

YEAR OF THE DOG

written by

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For Bootlegger

FADE IN:

EXT. DOG PARK - DAY

THE DOGS

The dogs are off their leashes. They sniff each other, wrestle, chase, chew balls, defecate. We HOLD on their revelries for an extended moment. Then we HEAR a woman's soft, somber voice...

PEGGY (V.O.)
If you all didn't think I was
crazy, I'm sure you will now.

THEIR OWNERS

The owners talk on cell phones, drink coffee, read magazines, chat. Only one is really paying attention to the dogs - she is PEGGY, 40, cheerful, plain. She smiles with pride and affection, watching her dog.

PEGGY (V.O.)
How do I explain the things I've
said and done? How do I explain
the person I've become?

PENCIL

Pencil, her terrier, trots around the other dogs, eats something in the dirt, then crouches to pee.

PEGGY (V.O.)
Imagine you love something in the
tenderest part of your heart. You
just have to think of this thing
you love and you want to cry.

INT. PEGGY'S CAR - TRAVELING

Peggy is driving her modest car on the freeway. Pencil is perched on her lap, looking out the window.

We STAY on them. Both stare, transfixed, at the road.

PEGGY (V.O.)
Now imagine this thing is hurt -
it's helpless - in danger or pain
or even dying. Now imagine you're
the only one who can save it and
end its suffering.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pencil sits in the center of Peggy's bed, nestled between two pillows.

Peggy, in her nightdress, gets into bed.

She removes Pencil's collar and places it on the bedside table.

She helps Pencil under the sheet, then turns off the last remaining light. Over this, we HEAR:

PEGGY (V.O.)

Imagine it is calling to you. And
its desperate call is the only
thing you hear, all the day and all
the night. Imagine how this would
eat at you - and that is pretty
much how I feel.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Moonlight fills the room. In their bed, Peggy and Pencil lie side-by-side. Peggy gently caresses the side of Pencil's face. Peggy sings, softly...

PEGGY

*Saw three shrimp in the water. /
Two were old and gray. / Swam a
little bit closer and I heard the
third shrimp say, "Goodbye Mama
Shrimp. / Papa, shake my hand. /
Here come the shrimpin' boat for to
take me to Lou-see-ann"...*

CUT TO:

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Pencil stands behind the side gate of the house, looking forlorn and softly whimpering.

INT. PEGGY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Peggy starts the engine of her car. She sneaks a look at Pencil. She sighs a guilt-stricken sigh, then proceeds to back out the driveway.

EXT. PEGGY'S OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - MORNING

Peggy gets out of her car with a carton of doughnuts.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - LATER

Peggy has laid the doughnuts out on the counter. CO-WORKERS stream into the kitchen and help themselves.

WOMAN #1

What are you doing to me? So much for my amazing self-control.

WOMAN #2

Peggy, how was your weekend?

PEGGY

Nice. Quiet. How was yours?

MAN #1

...hit the divider and then bounced back into my lane, Cathy swerves, then the car behind us...

WOMAN #2

Kevin had food poisoning all day Saturday. Sea bass.

MAN #2

Is this a jelly? Mmm.

More enter. Everyone is talking. Peggy watches, pleased, as everyone enjoys her doughnuts.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - LATER

Peggy is in conversation with her boss, ROBIN, 42, balding. Peggy eats a doughnut as Robin talks softly so no one can overhear.

ROBIN

I can't show you this. Really shouldn't. You know what it is? It's my bonus check. I can't show it to you, though.

(gives her a peek)

Did you see that?

PEGGY

Wow! That's so great, Robin. My gosh. That's...

ROBIN

No - it's actually not. It's actually wrong. Three million in sales. Almost three million. Let's just say three million. Seven percent. Ten percent is three hundred. Five percent is a hundred and fifty. Seven percent should be two twenty five. Little under that. About two hundred and fifteen. Around there. This is definitely under. It should be seven percent. What is this? How did they come up with this number?

PEGGY

Still, it's...

ROBIN

Still? Still nothing. I know it's a lot of money to you. But you don't do what I do. You don't have my degrees. This isn't the only place I can work. It's not about whether it's a lot of money or not, it's about what's fair. Seven percent. They take my overhead out, but that's not supposed to dip into my seven percent. And I don't like to have to be put in a position where I'm having to be a complainer or let alone, audit their books. Jerry is always pushing to get as much as he can. I expect that. But to have it come in under two hundred - it's so egregious. Two hundred, okay, maybe - it's still wrong - but it's not an insult. In the end, this kind of penny-pinching - what is it? - penny wise, pound foolish?

PEGGY

It's got to be some kind of mistake because everyone knows how important you are to this company. You're here twelve hours a day - at least. And you've been their number one seller. Maybe not this year, but not that long ago. And the last thing they would want is to offend you, I'm positive.

ROBIN

Well, then, they need to start prioritizing people over money because otherwise you have a guy like me who is the bones of this place, walking around feeling very gypped. Very, very gypped.

She nods emphatically and gives him a reassuring smile.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Peggy is at her computer, making a Christmas card.

COMPUTER SCREEN - It is an adorable photo of Pencil, wearing a Santa Clause hat. She chooses a festive font which says - "HAPPY HOLIDAYS from Peggy and Pencil!!!"

INT. CHILI'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Peggy sits across from her friend, GRETCHEN, 28, pretty. A tall man, PETE, leans over the table and kisses Gretchen on the mouth. They continue kissing.

Peggy looks away and down at her menu.

Pete and Gretchen finally pull apart.

GRETCHEN

Sit down.

PETE

I can't. Jason and I are meeting some vendors at Piazza.

GRETCHEN

Lucky. Bye. See ya later. Stop by my desk after lunch, okay? And get some of that garlic bread to go. Will you, please?

Pete gives Peggy a wink as he darts off.

GRETCHEN

Have you ever eaten at Piazza? You have, right? They have the best garlic bread, it's sick. I gorge on it. Pete and I got in such a big fight last night. He was complaining about my nails.

(MORE)

GRETCHEN (cont'd)

He said that they look like I've been trying to crawl out of a well. Then he said I was being over-sensitive because I started crying. Imagine you had a boyfriend and he said that to you. I am sensitive about my looks. What girl isn't? I'm gonna get my nails done. I'm gonna get like six inch talons and see how he likes that. He makes me crazy. And then I wanted a glass of wine just so I could calm down so I got a bottle out of the fridge and I don't know what I was thinking, I pulled the cork out with my teeth and my freakin' front tooth chipped. Don't tell anyone.

PEGGY

It looks fine.

GRETCHEN

Well, that's because I ran to the bathroom and stuck it on with crazy glue. Can you imagine the insults if he saw me with a chipped tooth? I gotta go to a dentist. I feel wind in my tooth. And I'm afraid to touch it with my tongue so I'm talking like I have a speech impediment. He makes me so insecure sometimes.

PEGGY

Gretchen, you are so beautiful. And you're so sweet and funny. You're a catch. You shouldn't feel insecure. That's crazy talk.

GRETCHEN

I think if we were engaged, I'd mellow out. It's just... it's... how many hints can you give without seeming pathetic? How many times can you point out rings in magazines and crap like that? Nine months isn't that long a time, but some people get married after one month. Like my sister, for example. It was cause she was pregnant, but... And that's another way to go. I would never do that. Although, I can see why girls do. Guys are just so inert.

(MORE)

GRETCHEN (cont'd)

They can barely stop playing video games on the couch. To go out and buy a ring and do it right, that takes a lot of effort. Sometimes you have to incentivize. I don't think my nails look that bad. He'll ask me. He may not know it yet, but whenever I light a candle for something, it happens. And I've lit a lot of big honking candles.

INT. MALL TOY STORE - LATER

Peggy stands before a shelf of STUFFED TOY ANIMALS. She lingers here, taking her sweet time. She smiles as she scrutinizes the bears, the elephants, the dogs. She chooses a STUFFED GRAY SEAL.

INT. MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Late to get back to work, Peggy hustles through the mall with her bag from the toy store. She stops in her tracks, though, when she sees...

Gretchen's boyfriend, Pete, standing outside the GAP, flirting shamelessly with an ATTRACTIVE FEMALE GAP EMPLOYEE. Pete even puts his arm around the girl and nuzzles her neck.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Peggy is preparing a stack of checks for Robin to sign. Robin passes by her desk.

PEGGY

Robin, can I get you to sign these checks? Thanks.

As he stops to sign, she glances over at Gretchen's cubicle.

Pete has delivered Gretchen her garlic bread. Gretchen gives him a kiss, then excitedly takes the bread out of the bag.

Peggy watches all this with a look of concern.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - DUSK

Pencil, outside, whimpers behind a sliding glass door.

Inside, Peggy sits in the spacious living room of her brother's house with her brother, PIER, and his wife, BRET, both late thirties. Their daughter, LISSIE, six, is winding Pencil up by tapping on the glass door and laughing. Bret holds their two year old, BENJY.

PIER

Lissie, don't tease the dog.

BRET

I'd love to let her in, but you know, with Benjy and everything.

PEGGY

Pencil's good with little kids.

BRET

I know. It's just... I get so paranoid. When you have kids, you'll understand. If. Did Pier tell you? Pier, did you tell her?

PIER

About what? What is this?

Pier picks up a wrapped present off the coffee table.

PEGGY

It's just a little something for Benjy.

PIER

Benjy! Your Auntie got you something. Should I open it?

BRET

You didn't have to do that. So nice. No, the baby nurse.

Pier unwraps the present as Bret prattles.

