed to High School.

Meanwhile, back at Table Number One:

FREDERICK

... there was some talk at the
National about doing a revival of
SUNRISE -- one of those marvelous
"re-imaginings for a new
generation" -- but they decided to
do PORGY instead. As if the
Gershwin estate needs the fucking
dough. Fuck them.

TERRY

Fuck the Gershwins.

FREDERICK

No, I love the Gershwins! Fuck
Jerry Herman instead. Oh, I did.

They laugh as the waiter brings Frederick another drink. He
takes it at a gulp. Terry notices.

FREDERICK

Now, how goes the show?

VERONICA

Mmm. Every moment paradise.

FREDERICK

(laughs)
Patty not behaving?

TERRY

No, she behaving. Like Stalin. If
Stalin were a coked-up dyke of a
choreographer.

FREDERICK

She wasn't?

Back in Siberia:

MAN 2
(eyeing Veronica)
She's had work.

CONNOR
No way.

MAN 2
Botox minimum.

WOMAN
She wouldn't do that. You can't
move your forehead. You can't act.

MAN 1
When's the last time she acted?

MAN 2
Don't stare.

CONNOR
Why are we afraid to go over there
and say hello to people we work
with every day?

MAN 1
They might eat us.

Back at Table Number One:

Veronica is leaning in, emotional. It's serious here now.

VERONICA
... the point is I'm not a dancer.
She can't make me into one.

TERRY
No one's trying...

VERONICA
You know how it makes me feel?
Standing there like a fat klutz
with those kids dancing around me?
I feel useless.
(near tears)
Don't let her embarrass me.

TERRY
Honey...

VERONICA

You don't know. Wait until some young composer like Duke comes along and starts writing better than you -- and everyone's looking at him and not you -- suddenly you're irrelevant. What do you do then?

FREDERICK

Amen.

TERRY

I hope I have the dignity to retire.

VERONICA

And grow vegetables? Come on ... Let me sing. Let me do what I do while I can.

TERRY

Stop it.

VERONICA

You're afraid to write any range for me. I can read: G to E. I can read.

TERRY

I'm writing the part. I'm writing Madame Walter. I'm not writing a star turn for you. Go to the Carlyle and do a fucking cabaret act if you want to jerk-off.

Veronica has never backed down a day in her life:

VERONICA

Madame Walter is a complex, mature woman with life experience. Why does she only express herself from G to E? Is she not capable of a fucking B-flat?

DUKE

Mom...

VERONICA

(persistent)

She comes alive in the course of the show.

(MORE)

VERONICA (CONT'D)

She meets Duroy, she falls in love, she unfolds: why not let her G become a B-flat? Let her range grow as her heart opens.

FREDERICK

That's good.

TERRY

For god sake, can we just have dinner?

VERONICA

You're not doing me a kindness. You think you are, but you're not. What you're saying is you're too old. You're like fucking television, Terry. I can play more than mothers. Or grandmothers.

Meanwhile...

In Siberia they have no idea how tense things have gotten up front.

CONNOR

You know, to hell with this, I'm talking to him.

WOMAN

Don't.

CONNOR

No. It's not like the man did not fuck me.

MAN 1

Calm down, Connor.

MAN 2

Let them eat.

CONNOR

(stands)

You wanna know how to get to Table Number One? You fucking do it. You wanna be in the chorus the rest of your life? Enjoy.

He goes.

The others are apprehensive.

Connor approaches Terry's table.

They see him.

Not pleased.

Connor immediately realizes this was a mistake, but he's gone too far now.

CONNOR

Hey, Terry, Duke, Veronica ... I'm just over there with ... How are you?

TERRY

Good.

CONNOR

Good. I ... We were wondering if you -- wanted to join us for dessert or something--

VERONICA

I spent my entire professional life getting from that table to this.

DUKE

(nicely)

Another time, okay?

An awkward pause.

CONNOR

We are in the same show.

TERRY

We're trying to talk.

Connor looks at him.

Another terrible pause. Connor dangles helplessly. He doesn't know what to do.

CONNOR

Sorry.

He goes. Humiliated.

The walk back to the other table is agonizing.

INT. ANGUS'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Dinner is over. Veronica and Duke are picking at dessert, talking quietly.

Connor and the others are gone.

Frederick is making his way unsteadily to the bathroom. He's sweating. Too much to drink. Plus he's anxious about something.

He stops outside the men's room. He waits.

Gets up his nerve and enters...

INT. ANGUS'S RESTAURANT-MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Terry is washing his hands.

Frederick launches in before he loses his nerve:

FREDERICK

I'm a cunt to ambush you like this
but I have a proposal! How would
you like to employ your old mentor,
Tony-award winning composer
Frederick Hunter, on your new show?
There I've said it. Thank Christ
that's over!

He keeps talking nervously. This is demeaning.

FREDERICK

I'm a bit ragged at present, but I
still know my way around a score.
Just need to get on my feet. So I
thought, talk to Terry. See if he
needs an orchestrator, a pal to
help out with the charts, just
until I'm on my feet again, you
know ... You know ... Because
there's no denying it, when all's
said and done...

He thinks how to phrase it.

FREDERICK

What we used to be, we are no more.

Terry is touched. A giant of the theatre reduced to this.

They are both reflected in the bathroom mirror. Terry clocks this: twin composers. Past and present.

Terry handles the difficult moment with surprising grace and tenderness. Casually drying his hands on a towel.

TERRY

Down the line I'm going to have a lot of scoring work and I'd be honored to have you take a look. Until then let me give you a retainer. Like \$5,000, that sound okay?

FREDERICK

Could you make it 10?

TERRY

Sure. I'll come by tomorrow and bring a check -- and I can play you a few songs. Some of them are pretty rough, so you have to be patient, but I'd like to get your take.

FREDERICK

For you my take is always the same: write from your heart, not your head ... Look where it's gotten me!

Terry smiles.

FREDERICK

Thank you, Terry.

TERRY

Forget it.

FREDERICK

I don't mean for the money. I mean for the dignity.

He goes.

Terry exhales. Deflates.

We see him reflected in the mirror.

There but for the grace of God...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - LATE THAT NIGHT

Terry is alone. Very deep in thought.

He pours himself a drink.

He's a different person.

He's quiet. Not performing for anyone. No one to spark with.

His face has settled into a sadness. Something even beyond that.

He stands for a moment. Summoning up his courage.

Then he turns to face the staircase going upstairs. A beat. He exhales a long breath.

Then he begins to walk upstairs...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-SECOND FLOOR - LATE THAT NIGHT

Each step is meaningful. Like he's walking to his execution...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-MUSIC ROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

He moves into the room and stops.

He stares at his piano from all the way across the room. Giving it distance. Giving it respect.

He's not ready to approach.

In moments like this, the piano is like a living thing to him: capable of inspiration and degradation. Capable of hurting him. One day he knows it will kill him.

He stands there.

Frozen.

Vulnerable.

Finally he approaches.

He stands over the piano. Looking down at the keys. His head tilting back and forth. A silent plea:

Please let the notes come.

Please.

Just once more.

It's wrenching. He tries to banish the anguish.

Partly successful.

Then his hand reaches down to play a note. His fingers hesitates for a moment. Then he continues.

With one finger he plays a G.

The note echoes around the room and back to his ear. The sound comforts him. He's almost crossed some boundary.

He plays an E.

He thinks. Plays another G. Plays another E.

He plays the notes from G to E. (The range he has been writing for Veronica.)

Then he plays a B-flat. A much higher note.

He sits down at the piano. Hunched, no posture.

He slowly runs his fingers over the keys without enough pressure to play any notes. They undulate gently under his touch, bringing him solace.

He thinks.

Nothing dramatic. No histrionics. No "inspiration."

He just thinks.

He plays some more. He joins the notes, eventually moving from G to B-flat, letting the notes unfold, playing a new musical phrase.

He continues playing. Something evolving. Something new in his eyes now.

Joy.

The act of creation. It is beyond words for Terry, this rapture.

Eyes closed. A smile to melt your heart.

He stops.

Thinks.

Plays a short section again. Adds a chord.

Thinks.

Plays it again.

Then picks up a pencil and starts notating it.

INT. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM-CURATORIAL OFFICE - DAY

Silence.

Darkened room.

We're looking at a striking modern painting of a woman. Lots of negative space.

It's a slide. Switches to another painting of the same woman.

Switches to yet another painting of the same woman.

(This is Alex's "Beth" series. It's not unlike Andrew Wyeth's Helga series.)

MAN'S VOICE

Did you intend it as a series?

ALEX (O.S.)

Not at first.

Another slide.

VOICE

Did she object?

ALEX (O.S.)

Not at first.

We see Alex. His face is illuminated in the glow from the slide projector. He sits. Studying his work.

Ferocious concentration.

Another slide.

VOICE

We can include as many as you want.
The continuity is suggestive.

Another slide.

Another slide.

VOICE

Did you start these at the loft?

ALEX

No. 78th Street.

Another slide.

VOICE

The background looks sky-lit. Might
have been the loft.

ALEX

Maybe.

Another slide.

VOICE

Did she model them all? Are they
from life?

Alex doesn't respond.

Something is troubling him.

VOICE

Are they from life?

Alex still doesn't respond.

Then:

ALEX

Let's take a break.

The room lights come on.

Surprisingly, the room is more like a high-tech CSI lab than
a dusty museum office: sleek electron microscopes and
authentication x-ray machines. Clinical.

The voice belongs to TAMIL LEE, a young Curator.