BRET

The nanny. She's not the nanny anymore I can tell you that. I still think we should inform the police or something. But I just want to forget the whole thing even happened. It's like a nightmare. It's a mother's worst nightmare.

Pier takes out the baby seal.

BRET

Aww, it's a walrus.

PIER

It's not a walrus. It's a seal.
Walruses have tusks, Bret.

BRET

Benjy, look at the seal. Look at
the seal. He's not focusing, Pier.

PIER

Yes, he is.

BRET

No, he's not. Something is wrong
with his vision. We are calling
Dr. Bakaly tomorrow.

PIER

He's fine. Look at the seal,
Benjy. It's Shamu.

Lissie comes over and grabs the seal.

LISSIE

I want it.

BRET

Anyway, it turns out our baby nurse
was doping Benjy with Benadryl.
Yeah!

PEGGY

What?! That's awful.

PIER

You can share it with your brother,
Lissie. We don't have proof.

BRET

But we know. It happened. Every
time we would come home, she would
tell us Benjy had slept all
afternoon or what have you, which
is weird because when we're here,
he's almost practically spastic.
But then one night we came back and
he was like comatose...

PIER

He wouldn't wake up.

BRET

No, and then I noticed all these
red stains on Alma's shirt.

(MORE)

BRET (cont'd)

And I asked her what it was and she said it was cranberry juice. And I'm thinking we don't have cranberry juice. And I ask her, and she said she brought it. Which is what? I don't understand. She brought cranberry juice and then I go upstairs and I look in the cabinet and I see the Benadryl is almost gone. Half-empty. And I'm like, this woman is drugging my son - and she's probably been doing it for months. And she probably drugged Lissie, too. Incredible, right? Sick!

PEGGY

I can't believe it. That's horrible. My goodness! Jeez.

Peggy shakes her head, but then sneaks a glance out at Pencil, who is still softly whimpering outside.

PIER

We were gonna call someone about it but the woman has two young kids of her own. What are you gonna do?

BRET

Maybe in her culture that's how they deal with a crying toddler, I have no idea. But it freaked me out...

INT. PEGGY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Pencil eats from her dog bowl.

Standing above him, Peggy eats take-out. As she eats, she watches Pencil eat.

INT. PEGGY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peggy and Pencil cuddle on the couch, watching a thriller on television. Suspenseful music, a woman SCREAMS.

Peggy pets Pencil nervously as she watches the scary movie.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peggy is asleep in bed. Pencil is awake, scratching himself. Peggy slowly rouses.

PEGGY

Pencil? You need to go tee-tee?

Peggy rises from her bed.

INT. PEGGY'S BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Peggy opens the back door for Pencil. Pencil scampers out into the dark. Peggy returns to bed.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Peggy lies in bed, half-awake. Her clock reads "3:46 AM".

EXT. PEGGY'S BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy stands by the back door, calling for Pencil. A gusty night wind is blowing.

PEGGY

Pencil? Pencil?!

She spots Pencil by the side gate. He is digging a hole.

PEGGY

Pencil! Come on, boy!

Pencil and Peggy lock eyes. The look in Pencil's eyes unnerves Peggy.

PEGGY

Pencil! Come on now! I mean it!
Mommy's mad!

Pencil does not come. He disappears behind a shrub.

PEGGY

Pencil!

After a moment, Peggy gives up and retreats into the house.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Peggy's clock now reads "6:03 AM". We HEAR the faint sound of Pencil's whimper from far away.

Peggy wakes with a start.

EXT. PEGGY'S BACK YARD - DAWN

Peggy wanders the yard, looking for Pencil.

PEGGY
Pencil? Pencil!

Peggy thinks she hears Pencil's cry. She tilts her head toward the neighbor's yard.

EXT. AL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens. AL, an overweight man in his underwear, late thirties, rubs his eyes.

AL
Yeah?

PEGGY
I'm so sorry, but my dog is missing
and I hear him crying and I think
he's in your yard.

EXT. AL'S BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Al loiters by his back door as Peggy scours his yard for Pencil. She is now in a panic.

PEGGY
Pencil! Pencil!

Peggy slaps her leg with frustration.

AL
I hear him over there.

Al points toward the garage.

Peggy runs across the yard. She looks around...

Pencil is there, quivering in a dirt patch, behind the garage. He does not look well.

INT. PEGGY'S CAR - TRAVELING - MORNING

Peggy is speeding to the animal hospital. Pencil is in the passenger seat.

PEGGY

(upset)

Pencil, please don't die. Please
don't die. Please don't die.
Pencil, I love you.

She strokes him. Pencil starts to have a death seizure.

PEGGY

Oh my god. Oh my god. No, Pencil.
Please, no.

Pencil is dying. Peggy is crying.

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

The admitting nurse looks up to see...

Peggy, entering with a lifeless Pencil.

The Nurse immediately senses the gravity of the situation.

NURSE

Ma'am, I'll take him.

The Nurse takes Pencil from Peggy and darts off.

NURSE (O.S.)

Will someone please take a look at
this dog? Now!

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - LATER

A distraught Peggy sits waiting for news. She notices a LITTLE BOY and his FATHER, sitting next to her.

LITTLE BOY

Is your dog sick?

Peggy nods, starting to cry.

One of the hospital's employees, NEWT, skinny, in his thirties, approaches.

NEWT

Can I get you something?

PEGGY

(stifling a sob)

I just want to know what's happening.

NEWT

I'm sure you'll have news very soon. Is he your only dog?

Peggy nods.

CUT TO:

INT. PEGGY'S CAR - LATER

Peggy gets in her car and closes the door.

She begins to convulsively sob. A high-pitched wail of grief.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

Peggy looks like she's been through the ringer. Her eyes are red, her face is swollen.

She tries to remain inconspicuous as she arrives for work. As her CO-WORKERS greet her, she attempts feeble smiles.

CO-WORKERS

Hey, Peggy./ Morning, Peggy./
Hey, girl./ Peggy, any donuts?

Peggy looks like she might erupt into tears at any moment.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

A stricken Peggy stands across from Robin's desk.

ROBIN

Was he sick at all?
(off her head shake)
Well, what happened?

PEGGY

(barely audible)

They said it was toxic poisoning
or... He got into something, ate
something.

ROBIN

I don't know what to say. I know
you really liked that dog. I
remember you brought him to the
barbeque at Tim's. You had him in
a little sweater or a coat. Boy.
This might be a good time for me
to...

Robin grabs an envelope from his drawer and places it on the
edge of the desk.

ROBIN

I was gonna wait 'til closer to
Christmas but I think you deserve a
little boost. I would have liked
to give you more but since it's a
percentage of what they give me -
you deserve more, but I'm still
debating what to do about that. I
talked to Mel - he told me that,
uh, - this is cone of silence, by
the way - but they stiffed him, too
- pretty much - at least it's not
personal, they're ripping everyone
off - that's something. I'm gonna
wait 'til the right time, but I am
gonna say something. Because it's
the principal - it's not about a
few thousand dollars - it's about
the big picture - that's what it's
about. You know?

EXT. OFFICE COURTYARD - DAY

Gretchen and Peggy sit on a bench by a fountain. Peggy is
about to burst into tears again.

GRETCHEN

No, no, no, no. Don't. Oh, don't.
If you cry, I'm gonna cry. Oh, no.
Smile, smile. Ohhh. Here. I have
something just for this.

Gretchen takes out a pill from her purse and a pack of
cigarettes. She hands Peggy the pill and her Diet Coke.

GRETCHEN

Take this. It's just nothing.
It's a little - it'll help. It's a
Percodan. You won't even notice it
but it'll calm you down.

(as PEGGY hesitates)

Please. Trust me. I'll feel
better if you take it.

Peggy pops the pill, then gulps the Coke.

PEGGY

(in tears)

I'm just so sad.

GRETCHEN

I know you are. Oh, God. Here.
Have one of these.

PEGGY

He had such a good personality.

GRETCHEN

I know. Smoke this.

Gretchen puts a cigarette in Peggy's mouth, then lights it.

GRETCHEN

Sorry, they're menthol. They're
Pete's. He's quitting so I'm
holding them for him when he wants
to cheat. You know what - we need
to get your mind off of this.
Let's go see a crappy movie. Yeah.
Let's go see the stupidest movie we
can find. A stupid, funny movie.

PEGGY

(shaking her head)

I don't... no.

GRETCHEN

Let's go out tonight and get drunk.
Let's get bombed. Hunh? That'll
be fun. Let's get plastered. You
need to get laid. When was the
last time you got laid?

PEGGY

I don't want to talk about that.

GRETCHEN

Awww. Ok. Has it been a long time? How long? Well, do you like anyone? You can tell me. Anyone? You must think someone's cute. Jeff, probably, hunh? Or Nestor? He's your age. Who, who, who? Who can we set you up with? That's the best way to get out of yourself. Little action. Little crush. It's fun. Can I have a drag?

Gretchen takes a drag of the cigarette.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

At the front door, Pier and Bret take turns hugging Peggy.

PIER

That really sucks. What a bummer.

BRET

I'm so sorry, honey. Come on in.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Pier, Bret, Lissie and Peggy sit around the dining table. A NANNY holding Benjy crosses through the kitchen in the b.g.

LISSIE

Why is Aunt Peggy here again?

PIER

Because she needs some cheering up. Maybe after dinner, you can show Aunt Peggy your magic trick.

LISSIE

What magic trick?

PIER

With the toiler paper, honey.

BRET

Two girls in Lissie's class were sent home today with L-I-C-E.

LISSIE

Why does Aunt Peggy need cheering up?