TAMIL

By the way, Henry got the
certification from the Tate. We
swapped for a Rauschenberg, which
is a first for them...

Alex isn't listening. He's still studying the images as they
cycle past on the automatic slide carousel.

Tamil watches him.

ALEX

Did I paint these?

TAMIL

What?

ALEX

It's like someone else did them ...
The brush stroke is mine, but
there's so much I can't remember.

TAMIL

I'll fill it in. Curators live to
fill in.

ALEX

I remember the day I met de
Kooning. Like it was yesterday ...
But I look at these and I can't
remember if it was summer or
spring. Was she in a good mood? Was
she bored? Did I mix the pigments?
Did I buy them? Did she laugh? ...
All the tissue between things,
where life really happens, where
patterns evolve on top of one
another, the palimpsest. That's
what's missing.

TAMIL

(gently)
It'll come.

ALEX

Mm.

He stands. Stretches.

ALEX

What did you say about
Rauschenberg?

TAMIL

Loaned one to the Tate for yours.

ALEX

Now there was a man of deviltry. He
fucked every single living thing in
Manhattan except for me and Norman
Mailer.

Tamil laughs.

INT. GUGGENHEIM-PRIVATE CAFETERIA - DAY

Alex and Tamil are having lunch at the employee cafeteria.
Alex eats healthily and sparingly.

He's a star in this world. People notice him. He enjoys it.

TAMIL

... the organizing principle defines the exhibition. It's your retrospective so you have to decide how you want your work to be assessed ... Traditionally, we would start at the top floor and work down chronologically. End with your current work.

ALEX

From juvenilia to dementia.

TAMIL

Not the most inspired curatorial approach -- but it's clear.

ALEX

You think so?

A beat.

It's a challenge.

TAMIL

I ... I think your work evolves. I think one can see the evolution.

ALEX

Do you?

TAMIL

Yes.

ALEX

Hm.

He will not commit.

TAMIL

Or ... We could organize it on theme. Works of abstraction, works of representation, works of alienation, negative space, portraiture, whatever.

ALEX

Perhaps.

TAMIL

That's more creative anyway.

ALEX

Hm.

TAMIL
Maybe start with the "Beth" series
and then open out?

ALEX
Maybe.

A beat. Alex still will not commit. Tamil's frustrated.

TAMIL
Or we could show the paintings
alphabetically by title.

Alex smiles.

TAMIL
Alex ... I don't want to put
pressure on you but this
institution has it's own internal
clockwork. The website needs a name
for the exhibit, the season
newsletter has to go to press.
Everyone's been respectful, from
Franny on down. But in eleven
months those doors are going to
open and people are going to have
to see something.

ALEX
Do you think about your life?

Tamil looks at him. What?

ALEX
Do you think about your life?

TAMIL
In what terms?

ALEX
Do you look back?

TAMIL
Sometimes.

ALEX
How do you feel about yourself when
you do?

TAMIL
I don't know.

ALEX
Try. Put it into words. What kind
of man are you?

TAMIL
I don't...

ALEX
Try.

A beat.

TAMIL
I can't.

ALEX
Are you a prick?

TAMIL
Sometimes.

ALEX
Are you kind?

TAMIL
Yes.

ALEX
Are you cruel?

TAMIL
Yes.

ALEX
Do you steal? Do you cry? Do you
dance? Do you envy me? Do you want
to fuck that girl over there? Do
you want to paint a masterpiece? Do
you hurt?

A beat.

ALEX
We're doing more than picking
pictures for an exhibit ... We're
finding the narrative of my entire
life ... What story are we telling?

He rivets Tamil.

ALEX
When I know. I'll tell you.

End of discussion.

INT. VANCE HOUSE - MORNING

Buzzing alarm. Very nice upper-middle class house.

Mandy Vance is already up. Dressed and putting her makeup on. Traditional business suit. She's a corporate lawyer.

She turns off the alarm. Bed is empty. Her husband Scott is already up.

She returns to the bathroom. Continuing her minimal makeup. She considers putting on more ... Decides against it ... The daily inner beauty battle.

INT. VANCE HOUSE-KITCHEN - MORNING

Scott is cooking breakfast for the kids.

Lara is quiet, texting, always overshadowed by her extrovert brother Cameron. She doesn't resent this, she prefers it.

CAMERON

... you never even ask, you just assume. I have a life you might be surprised to learn--

SCOTT

I brought you into it, pal.

CAMERON

But Sammy's only free on Saturday, if we went Saturday I'd already be there! Why can't we do that?

SCOTT

Because the whole world does not revolve around you.

LARA

(dry)
Since when?

CAMERON

Bitch!

LARA

(back at him)
Bitch!

He laughs. Mandy enters in a hurry.

CAMERON

Mom. I'm going in on Saturday
anyway, why don't we--?