BRET

Covered. One of the girls has a horse and her mom's kind of a hippy and she has really long hair - I definitely think she's patient zero. I spent an hour fastidiously combing Lissie's hair and thank god, she's clean.

LISSIE

(interrupting)

Why does Aunt Peggy need cheering up?

PIER

Because she's sad, honey.

LISSIE

Why is she sad?

PEGGY

Because Pencil died today.

Lissie looks stunned. Bret furrows her brow.

BRET

(to PEGGY)

Maybe we shouldn't talk about D-E-A-T-H.

PIER

Honey, it's natural.

BRET

Well, let her find out naturally, then.

Peggy looks down at her food.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A stupefied Peggy watches TV alone in her living room. There is a KNOCK on the door.

INT. PEGGY'S FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy opens it. It's Al, from next door, in his work clothes.

AL

Hey. So what happened with your dog?

PEGGY

He died.

AL

Aw, nuts. Really? He did look pretty bad. Shoot. What happened?

PEGGY

Toxic shock. They're not exactly sure.

AL

Gee, I'm sorry. I had a dog when I was younger and when she died, I was devastated. Just destroyed by it. I'm really sorry.

PEGGY

Thank you.

AL

(lingers)

So weird. Feel like I should do something for you. Bring you food.

PEGGY

Oh, I'll be okay.

AL

Can I take you to dinner? Not tonight. But another night. When you're up for it.

PEGGY

Sure, okay, yeah.

AL

I'm really sorry. Seemed like a real sweet, little dog.

This touches her. Her eyes well over.

PEGGY

Thank you.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM

Peggy lies in bed awake and alone. She finds a dog hair on the pillow beside her. She inspects it, sadly.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - MORNING

Peggy arrives to find a bouquet of flowers on her desk. She smiles as she opens the card. She reads it, then glances over at...

Gretchen's desk. Gretchen is smiling brightly at her.

Peggy is pleased. She smells the flowers.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Peggy and Gretchen are taking a coffee break.

GRETCHEN

Peggy! That's great. That is exactly what you should be doing. You vixen. Is he hot?

PEGGY

No.

GRETCHEN

Is he cute? Is he adorable?

PEGGY

I'm not that attracted to him.

GRETCHEN

You're getting back on the bike - that's what important. You're back on the bike and you're gonna ride the bike. This is so great. What are you gonna wear? Where's he taking you? Don't let him take you somewhere gross. Cause what if you get married - you'll always remember your first date - and you don't want it to be some fleabag - some beefy b.o. burger place. Go to Piazza. Go to Mi Piace. Go Italian. I'm so excited.

PEGGY

It may not even be a date,
Gretchen. I think he might just be
being nice.

GRETCHEN

I believe in fate, don't you? I
believe there's somebody on this
planet for all of us. Even
retarded, crippled people get
married. And you've just gotta be
open. Keep your eyes open and
your...

(points)

...down there open. So like maybe
your dog died so that your love
life could live and you could
find... what's-his-name?

PEGGY

Al.

GRETCHEN

You could find Al. Maybe this is
all fate and this is all for the
best. I totally think so.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Peggy has dressed for her date. She looks at herself in the
mirror by the door. She makes a few adjustments.

The DOOR BELL RINGS. Peggy grimaces.

INT. AL'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Al has also made an effort to dress up.

AL

You like country music or no?

PEGGY

Sure. So is Al short for Alfred?

AL

Albert.

PEGGY

Like Fat Albert.

Peggy realizes she's said the wrong thing. Al smiles, good-naturedly and turns on some country MUSIC.

AL

Yep. That's what they used to call me. That and Alpo.

(beat)

I thought we'd go to Mi Piacce.
Ever been there?

PEGGY

(happy)

Yeah. Great. I love Italian.

They both smile.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Al and Peggy are eating their meals.

PEGGY

His name was Pencil 'cause when I got him he was thin as a pencil and, you know, he was brown.

AL

Pencils are yellow.

PEGGY

Also, he did this thing with his paw. He'd wipe it on the floor back and forth - like he was trying to write something to me. He had a really unique personality.

AL

Sounds like it. Was he a water dog?

PEGGY

Not really. We used to go into the hills on long walks - he loved that.

(beat)

So you said you had a dog when you were young who died.

AL

Tessie. She was a lab. Loved that dog. Had her since she was a puppy. We used to do everything together.

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)

She was my right hand bitch.
Sorry. In the dog way of being a
bitch, I mean. She died too young.
Only six.

PEGGY

How'd she die?

AL

I shot her in Wyoming. You want
more wine?

PEGGY

Wait, what? What do you mean?

AL

That's where I spent most of my
teen years. In Wyoming.

PEGGY

What do you mean, you shot her?

AL

It was an accident. It was a
hunting accident. She was in the
wrong place at the wrong time. I
was real busted up about it. I
felt terrible. I still feel
terrible.

PEGGY

What were you hunting?

AL

Hunting moose. Mooses.

Peggy finds this very troubling. Al smiles.

AL

They got a lot of moose up there,
don't worry about it. Ever been
hunting?

PEGGY

No.

AL

It can be a rush. Waiting in the
brush. You gotta be real quiet so
you can hear a twig snap. And then
after hours of waiting sometimes,
up comes a moose or a rocky
mountain elk or a pronghorn
antelope.

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)

And you're stiff as a board. Man, you can't pee. You can't breathe. There's nothing like the feeling like something's gonna happen. You know - but it don't know. It's just another moment in its life, but you know it's its last. Its last moment. Its life's gonna be gone - and you're gonna take it. It can be very exhilarating.

(sensing her unease)

It's all legal. But accidents do happen. A gun is a very powerful weapon. I've learned that the hard way. That's why I don't keep guns in my house.

PEGGY

Well, that's good.

AL

Yeah, just knives.

INT. AL'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Al and Peggy head home.

AL

So you ever been married?

PEGGY

(nervously clears throat)

No, I was... I, uh... I had boyfriends and... sort of... well, I was never... I don't know... I just... not my...

(clucks her tongue)

I guess I never... it just never happened so... but, you know, I'm... some people just aren't... like, I don't know what I'm saying exactly... just, you know, whatever, you know... what are you gonna do? I mean, it's... and the whole, like, dating, it's... blech... no, thanks... I mean, so, that's basically how I feel about... yeah, I don't know, I don't know.

AL

Well, I was married for six years.
And then I got the seven year itch.
Which is not just a phrase.

They continue driving in silence.

INT. OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES - NIGHT

Al and Peggy stand outside their neighboring houses.

PEGGY

Well, thank you very much. That
was very nice.

AL

Why don't you come in? I got some
different collections.

PEGGY

Umm. Well...

AL

Just for a minute. You've never
seen the inside of my house.

PEGGY

Actually, the other morning I did.

AL

But I didn't give you the full
tour.

INT. AL'S DEN - LATER

Peggy stares at the HEAD OF AN ANTELOPE, hanging on the wall.

AL

That was a lucky shot. Isn't it a
beauty?

Peggy nods absently, disturbed. She comes across a glass
cabinet, full of hunting knives.

AL

Those are my knives.

She has her back to him for an extended moment, then she
turns with a look of suspicion.

PEGGY
Can I see your garage?

AL
My garage.
(off her nod)
Sure. Right through there.

He points to a door off the den.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy wanders through the clutter of stored stuff. Al follows behind her.

PEGGY
Was this open the other night?

AL
What?

PEGGY
This garage was open, wasn't it?
The night Pencil got sick?

AL
Could be.

Peggy starts searching the floor for something.

AL
What are you looking for?

PEGGY
Do you keep antifreeze in here?

AL
Hunh?

PEGGY
What about rat poison?

AL
Uh, no.

Peggy burrows through some stuff on the floor. She has her butt in the air. Al looks down at it, longingly.

AL
You got a rat problem?

She rises and continues sorting through his stuff.

AL

Looking for something? Can I help?

Al steps in behind her, making his move. He peers over her shoulder as if he is aiding her search.

But then he nuzzles into her neck.

AL

I like you.

He presses into her, then kisses her cheek. She recoils with a startled GASP.

PEGGY

No, no, no. What are you doing?

AL

What?

PEGGY

Get away from me. Don't do that.

AL

Yeah, okay... I just...

Peggy backs away from him and then bolts from the garage.

Al watches her go, stupefied.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A distraught Peggy has taken out a cardboard box. She is putting Pencil's belongings in it - his collar, his leash, his toys.

She picks up his small sweater and smells it. She begins to cry.

PEGGY

Pencil. Oh, Pencil.

Wiping her tears, she puts the sweater in the box.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - NEXT DAY

Peggy sits at her computer, absently staring.

After a moment, Gretchen approaches.

GRETCHEN

So?

(no response)

How was your date?

PEGGY

He's not my type.

GRETCHEN

Are you sure?

(off PEGGY's nod)

Well, what is your type? Do you have a type?

PEGGY

Umm, I kind of have a lot of work to do right now.

Peggy musters a strained smile, then returns her attention to her computer. Gretchen shrugs and walks off.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Peggy eats in front of the television.

ON TV - "ANIMAL PATROL". TWO ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS have entered the filthy house of a WOMAN who has been hoarding animals. There are mangy cats and dogs everywhere.

OFFICER #1

Ma'am, when was the last time you took these animals to the vet?

FEMALE HOARDER

I just got back from the vet. I have a very sick cat... where is she?

OFFICER #1

Looks like you've got a lot of sick cats.

FEMALE HOARDER

(unraveling)

Pebbles! Pebbles, no! Do not take the mother - okay, because she needs to be with her babies. Ginny, come here. If you're gonna take something, take the dalmatian behind the house - it's not my dog.

One of the Officers does an interview to camera.

OFFICER #2

We've been here before. This woman's a classic hoarder. She's got over twenty-five animals here. They're dehydrated and malnourished. Most of them are infested with fleas and ticks...

On the couch, Peggy shakes her head, disapprovingly. She switches the channel.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Peggy is napping in the middle of the day. The PHONE RINGS.

PEGGY

(answering)

Hello?

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Newt, the shelter employee, sits at the receptionist's desk.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

NEWT

Is this Ms. Spade?

PEGGY

Yes.

NEWT

Hi, Ms. Spade, I'm Newt Erdrich from the ASPCA. I'm a Client Services Manager. I actually met you when you brought your dog in the other day to the hospital. I'm very sorry about your dog. Umm, what I do is work in the adoption program to place animals to prevent them from being euthanized by the city. And really, I'm not actually supposed to be calling you since you didn't apply to adopt, but I noticed you were very upset about losing your dog - and my instinct is you're a very sensitive, caring pet owner. And that's exactly the kind of people we're looking for.

(MORE)

NEWT (cont'd)

And well, we have a dog here that needs a home. We're at full capacity here at the shelter - and this dog - her name is Pepper - has a few behavioral issues - she's part pit - and therefore if we placed her with the city, she'd be an automatic candidate for euthanasia. This dog is a very sweet dog - and I just thought - maybe you might fall in love with her. It's a shot in the dark here - but I'm just desperate - because I don't want to see this dog die. But no pressure.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Newt pulls up in his dilapidated truck.

Peggy stands on her porch, watching.

Pepper is a large, brown mix. Newt lets her out of the truck and walks her up the lawn.

EXT. PEGGY'S BACK YARD - LATER

Peggy has put a water bowl down for Pepper.

NEWT

She's fear-based and she's very food-protective. She's aggressive. She's not good with other dogs - she's most likely been abused. But I just think she's real special - with a good home and consistency...

Peggy looks at Pepper for a moment.

PEGGY

I don't think I'm ready for another dog just yet.

NEWT

Uh-hunh.

PEGGY

It's too soon.

NEWT

Well, you know, sometimes that's the best way to move on.

PEGGY

Not for me. Yeah. No.

NEWT

Okay.

PEGGY

There's no one else?

NEWT

Maybe. I hope so. I just know
what the city will do with her.
But don't feel guilty. What
happens, happens. Come, Pepper.

Newt leads Pepper toward the side gate.

PEGGY

I'm really sorry.

NEWT

No, I understand. Thanks for your
time. Say, "Good-bye" Pepper.

Newt struggles a bit with Pepper as he leads her through the
side gate.

Peggy watches, deeply torn.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Peggy is at her Episcopalian church with Pier, Bret, Lissie
and Benjy. Lissie is itching her head. Bret holds Benjy as
the congregation SINGS.

CONGREGATION

*Christ the Lord has risen today,
Alleluia! Sons of men and angels
say, Alleluia!*

On PEGGY - her singing is half-hearted; she looks sad.

CONGREGATION

*Raise your joys and triumphs high,
Alleluia! Sing, ye heavens, and
earth, reply, Alleluia!*

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Peggy sits at her desk, her head in her hands. She is
completely preoccupied.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Peggy sits across from Robin, at his desk.

ROBIN

You remember when my mother died - year ago, February? I had upped the dosage on her morphine one night - well, then she died an hour later. We thought she had Alzheimer's - turned out it was pernicious dementia - without your memory, my feeling is you're not human. And she was in pain. I don't know why. Plus, the care was costing upwards of eight hundred dollars a day. And that's not even with the doctor bills factored in. My mother was a very frugal woman - she would not have wanted to live like that. But even still - the whole thing weighed on my mind. For days. And I just realized this wasn't doing me any good. It wasn't doing her any good. It was time to put Mother to bed. I think it might be time to put your dog to bed.

INT. SHOPPING MALL FOOD COURT - DAY

Peggy and Robin eat lunch.

ROBIN

This is a business. That's the bottom line. And it's obvious to me that your body is here but your mind is somewhere else. Frankly, it sends a message about me and my leadership skills when my assistant is permanently checked out to lunch. There's a power struggle going on here if you didn't notice. And I need you in the trenches. You're in my foxhole.

EXT. NEWT'S BACK YARD - LATER

Newt leads Peggy around the side of his house. THREE DOGS run out to greet them.

NEWT

Hey, guys. Hi, hi, hi. Yeah. I'm home. Happy? This is King - he's diabetic, unfortunately. You big maloof. This is Myrtle - she came in when I was just starting at the center. She spent her first three years of life chained to a post.

PEGGY

Oh, no.

NEWT

Oh, I know. And this is Buttons.

Buttons is missing a leg. They approach a dog run - inside is a barking Pepper.

NEWT

And here's Pepper - I've kept her in the run because she still doesn't play well with others.

(opens the run)

Hey there. Nope. Look at me, look at me. Down. Good girl. I brought her home because - she just spoke to me. That happens sometimes. And she's just got this face - it's an amazing, haunted face. But I can't keep her. Myrtle, over here, babe. Legally, you're only supposed to have three pets - and it's one of the few regulations concerning animals I agree with. King, sit. Animals are like us - they live on love - if there's too many, there's not enough love to go around. Pepper - this is your new mommy.

Peggy kneels down to pet the hyperactive Pepper.

PEGGY

I didn't think I was ready for another dog. But I prayed about it and - I can't say no.

NEWT

She's been abused so you're gonna really need to work with her. But look in her eyes. She's got an old soul, I think.

Peggy looks into Pepper's eyes.

Peggy is touched. Her eyes well with tears.

PEGGY

I love her already.

NEWT

If you want help with training, I
do that part-time on the weekends.
My method is very positive. It's
about reward - not punishment.
Myrtle, is that for me? Thank you!

Peggy nods, petting Pepper.

EXT. NEWT'S BACK YARD - LATER

Peggy is putting a leash on Pepper. She looks...

Across the yard, Newt is horsing around with his three dogs.
He takes a toy from Myrtle and gives it to the three-legged
Buttons.

Peggy smiles at the sight.

INT. PEGGY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peggy has put a bowl of food down for Pepper. Pepper munches
it down, greedily.

PEGGY

You like that, Pepper?

She smiles and gently pats Pepper's back.

Suddenly, Pepper recoils. She starts BARKING at Peggy and
gnashing her teeth.

Peggy is startled and backs away.

PEGGY

No, Pepper. Down.

Pepper keeps barking.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peggy lies with Pepper. Pepper is sound asleep.

Peggy caresses her fur, lovingly. She HEARS a car pull up.

Peggy sits up and looks out her bedroom window.

Al is arriving home. There is a GIRL in the car with him. Both tipsy, they make their way up the lawn, laughing.

Peggy, expressionless, returns to petting Pepper.

INT. WOMENS RESTROOM - DAY

An excited Gretchen leads Peggy into the bathroom.

PEGGY

What is it, Gretchen?

GRETCHEN

Look at this!

Gretchen points to her hand. She's sporting an ENGAGEMENT RING.

PEGGY

What?

GRETCHEN

I guess all my whining paid off.

Peggy and Gretchen squeal and hug.

PEGGY

I'm so happy for you!

GRETCHEN

I am freaking out. I was so not prepared. We went and saw the new Spiderman - Superman? No, Spiderman. And it was cute and then we went to eat at Greenstein's - deli - not romantic - but he kept acting really nervous and weird - and I'm like, what is going on? Then he just pulls it out. I'm not pregnant. There's no date yet. I am not even telling my mother 'til Christmas. It's like a mellow engagement - that's what he calls it - but we'll see.

PEGGY

That's so awesome, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

You're the first person I told.
Except Kim. And I told my mother.
But don't tell Pete I did. I feel
like a mac truck has been lifted
off me - I didn't even know was
there - but now it's gone and I'm
so...

PEGGY

I have some news, too.

GRETCHEN

What? WHAT?

PEGGY

I got a new dog. It's a shelter
dog. Her name's Pepper.

GRETCHEN

(slightly disappointed)

Peggy, how are you ever gonna find
a boyfriend, if you keep shacking
up with dogs. Just kidding.
That's great. Look at this ring?!
I think I might exchange it. Yeah.
What do you think?

EXT. PEGGY'S BACK YARD - DAY

Newt is training Pepper with a choke chain and treats.

NEWT

Sit. Sit. Sit. Good girl. She's
learning. Sit. Sit, Pepper.

Peggy watches as Newt makes progress with the dog.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Newt walks Myrtle as Peggy struggles to control Pepper.

Pepper pulls Peggy onto a neighbor's lawn.

INT. PEGGY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Peggy hands Newt a cup of coffee.

NEWT

It is gratifying, but... do you have any soy milk?

(off her look)

That's okay. It's very political. On one hand you've got the city and they want to terminate every animal they can get their hands on. Nothing like a good, clean extermination, you know? They say twenty-nine thousand but it's more like forty-four. They just have a killing routine. I know for a fact they have paper products stored in cages and... it's very frustrating. I could write an expose. It would explode like a bomb... or maybe people just don't care. We house six hundred dogs at the shelter - keep them until they're adopted - but we're always full to capacity. We have adoption fairs, we transport them to farms in Utah and Alaska, Barstow. You name it.

INT. PEGGY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Newt and Peggy are sitting on the couch.