MANDY

'Cause we can't. Have a good day,
hon. Don't pout. Why don't you
invite Sammy?

(kisses him, then Lara)

... No texting at the table. You
look pretty.

Grabs her cell, which is charging.

SCOTT

We have to talk about Cape May.
Call me at lunch--

MANDY

For sure.

(to the kids)

Be good. Love you.

A quick kiss to him and she's off.

CAMERON

The Flash strikes again.

EXT. VANCE HOUSE-SHORT HILLS, NEW JERSEY - MORNING

Mandy emerges from the house. Carries a briefcase and heavy
legal case.

Lovely house. Sculptured neighborhood. Comfortable. Money.

Scott follows her out, with her traveling coffee mug:

SCOTT

Mandy...

MANDY

(taking cup)

Oh, god, thanks...

SCOTT

Listen, whatever you want about the
house is totally cool ... We should
only do it if it's going to be fun.

MANDY

Thanks.

He notes one of the neighbors is watching them from his driveway. Scott waves.

SCOTT

Now give me a real kiss, woman.

He gives her a big kiss, partly for the nosy neighbor's benefit ... She's pleased. Scott can still charm her.

She climbs into one of the three family cars and goes.

INT. MANDY'S CAR - MORNING

She reads emails on her Iphone on the way to the Short Hills Train station.

EXT. SHORT HILLS TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Mandy waits on the platform with the other commuters.

She notices a sexy Lancome poster. The model's firm jaw line is like an indictment.

INT. TRAIN - MORNING

Mandy rides the train toward the city.

She works. Complicated legal and financial documents.

Some laughter. She glances up.

Two commuters are talking. One is a younger man. His eyes quickly pass over her. No interest. She's invisible to him.

She returns to her work. Tries not to care.

INT. MANDY'S LAW FIRM - DAY

A busy Manhattan corporate law office. 200 partners. Successful.

INT. LAW FIRM-BREAK ROOM - DAY

Mandy is alone in the break room, trying to get the high-end cappuccino machine to work. It's not obeying.

She twists and turns the dials and spigots.

MANDY

Damn it.

Finally gets a sputtering stream.

Her immediate boss, HAROLD BURTON, enters. He's a little older. African-American. Not as nice as he wants to appear.

HAROLD

Here you are ... I need caffeine.
Bill just spoke for three hours
without taking a breath...

MANDY

(cedes the machine to him)
Go crazy.

HAROLD

I swear, three hours! ... You sure
you wanna make partner?
(she smiles)
He's up in arms about Global Reade.
The Germans are getting nervous.

MANDY

They know about the Floating Rate
notes.

HAROLD

Yeah. They know, they just don't
know.

MANDY

Okay, when they come in I'll talk
them through how we work it under
the exemption, step by step, the
whole process. In brain-numbing
detail.

HAROLD

Perfect.

MANDY

I need to finish the full Reg S
analysis.

HAROLD

Call in Santos if you need him.
Anyone you want. They're coming in
at three. I'll have Susan loop back
to you.

He finishes pouring his cappuccino. Takes a sip. Sly smile.

HAROLD
Actually it's a real question ...
about making partner.

She looks at him.

HAROLD
I spoke to Bill.

MANDY
Are you serious...?

HAROLD
Congratulations.

MANDY
No way!

HAROLD
Way!

She's delighted. Impulsively hugs him--

Knocks her cappuccino over in the process. It splatters her
and the floor--

MANDY
Oh shit--

HAROLD
It's okay--

MANDY
Did I get you?

HAROLD
No. I'm good.

She awkwardly grabs a handful of paper towels and tries to
blot her suit clean as:

MANDY
Tell me! Tell me everything!

HAROLD
You gotta have The Lunch first.
It's totally pro forma but you
gotta do it. It's the rite of
passage. Four Seasons, just you and
Bill. It'll be the most awkward
hour of your entire existence ...
He'll ask you about your commitment
to the firm in some treacherously
subtle way.

(MORE)

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Have some bullshit answer ready:
continuity and tradition.

MANDY
Believe me, I'll be ready.

She kneels and begins trying to clean the floor with more paper towels.

HAROLD
Leave it. You don't have to do that.

MANDY
No, no, I got it.

HAROLD
(tight smile)
We have staff.

MANDY
I'm done. I got it.

He watches her.

A beat.

She finally stands. Throws the messy paper towels away. Faces him.

MANDY
I don't know what to say ... Thank you.

HAROLD
You've earned it, Miranda. Twelve years you've given up your life. Now you give up your soul.

She laughs.

HAROLD
When he calls you for the lunch, act surprised.
(scans her)
And dress-up. Buy something new. Talk to what's-her-name out there.

MANDY
Who?

HAROLD
What's-her-name. Your assistant.

MANDY

You bet.

HAROLD

(re: her messed-up suit)

Look at you.

Smiling, he goes.

Mandy sees herself reflected in a mirror. She's rumpled and coffee-stained. What a mess.

She laughs.

We love her for that laugh at her own expense.

INT. MANDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Well-appointed office. Stacks of accounting reports and documents on her desk. She obviously works hard.

Mandy enters. Sits at her desk. Thinks. Comes to a decision.

She makes a call.

CROSSCUT to:

Scott is in his home office, at the top of the house. We can see brochures and web design work for VPI -- Vance Publicity Initiatives.

Several computers and laptops running at once. Stock reports. Email. Publicity campaigns. HALO.

SCOTT

(on Bluetooth)

Hey, honey.

MANDY

(on phone)

How's it going?

SCOTT

(on Bluetooth)

Gardeners just got here.

MANDY

(on phone)

Let's get the house.

SCOTT

(on Bluetooth)

Really?!

MANDY
(laughs, on phone)
Really.

SCOTT
(on Bluetooth)
You sure?

MANDY
(on phone)
Why not?

SCOTT
(on Bluetooth)
So reckless. I love it.

MANDY
(on phone)
Just feeling ... Good. Everything's
good. Lot to tell you ... You wanna
call Janet?

SCOTT
(on Bluetooth)
I'll do it right now. Get home
early, we'll celebrate. This is
great!

MANDY
(on phone)
Good to hear you so happy. Let me
know that she says. Bye bye.

She hangs up.

Allows herself one deep breath of satisfaction, and then back
to work.

Stops.

Glances up.

Sees her pretty ASSISTANT standing at her desk. She dresses
well, clothes fit her nicely. She's also twenty years
younger.

Mandy watches her.

We hear piano music. Familiar. It takes us to...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Downstairs is deserted. But we see glasses, joints, coke-smearred MAMMA MIA playbill...

We hear the exact bars of the love song Terry wrote with Connor earlier...

We follow it up the stairs...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-SECOND FLOOR - AFTERNOON

We move down the hallway...

The piano music continues...

We hear Terry...

TERRY (O.S.)
... I'm looking for the resolution
for weeks -- and then you say "I
don't know how" -- dah dah dah dah -
- declining -- without resolution
because it should go dah dah dah
dah dum. There should be another C
to resolve the idea on the tonic...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-MUSIC ROOM - AFTERNOON

Terry is at the piano with a different YOUNG MAN. The young man is, of course, enthralled...

TERRY
... There's no resolution. There's
no release. There's no release
because he needs her to complete
the phrase: he needs her to release
him!

Cut to--

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Terry and the Young Man are fucking.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Meanwhile. Downstairs...

Frank, Terry's partner, enters.

He sets down his suitcase and traveling yoga mat case. Looks around. Sees the glasses and coke.

He knows exactly what's going on. So not the first time.

Stands for a moment.

Decides to not have the confrontation now.

He starts to clean up the ashtrays and glasses...

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - LATER

Frank is sitting. The room is clean.

The Young Man comes down the stairs. Looks at him.

A beat.

YOUNG MAN
I had a jacket...?

FRANK
By the door.

The Young Man gets his jacket and goes.

Frank steels himself and goes upstairs.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Frank enters. Terry wakes.

Terry knows he's busted. This is going to be awful.

TERRY
So you're not coming home tomorrow?

FRANK
No, today. Sunday. Look at me
Terry.

Terry lights a joint.

TERRY
I have such a fucking headache.
Could this wait?

INT. ALEX'S HOME-STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Alex lives in a reconverted Gilded Age building downtown. Spectacular iron work and stairways. He owns the building and it has been designed exactly to his specifications.

The entire top floor is his studio.

Skylights. Canvases. Supplies. Powders and a stove for mixing pigments.

He stands in his work clothes, ready to paint.

All around him are a series of self-portraits. Large and small. The brush work is remarkably detailed. He has been working on this series for several years.

There is a mirror at his side, so he can study his face.

He faces a blank canvas.

Looks at a selection of brushes.

Selects a small brush. Rubs the brush on his hand to limber and heat the bristles.

As he does this, he looks at his own face in the mirror. How will he capture himself? Who is he today?

He looks down at the palette of paint before him. He has mixed a collection of colors.

He continues to rhythmically rub the bristles on his hand. Almost lost in the motion. Staring at the paint.

Something's wrong.

We see it in his face.

He stares at the rich collection of colors. So many options. Too many options.

He stops.

He's confused. Has to figure something out.

INT. ALEX'S HOME-SECOND FLOOR - AFTERNOON

The second floor of the building contains his study, bedroom and storage room.

Alex moves down the hallway and goes into his storage room...

INT. ALEX'S HOME-STORAGE ROOM - AFTERNOON

He flips on the fluorescent lights.

Neat stacks of his paintings in wooden racks.

He begins to pull some of them out...