NEWT

On the other side, you have animal activists who do not want to see even one animal die. And we come under criticism 'cause we work with the city. There's five thousand kittens who come through the system - you can't save them all. You have to be realistic.

PEGGY

That must be a lot of pressure for you.

NEWT

Uh, yeah. I have nightmares. I had a nightmare last night I was being attacked and like, raped by two bull mastiffs. It wears on me. But what am I supposed to do? Stop caring?

Peggy nods emphatically, hanging on his every word.

PEGGY

No, you can't stop caring. No.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Peggy is on the phone.

PEGGY

Yeah, I was thinking, I would be interested in doing some volunteer work. Yeah! It just seems like what you do is so important and... Uh-hunh. When is that? Saturday. Uh-hunh. No, I, I don't think so. Not really. I was gonna walk Pepper and catch up on some... She's good, she's still a little high-strung, especially with the food. But she's wonderful. Maybe a few more sessions with you would help...

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Peggy is helping Newt at an adoption fair. A DOZEN DOGS in cages are waiting for owners.

An OLDER WOMAN stands with Peggy, scrutinizing a stray.

OLDER WOMAN

Lars - who is my former husband - has stolen my car - he says it's his car - but it isn't - I have the deed - and I've told the department of motor vehicles about the situation - which is complicated. The point of all this is - I don't get out much - so I'd like a cute, affectionate dog like this one or something - but it's gotta be a lapdog - because my energy is not what it used to be - I just can't have piddling in the house...

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Peggy and Newt are laughing about something.

PEGGY

(sobers up)

So were you always an animal person?

NEWT

I prefer animal freak.

(smiles at his joke)

Just joking. You know, I've always had better relationships with animals than people. Animals aren't petty, for one. They don't back stab you and...

PEGGY

What about girlfriends and that kind of thing?

NEWT

I dunno. That's complicated. Ever since I was a kid and going to the zoo, I just had a connection with animals. That's why I'm a vegan. They say, if you couldn't kill it, you shouldn't eat it. I could never kill an animal. Maybe if I was in the desert and starving to death, maybe, I could throw a rock on a ferret or something. No.

PEGGY

I've always loved animals. But Pencil was...

The thought of Pencil makes her sad.

PEGGY

He had a good personality. The night he got sick, I had let him out to go to the bathroom - and I went out a little bit later - and he didn't come in - and I just let him stay out there. And it was probably after that he got into whatever it was that killed him. And I just feel like if I had...

NEWT

Don't do that to yourself. You gave him a great home and a great life. Don't go there, you know?

PEGGY

When I was driving him to the hospital, he looked at me. It was like he knew he was dying. And it was like he was trying to say something to me. I was the love of his life, you know what I mean?

(off NEWT's nod)

A lot of people don't understand the way you can feel about...

NEWT

No, they don't.

PEGGY

At all. Not at all.

NEWT

You know, when you're a kid, you love animals. Kids love animals.

PEGGY

That's true. They do.

NEWT

Think about it.

PEGGY

Oh, I know.

NEWT

And the thought of an animal being hurt is very distressing for a kid. And you spend your whole life hardening your heart. Even me - I did. And society creates this big disconnect between the food we eat and the way we treat things. But one day I realized that those feelings, you know, of compassion or whatever are real. And I'm not gonna ignore them. That's how I feel.

PEGGY

(moved)

That's really... I understand.

(looks at her sandwich)

I feel weird eating this right now.

Newt simply shrugs and smiles.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - DAY

At her desk, Peggy is reading the PETA web site.

She shakes her head with disgust as she reads chilling details of animal abuse.

INT. SHOPPING MALL BOOK STORE - DAY

Peggy browses the store for books on vegetarianism. She has an armload of vegetarian cookbooks.

She grabs a book off the shelf - "WHY VEGAN?" She opens the book.

A PHOTO of a COW with a swollen udder.

A PHOTO of TURKEYS stuffed into cages.

A PHOTO of a PIG with a ruptured stomach.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - LATER

Peggy is at a bench, reading "WHY VEGAN?" On her lunch break, when a FEMALE CO-WORKER passes.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Hey, Peggy. How are ya? I hear they're color coding everyone into teams. What are you reading?

PEGGY

(slightly embarrassed)
Oh, just some book I picked up.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Why Vegan? Is it any good?

PEGGY

It's interesting.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Well, see you back in the pen.

Peggy watches her go, then returns to her book.

INT. VEGAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Peggy and Newt are eating at a vegan restaurant.

PEGGY
It's just disgusting.

NEWT
It's so unnecessary.

PEGGY
Yeah - and unnecessary and it's so sad because animals can't defend themselves - they can't speak for themselves. Ever since I've read these books, I've been nauseated.
(opens her menu; smiles)
I'm so excited to be eating here.

NEWT
There's a few things that are really amazing. The seitan sloppy joe, the tempeh BLT is good, the tofu chop, everything's good, actually.

PEGGY
Oh my goodness. One of everything.
(laughs)
No, not really.

Peggy watches Newt as he reads the menu.

NEWT
I think... veggie pizza.

Newt puts down his menu and locks eyes with a smiling Peggy.

NEWT
What?

She coyly shakes her head and looks at her menu.

INT. NEWT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Newt leads Peggy into his bedroom. Pepper and his three dogs race in and out of the room.

NEWT
See. Not much to see.

Peggy lingers, taking everything in.

PEGGY
Do you sleep with your dogs?

NEWT

Yeah. I... guilty.

PEGGY

Three dogs?

NEWT

Yeah, it gets crowded. King hogs the covers. Don't you, King?

Newt sits down on the bed to give King a head rub. Peggy sits down beside him.

PEGGY

I don't think its weird to sleep with dogs. I sleep with Pencil. I mean, Pepper. I slept with Pencil and now I sleep with Pepper.

(beat)

You know, it's really nice to finally know someone who... I don't know, we have a lot in common, don't you think? And you've really opened my eyes to a lot, so, I don't know, I'm...

NEWT

Well, you're great.

PEGGY

Yeah?

NEWT

Yeah. Definitely.

PEGGY

I want to volunteer more for the shelter. And you know what?

NEWT

What?

PEGGY

I'm gonna be a vegan.

NEWT

Really? Yeah?

PEGGY

I mean, I just... how can I not? After those books? I mean, absolutely.

NEWT
I think that's great.

PEGGY
Yeah.

Awkward pause. Peggy seems to be leaning in for a kiss. Newt hesitates, but then meets her. They share a tentative kiss, then pull away.

She giggles, embarrassed. He laughs a little as well.

PEGGY
It's been a while since I...

NEWT
Well, we don't have to do anything.

PEGGY
Oh, okay.

NEWT
What about the training session?

PEGGY
Oh, yeah. Well, we could just stay here for a bit.
(beat)
Maybe we could turn on some music.
I don't know. Is that weird?

NEWT
No. Sure.

INT. NEWT'S BEDROOM - LATER

Newt and Peggy recline on Newt's bed, listening to Sam Cooke's "Mean Old World". There are dogs everywhere - on the floor, on the bed, on them.

As she pets a dog and stares up at the ceiling, Peggy smiles - she looks very content.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MORNING

Peggy puts up a flyer on a community bulletin board.

ON THE FLYER - A PHOTO of a STRAY DOG. "DON'T BUY OR BREED! ADOPT! LOOKING FOR A DOG? TALK TO PEGGY at EXT. 6944."

Peggy is pleased with her flyer.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - MORNING

Peggy has placed a plate of cupcakes on the counter. CO-WORKERS approach.

MAN #1

Cupcakes!

WOMAN #1

These look diabolical. Oh!

They start scooping them up and nibbling.

MAN #2

I just had a croissan-wich.

PEGGY

They're vegan.

Everyone looks over at her.

MAN #1

What?

PEGGY

There's no milk or butter or any animal products in them. No animal was harmed in the making of those cupcakes.

Peggy smiles with pride. The others look confused. They seem to enjoy the cupcakes less.

WOMAN #1

Different..

MAN #2

No butter. That's weird.

Her Co-Workers drift off. Peggy approaches another WOMAN with a cupcake.

PEGGY

Sheila, try this. It's a vegan cupcake.

WOMAN #2

Thank you, but I'm fine.

PEGGY

They're delicious.

The Woman reluctantly takes a bite, then nods.

WOMAN #2

Yeah. Really good.

Peggy smiles, delighted.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - LATER

A bubbly Peggy sits across from Robin with pen and notebook at the ready.

ROBIN

What are you so happy about?

PEGGY

Well, I just got two stray dogs adopted. Juanita is taking one for her nephew and sister. And Tom, the temp, is taking a Keeshound.

ROBIN

I hope you're not spending a lot of time on this during work.

PEGGY

What? No. Not really.

ROBIN

Because you know what happened, don't you? They put me in the green team with Greg and Paul. Neither of them are go-getters. They're two of the oldest guys in this division. I feel like I've been put in with the dinosaurs. And here's the thing - we split the commissions. Greg is Jerry's best friend. I just hope that doesn't factor in and suddenly Greg is walking away with more than his share of everything. I don't want to have to pull all the weight - and then Greg comes in and takes all my earnings.

PEGGY

(mischievous smile)

You know what I was thinking, Robin. You're gonna hate this. But you should adopt a dog.

ROBIN
(irritated)
What?

PEGGY
You need something to come home to.
A little life in your house.
Something to love. And I have just
the dog. It's a maltese, poodle
mix - I have a picture here...

ROBIN
(sharp)
Peggy, no. Absolutely not. I
don't want a dog. Get your head in
the game here. What are you doing?
Don't ever bring that up again.