INT. ALEX'S HOME-STORAGE ROOM - LATER

He stands.

A collections of his paintings spread out before him. Facing him.

They are all works from the "Beth" series. Like the ones we saw at the Guggenheim.

Alex studies her face. Painting after painting.

Again, that look of confusion in his eyes.

Then frustration.

He leans close. Looks at her.

ALEX
Who are you?

INT. ALEX'S HOME-CLOSET - EVENING

Huge walk-in closet. Immaculate clothes.

Alex is getting dressed for a nice evening out: jacket and tie.

He's still preoccupied, unaware of his actions, that intense concentration turned inward.

He's doing his tie by rote. He glances up. Sees his own face in the mirror.

Stops.

There's something new in his eyes now. It is unmistakable.

Fear.

The expression shocks him. The vulnerability. He tries to banish the emotions. Avoid the thoughts.

He is overwhelmed to discover he can't.

Tears begin to come. Unwelcome and unbidden.

Soon he's sobbing.

He can't stop himself.

To Alex, the lack of control is harrowing.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE-BEDROOM - EVENING

Terry and Frank are getting dressed to go out, flowing from bathroom to closet to bedroom. They have been fighting on and off for hours.

Terry has been drinking all the while. Carries a vodka from room to room.

FRANK

... you were more upset you were
going to have to deal with it than
that you might have hurt me.

TERRY

What do you want me to say? Tell me
and I'll say it.

FRANK

Tell me you'll never fuck around
again.

TERRY

I won't fuck around again.

FRANK

You're lying.

TERRY

Well?

FRANK

Tell me you'll smoke less pot and
snort less coke--

TERRY

And do my exercises and brush my
teeth...

FRANK

Yes--

TERRY

How about I'll try?

FRANK
How about you just STOP FUCKING
AROUND?!

TERRY
It's not like I don't try. These
kids throw themselves at me!

FRANK
They throw themselves into the
house and up the stairs and into
bed?

TERRY
Very much like that, yes.

FRANK
You are such a spineless fucking
coward.

TERRY
I have never denied that!

Frank has had it. Grabs his tie. Leaves the room.

INT. TERRY'S TOWNHOUSE - EVENING

Downstairs, Frank is doing his tie. Terry comes down the
stairs. Freshens his drink.

TERRY
I'm not perfect, okay? I'm a
generously flawed human being,
capacious in sin. All of which you
know, so don't play the injured
wifelette.

FRANK
It's like you don't realize there
are consequences to your actions.

TERRY
Frank, I'm sorry you were hurt by
what I did.

FRANK
But you're not sorry you did it!

TERRY

You want me to lie, I'll lie. I live out there in the real world where fucked up things happen and people make mistakes. We're not all yoga teachers, you know.

FRANK

What does that mean?

TERRY

It was an observation. It doesn't mean anything.

FRANK

It means what it always does: you don't respect what I do -- which means you don't respect what I am.

TERRY

You wear tights. You work out. What's to respect?

Frank storms into the kitchen. Storms back.

FRANK

This is not about my job. Which, I might add, is therapeutic and actually helps people, this is about you're inability to be FAITHFUL FOR FIVE FUCKING MINUTES. Put the drink down and let's go.

Terry puts down his drink, grabs his jacket and they leave.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

They move through the evening crowd.

They don't speak. Simmering anger.

Then:

TERRY

Here's the problem. You know the problem?

FRANK

No, what's the problem?

TERRY

The problem is you're oversensitive.

FRANK

You're fucking an 18-year-old in our bed and it's my problem.

TERRY

You do your sun salutations and all the while you're brooding about everything I've ever done wrong.

FRANK

Is that what I do?

TERRY

All day, brooding about every little thing, every imagined slight--

FRANK

Imagined?!

TERRY

--then it comes out in these explosions. It's like I can never do anything right.

FRANK

Can you?

TERRY

(going on the attack)

I'm sick of it. I have a lot on my mind right now. You have no idea, living like you do, protected by my money. You have no conception of the pressure. That bitch is fucking killing the show, the show I worked ten years to get on in case you forgot. And I'll let you in on a little secret: the writing isn't going so well. What happens then, huh? What happens when the notes don't come? It's all on me, you understand?

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

All those actors, all those musicians, our house, our life, the whole goddamn thing depends on my pencil up there in that room -- so, YES, I fuck up, I drink too much, I eat too much, I am unfaithful, I am selfish, but that is ME RIGHT NOW IN MY LIFE and I WILL NOT APOLOGIZE FOR IT and YOU better suck it up because I am ONE SECOND AWAY from walking to the middle of fucking Times Square and BLOWING MY BRAINS OUT ALL OVER THE STATUE OF GEORGE M.-FUCKING COHAN!

He slams into a restaurant, their destination--

INT. NICE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Terry, still livid, stomps through the restaurant. Frank follows angrily.

Terry arrives:

His family is waiting.

Alex Segal, his father ... Mandy, his sister ... Scott, his brother-in-law ... Cameron and Lara, his nephew and niece.

ALEX

Happy Birthday, son.

INT. NICE RESTAURANT - LATER

Not. Going. Well.

This family is distant at the best of times. Tonight they struggle to keep up the veneer of civility.

Frank sits sourly. Still angry.

Lara is watchful.

Scott is intimidated.

Mandy endures.

Terry drinks.

Only the indefatigable Cameron tries to remain eager.

Alex is frankly disinterested in the discord. Alex always enjoys being Alex in public.

ALEX

... What I told her was: this is not merely a question of pride, although that unquestionably plays a role, it's more accurately a question of aesthetic judgement, of discernment. Have you lost, I said to her, discernment? In which occasion you should close the shop because a gallery owner without taste forfeits her right to speak with authority and, therefore, to sell my work.

CAMERON

What did she say?

ALEX

She would banish the Jeff Koons to a room far, far from the Alex Segals.

(Cameron laughs)

Felt a bit of a bully.

TERRY

No!

MANDY

You?!

Alex laughs.

LARA

(defending Alex)

Don't be mean.

ALEX

One ally at least!

CAMERON

Uncle Terry, when can I come to rehearsal?

TERRY

When the Cunt of Cunthall gets off her broomstick.

MANDY

(quickly changing the subject)

(MORE)

MANDY (CONT'D)
Ahh ... You know, I had some good
news about work...

ALEX
(to Terry)
How is the play going?

During the following Lara catches her mother's eye: sympathy
that they have so little interest in her.

TERRY
(snaps)
It's not a play. It's a musical.
Tony Kushner writes plays. Tom
Stoppard writes plays. I write
"shows" as you never cease to point
out in your elliptical way...

FRANK
Terry...

TERRY
... I swear you do it on purpose.

ALEX
What?

TERRY
Pretend you don't know what I do.

ALEX
Do I?

TERRY
Do I? really? you think? The
vaguely superior inquisition.

ALEX
(dry)
You think?

Mandy and Lara laugh.

TERRY
All right. Very funny.

Cameron jumps in, trying to salvage the evening:

CAMERON
Did you tell them about the house?

SCOTT
Yeah! We bought a house on Cape
May!

ALEX
Cape May, New Jersey?

LARA
Cape May, Alabama.

ALEX
(enjoys her)
Young lady.

MANDY
It's a great old Victorian pretty
close to the beach. It's nice ...
it was built by a Civil War
officer.

TERRY
(couldn't care less)
Like a fixer-upper?

MANDY
No. It's been renovated since then.
Since the Civil War.

ALEX
(couldn't care less)
Every time you call your
contractor: \$5,000.

MANDY
It's not a fixer-upper.

ALEX
Frank, tell us, how's work?

TERRY
Do you have to say it like that?
"Work." He does work. He's a
teacher.

ALEX
Did I say it like that?

FRANK
Work's fine. Between salutations
and brooding I don't have a minute
to spare.

CAMERON
(mischievously, to Alex)
Grandpa, are you going to put the
picture of Lara in your exhibit?

LARA

Oh no...

ALEX

I might ... Would that embarrass you?

LARA

If I say yes you'll definitely put it in.

TERRY

Ha!

MANDY

(to Alex)

She's onto you.

SCOTT

What picture?

CAMERON

The one from the beach in Nantucket.

LARA

Kiddie porn.

CAMERON

At the Guggenheim! Fierce!

MANDY

(to Lara)

Please, you were six.

ALEX

It wasn't Nantucket. It was Seagirt.

LARA

(to Mandy)

That's why they call it kiddie porn.

TERRY

Nantucket.

ALEX

I painted the picture. I remember where it was.

TERRY

Miranda?

MANDY

It was Nantucket.

ALEX

No, dear. It was Seagirt. We were all down at the shore that summer, including your mother. I was supposed to be doing a seascape but I did Lara instead. Your mother was very amused as a matter of fact.

TERRY

Nan-tuck-et.

FRANK

Who cares?

SCOTT

Exactly.

MANDY

Mom wasn't there.

TERRY

Because it was Nan-fucking-tuck-et.

MANDY

(snaps)

Do you have to do that?

TERRY

What?

MANDY

You know what.

ALEX

Your mother was there. She thought the painting was funny.

MANDY

She was in the hospital, remember? You wanted to get away for the weekend. We drove up and met you.

ALEX

... That's right.

Lara watches Alex. She senses something's wrong.

SCOTT

(to Terry and Frank)

So, guys, big tenth anniversary next year. How's the gala coming?

FRANK
We booked the Plaza.

CAMERON
Silky.

MANDY
(to Frank)
That must have been expensive...

LARA
(gently, to Alex)
How's the exhibit...?