Peggy, chastened, nods, dutifully.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

At her desk, Peggy is talking quietly on the phone.

PEGGY
I can't really talk because my boss
is getting a little aggravated with
me, but I got another one for you.
Yep. The receptionist wants the
dachsund. No, it's fun. I feel so
great about it. Yeah. Making a
difference, I know. But I should
go. Okay, bye.

Peggy hangs up the phone. She is positively giddy. She
suddenly notices...

Gretchen is standing over her desk.

GRETCHEN
What's going on, Peggy?

PEGGY
What? Oh, I'm volunteering for an
animal shelter, trying to get dogs
adopted - but Robin doesn't want me
to be doing this during work so I
gotta... you know. You know, you
and Pete - now that you've moved in
together, you should get a dog.
There's such a sweet Maltese...

GRETCHEN

No, Peggy - what is going on?

PEGGY

What do you mean?

GRETCHEN

You've been acting like freaking
Mary Poppins Sunshine or something.
Have you met someone?

PEGGY

What do you mean?

GRETCHEN

(imitating)

"What do you mean? What do you
mean?" Don't bat your eyelashes at
me. Have you met someone? Do you
have a boyfriend?

(as PEGGY stammers)

No! What? Peggy!

PEGGY

Well, I don't... It's not, no. I
mean, sort of. I guess. I don't
know. Maybe. I mean, I have a
friend.

Gretchen SQUEALS. She lifts Peggy to her feet.

GRETCHEN

We're going to the bathroom.

INT. WOMENS RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gretchen has corralled Peggy into the bathroom.

GRETCHEN

Have you slept together?

PEGGY

No!

GRETCHEN

Well, have you kissed?
(as PEGGY hesitates)
You made out.

PEGGY

Well, kind of.

GRETCHEN

You really like him, don't you?

PEGGY

He's a really wonderful man.

GRETCHEN

What does he look like? Is he hot?

PEGGY

Umm, no.

GRETCHEN

But you like him.

(off PEGGY's shrug)

It's so exciting. Peggy! Look at you. I'm liking this. A lot.

PEGGY

Seriously, Gretchen, why don't you get a dog? If you're gonna have a baby with Pete, I mean, this is one way to prepare.

GRETCHEN

(considers it)

Ok, I'll ask him.

PEGGY

You will?

GRETCHEN

Now that you have a boyfriend, I will consider getting a dog.

Peggy is elated. They hug.

GRETCHEN

You are so funny.

(sing-song)

Peggy's got a man.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the living room, Bret, Pier and Peggy watch as Lissie opens a present. It's a DVD of the movie, BABE.

BRET

Babe! Oh, Lissie, you'll like Babe.

LISSIE

We don't have this one.

BRET

No, we don't. Can you say thank you to your Aunt Peggy?

LISSIE

Thank you, Aunt Peggy.

PEGGY

You're welcome, sweetie.

Lissie runs off with her present.

BRET

I feel so sorry for her - she's missed so much school because of the lice. And she's paying for the school's failures because they...

PIER

Bret, let's not get into this.

BRET

She keeps getting re-exposed because they aren't coordinating with the parents...

PIER

The kids need to get de-loused on the same one day - that's what we've been saying from the beginning.

BRET

Where's the leadership?

PIER

It's tearing the first grade class apart.

BRET

The class? The community. They have a no-nit policy but Lissie was in line with a girl who they had found with three nits in her hair that morning - and they didn't send her home. And of course it was the Headmaster's daughter so...

PIER

You can't trust anyone. It's a meltdown.

BRET

But enough about that. So sweet of you to always bring presents for the kids.

PEGGY

Well, I was thinking for Christmas, maybe a d-o-g.

BRET

No, no.. That's - Benjy's still too young.

PIER

I don't think that's a good idea, Peggy.

PEGGY

Well, we had a dog when we were little, Pier. Little Tippy.

BRET

Yeah, but they're just so dirty.

PIER

We have our hands full as it is.

Peggy nods, disappointed.

BRET

Stay for dinner. Maria made pasta with spicy sausage.

PEGGY

That's okay. I'm vegan now - so I can't eat a lot of things.

Bret and Pier look concerned.

PIER

Is that healthy?

PEGGY

Very healthy. Some people do it for health reasons, but I did it for animal reasons. The corporate farming in America is awful. I read a book on it.

BRET

(after a beat; to PIER)
You know, it's in the Bible - I'm
not sure exactly where - but it's
in the Bible that God made animals
for us to enjoy. So...

PEGGY

But not to exploit and abuse.

BRET

Well, it'll be interesting to see
how long that lasts. I couldn't
last two days without bacon.

PIER

Vegan, hunh?

PEGGY

Vegan. It's nice to have a word
that can describe you. I've never
had that before.

Pier and Bret look dubious.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Newt's truck is parked outside Peggy's house. Peggy and Newt
work to get a BARKING Pepper into the back of the truck.

NEWT

Pepper. Jump. Now.

PEGGY

Come on, Pepper. Get up.

Al pulls up beside them in his car. He leans out the window.

AL

Hey. How's it going?

NEWT

Hi.

AL

That dog sure likes to bark.

Peggy says nothing, giving Al the cold shoulder.

Al looks at her for a moment, then drives away.

NEWT

Who was that?

PEGGY

My neighbor. He's a hunter. Real sicko.

NEWT

Really?

PEGGY

I also think he poisoned Pencil. It was in his yard where Pencil got sick.

Peggy shoots a dirty look at Al's house.

EXT. DOG PARK - DAY

Newt and Peggy have taken Pepper to the park. They sit on a bench. A nervous Peggy holds Pepper by his leash.

NEWT

It's good for him to get accustomed to the park and seeing other dogs before you let him off the leash. Although you have to watch - because often they can get more aggressive when they're on a leash.

PEGGY

Newt...

NEWT

What?

PEGGY

It's just...
(clears her throat)
I like you.

NEWT

I like you, too.

PEGGY

(averts her eyes)
Yeah. Do you know what I mean, though?

NEWT

(beat)

Peggy, umm, I'm not able to be in a relationship. With a woman. Or a man either, really. I'm not made for that.

PEGGY

I don't understand. You like men?

NEWT

Do I? Look, I haven't been in a relationship in... I'm celibate, basically, so it's beside the point anyway. I hope I didn't give you the wrong idea or...

Peggy is speechless. Suddenly, Pepper pulls on the leash. Peggy, distracted, loses her grip.

Pepper goes bounding across the park. She is BARKING wildly.

NEWT

(rising)

Pepper! No! Come here!

Newt goes chasing after her. Peggy finally realizes there's trouble.

PEGGY

Oh, no. Pepper.

Across the park, Pepper has cornered a small dog. Pepper GROWLS viciously. The small dog's owner, a middle-aged WOMAN, is terrified.

DOG OWNER

Oh my god! Get him away!

Pepper lunges at the dog and tries to bite it.

NEWT

Pepper! No! Down! Now!

Newt hits Pepper on the snout, hard. Pepper recoils. Peggy SCREAMS.

INT. NEWT'S TRUCK - DUSK

Newt has pulled up outside Peggy's house. Peggy's eyes glisten with tears. Pepper is in the back.

NEWT

You know, I do really like you.

Peggy looks out her window.

NEWT

If you want to find another trainer for Pepper, I totally understand. But she really needs somebody who'll build on my approach...

PEGGY

I'm just... so stupid. Wishful thinking, you know. To meet someone who cares about what I care about. And thinking that person might care about me, too...

NEWT

(exhales)

I'm sorry.

PEGGY

(shrugs)

I've always been disappointed by people. I've only really been able to count on my pets. I know it's pathetic...

NEWT

It's not pathetic.

PEGGY

But it's enough. It was enough last month. And last week. And it'll be enough next week. And because of you I've been able to - I dunno - acknowledge that part of my life - in a deeper way and - so thank you. And this...

(indicating the space between them)

...just, you know, confirms what I already knew and...

Peggy suddenly looks like she's about to erupt into tears.

NEWT

Peggy...

She shakes her head, opens the door, pulls Pepper out.

A stricken Newt watches Peggy and Pepper head up the lawn.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pepper is still wound up. Peggy tries to calm her.

PEGGY

You're okay. You're okay, baby.
You're home now.

Peggy locks eyes with Pepper.

CLOSE on PEPPER'S EYES - blood-shot and vacant.

CLOSE on PEGGY'S EYES - they are searching and sad.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - MORNING

Gretchen and Peggy are having a coffee break. Peggy seems distracted, colder.

GRETCHEN

Christmas is gonna be nuts. I'm going home with him to Houston to meet the family - and I've met his sister and her husband and they're nice. But I'm still nervous. Because they're all so worldly - his dad moved them around - they've lived all over - Chicago, Kansas, I think Canada - and I just hope I don't come off like a total boob. By the way, I don't have a present for you - I just got so behind with everything - but Pete and I want to take you to lunch, ok? Oh, and I know you're gonna be bummed but Pete wasn't into the dog idea - he says it doesn't fit into our lifestyle. Sorry. How's the guy you're seeing? Did you see him this weekend?

PEGGY

I don't want to talk about it.

GRETCHEN

What? What happened?

PEGGY

No - I don't want to talk about that.

GRETCHEN
(makes a face)
Oooo-kaaay.

Awkward silence as they sip their coffee.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Peggy is shaking her head as she reads something on line.

ON COMPUTER - A PETA URGENT ACTION ALERT. IVAR LABS RESUME ANIMAL TESTING. A PHOTO of ANIMAL ACTIVISTS picketing outside a building, carrying alarmist signs.