TERRY
(to Scott)
Now I should only survive the next
year...

ALEX
(thankful of Lara's
concern)
It's tiring...

FRANK
(to Mandy)
12 grand for the deposit...

SCOTT
(to Terry)
It's gonna be a great year. You
finally got your big show coming to
town.

TERRY
Not that big.

CAMERON
Why not?

FRANK
(to Mandy)
... But it's his money. As he never
tires of pointing out.

ALEX
(to Lara)
... Watching your past unfolding,
painting by painting...

TERRY
(to Cameron)
It's a chamber piece -- was a
chamber piece.
(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)
Until the Bitch of Belsen started
choreographing it to death...

ALEX
(to Lara)
... It's more emotional than I had
anticipated.

LARA
In a bad way?

ALEX
(takes her hand)
What a smart question.

CAMERON
(to Terry)
Did you not want dancing?

FRANK
To distract from his genius songs?!

TERRY
Which pay for your tights.

FRANK
(to Mandy)
Told you.

ALEX
(to Lara)
... Not in a bad way. In an
unsettling way. You feel lost.

LARA
Sometimes it's good to be lost.

ALEX
(smiles)
Maybe we'll get lost together one
day.

SCOTT
Great year for Alex too, with the
big exhibit...

TERRY
Scotty, don't tempt fate...!

LARA
And Mom's gonna make partner...

Everyone barrels over this in the rush of conversation.

Lara sees this sting her mother: Mandy slides her chair back in frustration. The chair screeches on the wooden floor slightly, as:

SCOTT
(continuing to Terry)
No one's tempting...

TERRY
... Really. Stop. I hate hearing about what a great year I'm going to have. Like tempting the gods. Bad enough I'm doing BEL AMI: the big Guy de Maupassant musical!

SCOTT
Are you going to translate the title?

TERRY
Are you serious?

MANDY
(so over him)
Terry...

TERRY
(condescending)
I think we'll leave it.

SCOTT
(snaps)
It was just a question.

TERRY
An inane question.

CAMERON
Ouch.

FRANK
Terry!

MANDY
That's enough. I'm not going to sit here and listen to you patronize...

She stops when -- with impeccable bad timing -- a troop of waiters arrive carrying a cake and singing "Happy Birthday" to Terry.

Some of the family join in.

Terry blows out the candles.

He instinctively tries to hand Mandy the knife to cut the cake:

MANDY
Cut your own fucking cake.

CAMERON
(delighted)
Mom!

Frank takes the knife and starts cutting the cake.

ALEX
Always such a joy to have my brood
around me.

Lara laughs.

Alex stands. His formality is kind of sweet.

ALEX
Now. The duty of the patriarch.
Everyone. Raise your glasses.

They prepare to toast. Terry sighs. Hates this. Mandy shoots him a look.

ALEX
As Scott has pointed out, this is a
year of great promise for Terry.
And, humbly, for myself as well...

Lara and Mandy exchange a bemused look. No mention of Mandy or her family.

ALEX
We look forward with expectation to
twelve months of health and
happiness in our lives...

Alex raises his glass. Looks at each in turn.

ALEX
So, on the occasion of Terry's
birthday, I toast you all ... Frank
... Terry ... Cameron ... Scott ...
Beth ... Lara...

Mandy starts. Alex has called her by her mother's name. Some of the others realize. An unsettling jolt through them.

ALEX
... It is my honor and my pleasure
to wish you all a miraculous year.
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

May you take your place boldly in
the world, in what Wordsworth
called:

*"The very world, which is the world
Of all of us -- the place where in
the end,
We find our happiness, or not at
all."*

To Terry!

ALL

To Terry!

They toast and drink.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Noisy, chaotic morning. Jack-hammers. Bruising city walk.

Terry is hurrying to rehearsals with Duke. They're late.

Terry is hung-over. He's eating a bagel and trying to light a
cigarette simultaneously.

Duke is trying to make a point about a song:

DUKE

(insistent)

... I'm telling you -- you need a
bridge, it's going to sound raw--

TERRY

(snaps)

So let it be raw, it's not supposed
to be pretty! Why are you all
trying to make it so fucking
pretty! Since when is life pretty?
Between you and Patty and everyone
else you're trying to do fucking
GIGI! This isn't fucking GIGI with
the costumes and the--!

(lighter won't light)

This is ridiculous--

DUKE

It's not about pretty! It's about
sounding *Belle Epoque*! Remember
that?! *Belle Epoque*?!

TERRY
 (still on about lighter)
 Oh, I have had it with this--

He stops.

Like hit by a freight train.

Flash of shock on his face.

Then he falls. Like a tower.

SLAMS to the sidewalk.

Massive heart attack.

Duke takes another step before realizing.

Turns back.

Alarmed crowd forming.

DUKE
 Terry...?

Snap to black.

The End.