Also, a PHOTO of a MONKEY, who appears to be shrieking.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - LATER

Robin walks briskly down the hall, when he is intercepted by Peggy, wielding a clipboard and a pen.

PEGGY
(crisp)
Robin, hi. First of all, I just went on lunch break. So this is my time. I'm not on the clock. I've just read about this science lab in Maryland that's been doing animal testing - it's evil - so I've been collecting signatures for PETA to protest.

ROBIN
You've got to be kidding.

PEGGY
Would you sign it?

ROBIN
No. How do you think we've made all the medical breakthroughs that we've made? That's how you figure stuff out, Peggy. You test it on animals so that people can live. You can't test it on people. So you're suggesting you test new drugs on people?

PEGGY
What they're doing is torture.

ROBIN

Be realistic. People don't test stuff on animals for fun. They do it for a reason. For science - and to save lives. And this isn't the forum for political signature gathering, okay? This is a business. Not in the office. I mean, come on.

He gives her a condescending pat on the shoulder - and keeps walking.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

An outraged Peggy pulls up one of Robin's personal checks. She glances at the signature.

She quickly and effortlessly forges Robin's signature on her petition. Gretchen approaches.

GRETCHEN

Pete wants to eat at BJ's. Is that okay? You can find something to eat there, can't you?

Peggy is admiring her forgery.

GRETCHEN

Peggy, we're gonna be late.

INT. BJ'S RIBS - DAY

Peggy sits picking at her salad. She stares at...

Pete - eating ribs with his hands. He is ripping the meat off the bone with his teeth. His fingers are covered in BBQ sauce.

Peggy is repulsed.

PETE

(mouth full of food)
Engagements last a long time.

GRETCHEN

No, they don't. Who says that?

PETE

They can.

GRETCHEN

But are we thinking Spring or
Summer - or Fall? Pete?

PETE

We're not thinking anything. We
just got engaged. Relax. We're
young - what's the rush? It's not
like we're forty. Right?

Pete looks at Peggy, who grimaces.

GRETCHEN

(annoyed)

Fine. I gotta pee.

Gretchen gets up and exits for the bathroom. Alone with
Pete, Peggy eyes him with contempt.

PEGGY

So Gretchen says you don't want a
dog. Doesn't fit into your
lifestyle?

PETE

I'm never home.

PEGGY

Must be hard to juggle job,
fiancee, social life.

(off his shrug)

Well, I for one think you should
get a dog.

PETE

Yeah?

PEGGY

Teaches responsibility.

PETE

(with a grin)

Maybe I don't want to be
responsible.

PEGGY

Might keep you out of trouble.

PETE

(checks his cell phone)

How's that?

PEGGY

Well, you're getting married. You could go home and walk the dog instead of - I don't know - going to the mall and picking up other women.

Pete looks up from his cell phone.

PEGGY

(locking eyes with him)
At the Gap, say.

Pete looks stumped, mouth agape.

PEGGY

And I just think a man who would adopt a dog - a poor stray, you know, who otherwise would be put to sleep, that's a kind man. I'd give that man the benefit of the doubt.

Gretchen returns to the table and sits down.

GRETCHEN

There's a line. I'll go later.
Peggy, get a sorbet or something.
It's Christmas and we're paying.

Peggy smiles, sweetly, then sips her iced tea.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Peggy is consumed with researching animal welfare groups online.

ON COMPUTER - "ANIMAL HOME - NON-PROFIT SANCTUARY FOR ABUSED AND DISCARDED FARM ANIMALS."

Peggy finds this touching. She adds the name "ANIMAL HOME" to a list of animal charities on a note pad.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Peggy has Robin's check book out. She writes a check out to... "ANIMAL HOME".

She makes the amount out to "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS".

She looks up, sheepishly, and over at...

ROBIN'S OFFICE. The door is open. Inside, Robin is having an animated conversation with TWO MALE COLLEAGUES.

Peggy turns back to the check book. She quickly forges Robin's signature.

She then adds the check to a small stack of checks, made out to various charities - all with Robin's forged signature.

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

Peggy.

Startled, Peggy GASPS. Gretchen is standing over her desk.

GRETCHEN

Sorry. Didn't mean to scare ya.

Peggy instinctively puts away the stack of checks.

GRETCHEN

Good news. Pete and I got to talking after lunch - and we've come around on the dog thing. When we get back from our trip, we'll take one. But a small one, because our place isn't that big - and we're gonna be moving and... well, are you happy?

PEGGY

Yeah. Very much so.

GRETCHEN

See. We're already nesting.

PEGGY

It's great.

Gretchen, pleased with herself, struts off to her cubicle.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

The office Christmas party. The bar is peppered with holiday decor. On the stage, Gretchen and Pete are performing a duet, "Baby, It's Cold Outside".

GRETCHEN

The neighbors might think...

PETE

Baby, it's bad out there.

GRETCHEN

Say what's in this drink?

PETE

No cabs to be had out there...

Everyone is enjoying themselves. Peggy, at a table with a group of rowdy FEMALE ASSISTANTS, looks distracted. When someone addresses her, she forces a smile, but then stares off into the middle distance, compulsively twirling her hair.

INT. PEGGY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peggy is feeding Pepper. She puts down the food bowl. Pepper instantly starts to lap it up.

Peggy, with a bit of dog food on her fingers, moves to the sink to wash up.

She accidentally steps on Pepper's water bowl, overturning it. Water spills across the kitchen floor.

PEGGY

Oh, crap.

Peggy grabs a dish towel off the sink to wipe up the water. She then makes the mistake of lifting Pepper's dog bowl.

Pepper goes on the attack, biting Peggy's hand. Peggy SCREAMS.

PEGGY

Pepper! No!

Peggy punches Pepper in the nose. Pepper unclenches his jaw and Peggy wrests her hand free.

Peggy is crying from the pain. She looks down at her hand...

It is a bloody mess. She wraps it in the dish towel.

PEGGY

(in tears)

Pepper! Dang you! Why'd you do that?!

She rises to her feet and opens the back door.

PEGGY

Get out! Get out of here!

A chastened Pepper heads for the back yard.

INT. PEGGY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Peggy's hand is swathed in bandages. She watches TV, still recovering from the violent encounter.

Outside, Pepper is HOWLING and BARKING. Peggy ignores it.

There is a KNOCK on the door. Peggy rises.

INT. PEGGY'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Peggy opens the door. Al is standing on her porch.

AL

Hi. Boy, that dog, hunh?

(no response)

Look, I got a friend over. She and I are trying to watch a DVD. But your dog is... Can you get him to quiet down?

PEGGY

I don't know.

AL

Well, can you at least bring him inside? He's standing right outside my window.

PEGGY

(beat; then...)

Maybe you shouldn't have poisoned Pencil.

AL

Who?

PEGGY

My other dog. The one that died in your yard. After you left out whatever it is she got into that killed her.

AL

I didn't leave anything out.

PEGGY

Oh, really?

AL

I did not poison your dog.

PEGGY

She was poisoned. Toxic poisoning.
That's what the vet said.

AL

Well, that's not my problem.

PEGGY

Yeah? Well, now it is.

AL

(stunned)

What is your deal?

Peggy closes the door in his face.

Alone, Peggy becomes upset, looking at her bandaged hand.
Then a wave of anger overtakes her.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pier, Bret, Lissie, Benjy and Peggy are sitting around the
living room, opening presents.

Peggy struggles to open her present with her bandaged hand.
She finally gets it open. It's a shawl.

BRET

It's a shawl. I didn't know what
to get you. Do you like it?

PEGGY

Yes, I do.

BRET

Because it was kind of expensive
so, if you don't, please take it
back. By all means.

PEGGY

No, I like it. Thank you, Bret.

PIER

It's from me, too.

PEGGY

Thank you, Pier.

Peggy rises and takes four envelopes out of her purse.

PEGGY

And I have something really neat for all of you. There's one for everybody. Pier, you can open Benjy's.

She hands them out. The others open their envelopes.

PEGGY

I discovered this really neat place online. It's an animal sanctuary for discarded farm animals. And I sponsored different animals for each of you. They actually name the animals after you.

(to LISSIE)

They named a chicken Lissie, after you, Lissie.

LISSIE

They did?

PEGGY

Yeah - there's a chicken named Lissie - named after you. She was rescued from a slaughterhouse and she's a very happy chicken because you're sponsoring her.

LISSIE

When do I get her?

PEGGY

You don't. But she's living a very nice life - all thanks to you.

LISSIE

But I want her here.

PEGGY

Well, you can visit her. It's just an hour away. That would be fun, wouldn't it? To go visit your chicken?

PIER

You named chickens after us?

Pier bursts into laughter.

PEGGY

Well, actually there's a pig named after you.

This makes Pier laugh even harder. Bret, too, is unable to stifle her laughter.

PEGGY

I know it seems funny. But it's really an amazing organization.

PIER

(through laughter)

I bet.

PEGGY

(sober)

But it's not a joke.

PIER

A pig. That's too good.

BRET

That's really sweet, Peggy.

Pier and Bret realize Peggy is not amused anymore. But they still can't shake the giggles.

BRET

Pier. Stop it.

PIER

What kind of animal is Bret?

PEGGY

A cow.

Pier and Bret are now beside themselves. They continue to laugh as Peggy stews, her feelings hurt.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - LATER

Pier's family and Peggy are eating dinner.

PIER

(breaking the silence)

How was the office Christmas party?

BRET

Yeah. Was it fun?

Peggy shrugs, sullen.

PIER

Peggy - don't be so sensitive. We weren't trying to hurt your feelings. It was just funny is all.

PEGGY

You know, chickens are terribly treated. They're pumped up with hormones. And they're genetically altered so their breasts are enormous and they can't move. They pin their wings to the cages.

BRET

You're gonna scare Lissie.

PEGGY

Maybe she should know about this.

BRET

She's six years old.

PEGGY

The point is - they suffer. I have a book about it - I'll give it to you.

PIER

I don't want to read about that.

PEGGY

Well, you should. It might change the way you think.

PIER

Peggy, there's always gonna be suffering. If you start looking for it everywhere, you can't enjoy your life.

PEGGY

But maybe you can do something about it.

BRET

Maybe it's all a part of God's plan.

PEGGY

Oh, bull! God loves all his creatures.

PIER

You know, this is Christmas. Can we please just try to have a pleasant Christmas?

Sudden awkward silence. Then...

PEGGY

And you never once let Pencil in the house.

PIER

What?

PEGGY

Not even once.

PIER

Peggy, we have little kids.

PEGGY

Pencil wasn't dangerous. He would have never hurt anyone - especially kids. He was wonderful with children.

BRET

Peggy, we also just put in new white carpet.

PEGGY

What, Pencil was dirty?

BRET

Peggy...

PEGGY

Lissie has lice. So don't talk to me about dirty. Did you even ever pet him, Pier? Did you even once run your hands through his fur?

PIER

Peggy, you sound insane.

PEGGY

I've listened to you guys talk for years about every little thing about your kids. Nannies and Christening and their sleeping problems and bed-wetting. But you never even let Pencil in your house.

PIER

Are you trying to compare a dog to a child?

PEGGY

What? You think having a kid is some noble act or something?

PIER

Jeez! Enough already.

PEGGY

(beat, then - softer)
It's not the thing you love - it's that you love it. You love it. And if you cared about me, you'd love it, too.

PIER

You have completely lost me.

Pier locks eyes with a dumbfounded Bret.

PEGGY

Oh, forget it. Just forget it.

Peggy looks down at her meal, sulking.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Peggy returns home to find Newt, walking down her lawn.

Peggy gets out of her car. Newt approaches.

NEWT

Hey. Merry Christmas - one day late. I just dropped a present off on your porch. It's for Pepper. It's a rain slicker. It's reflective yellow.

PEGGY

(lackluster)

Oh - thank you.

NEWT

How are you?

(notices)

What happened to your hand?

PEGGY

Pepper bit me. It was - I grabbed her bowl when she was still eating and...

NEWT

Was it serious?

PEGGY

(nods)

She dug in and wouldn't let go. I almost went to the hospital but I hate hospitals so anyway...

NEWT

Peggy. That's a big deal. I mean, what if Pepper bites a kid? Or attacks one of your neighbors...?

PEGGY

I don't know. She hasn't.

NEWT

She tried to maul that dog at the park. If we hadn't jumped in, who knows? If she bites someone, you're liable, you know that, don't you? There's a one-bite law.

PEGGY

Well, you're the one who was supposed to train her.

NEWT

I know. But some dogs can't be trained.

PEGGY

What are you saying?

NEWT

I'm saying - she's violent. We don't know her history. She's part pit. If something happens again - you might have to consider putting her down.

PEGGY

(incensed)

You unload a dog on me - you're supposed to be training her - and now you want me to put her down?

NEWT

(conciliatory)

Look, I'm just saying - you have to be careful. I'm sorry. I came here because I've been thinking about you - and Pepper and... I want to keep working with her if... unless... I want to be your friend still. That's all. And I wanted to give you the present. And so call me if you want. I don't know. Happy New Year.

Newt retreats down the lawn. Peggy turns.

PEGGY

Hey - I convinced someone else at work to adopt.

NEWT

(smiles)

That's great.

PEGGY

(smiles)

Yeah. I'm gonna call you about it next week. Thanks for the present.

NEWT

No problem.

Newt gets into his truck. Peggy watches him go.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Peggy is back at work. She answers her phone.

PEGGY

(into phone)

Robin Heaton's office. May I tell him who's calling? Uh-hunh. Uh-hunh.

(lowers her voice)

Well, Mr. Heaton's in a meeting... in another city, actually. But I know he really admires your organization which is why he made the donation, obviously. But he's a very private person - and I don't think he wants to be on any mailing lists.

(MORE)

PEGGY (cont'd)
Anything you want to send, you can
send to me. I'm his assistant,
Peggy. Okay? Yeah.

Suddenly, Robin appears at her desk. Peggy sees him...

And instantly hangs up her phone.

ROBIN
Who was that?

PEGGY
Oh, just someone who was, you know,
asking about... how was your
Christmas?

ROBIN
(perfunctory)
Fine. Asking about what?

PEGGY
What'd you do?

ROBIN
Caught up on some stuff.

PEGGY
Please tell me you took the day
off.
(no response)
I should have brought you with me
to my brother's.

ROBIN
I can't find the number for Long,
Green and Tessler. Can you bring
me their file, too?

PEGGY
Yes. Getting it. Right away.

Robin heads to his office. Peggy gets busy.

INT. GRETCHEN'S CAR - DAY

The car is parked on the street. Gretchen holds her new
small white dog. Peggy is in the passenger seat.

GRETCHEN
I love it. Oh, little puppy. I
love it. What should I name him?
Sparkle. Or I had a dog named
Bubble when I was little.
(MORE)

GRETCHEN (cont'd)

Didn't Michael Jackson have a monkey named Bubble though? Christmas went great. Everyone loves me - that's what Pete said. He said his mom just adored me. Which is huge. They're Texan but they're not really Texan - kind of reserved. Which I don't mind. I'm not reserved but I know how to deal with people like that. You just don't sneak up from behind and hug 'em, that's all.

PEGGY

I have a great vet, if you need one.

GRETCHEN

They kept talking about how many girlfriends he had in high school, which started to really get under my skin. Do you have to go there, you know? And I guess he's still in contact with some of these girls - which I'm not down with - at all. But I don't want to come off like a paranoid nag too soon.

(contorting her face)

Oh my god. This dog just peed on me! Eww!

Gretchen tosses the dog into the back seat.

GRETCHEN

Oh, gross. I am totally covered in dog urine. Get me something, Peggy.

Peggy searches for something to clean Gretchen up.

GRETCHEN

(pulling her blouse)

Ewww. What do I do? What do I do?

EXT. NEWT'S BACK YARD - DAY

Peggy has brought Pepper over. Newt is here, surrounded by his three dogs. He works to get Pepper in the dog run.

NEWT

I think I'm gonna alter my approach with Pepper - yeah, Myrtle, I see you - maybe more firmer - good girl, yeah, Pepper, you're okay - even if it means getting physical - King, shush...

PEGGY

Thank you for doing this. I hate leaving her but my brother doesn't allow dogs in his house.

NEWT

One of those, hunh? It's good. We can keep working - it'll be good to have her socialize with my dogs.

PEGGY

You wont keep her in the run the whole time?

NEWT

No, no. Just 'til she acclimates.

PEGGY

I'll be back tomorrow around five.

NEWT

Great. King, down - yes, I love you, too.

PEGGY

And maybe I can take you out to dinner after as a thank you.

NEWT

Not necessary.

PEGGY

I know. But I'd like to.

NEWT

(pleased)

Good. I'd like that, too. Well, Happy New Year.

PEGGY

Happy New Year. Bye, Pepper. Be good.

Peggy sticks her fingers through the wire cage. Pepper licks them.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - DAY

Pier and Bret are racing around, preparing to leave. Peggy holds Benjy. Lissie is drawing in her coloring book.

PEGGY

That's a pretty unicorn, Lissie.

BRET (O.S.)

Honey, where are my keys? I
can't find my keys anywhere.
Do I even need them?

(enters)

Oh, I hate myself.

PIER

(to PEGGY)

You have our cell phone
numbers if there's a problem.
And you should drive Bret's
car if you take the kids
anywhere because the car
seats are in there and...

PEGGY

Benjy's gotten so big.

PIER

Hasn't he? He's a little tank.

BRET

Oh my gosh. They're in my pocket.
Pier, my dumb keys were in my dumb
pocket.

PIER

Dummy.

PEGGY

(noticing BRET's coat)

Is that mink?

BRET

Oh, god, no. It's rabbit. And,
Peggy, they told me at the store
that the rabbits were gonna be
killed anyway.

Peggy musters an odd smile.

PEGGY

It's nice.

BRET

You think I'm horrible.

PEGGY

No, I really like it.

BRET

Thank you so much for coming.
Benjy, be good for Aunt Peggy.
Give me a kiss. Lissie, come say
bye - Mommy and Daddy are going to
San Diego.

Hugs and kisses as Bret and Pier head out.

PEGGY

Have fun. Everything's gonna be
fine. Bye!

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - LATER

As Benjy crawls around on the floor, Peggy sits down next to
Lissie, who is still coloring in her book.

PEGGY

Lissie, what do you want to do
today?

LISSIE

Nothing.

PEGGY

Well, I was thinking we could go on
a little trip. I thought we could
go visit your chicken.

Lissie turns. She likes this idea.

PEGGY

Want to go see Chicken Lissie?

LISSIE

Yeah!

PEGGY

Well, then let's do it. Go get
your shoes, okay?

INT. BRET'S CAR - TRAVELING - LATER

Peggy is driving. Lissie and Benjy are in the back seat.

PEGGY

Did you watch, Babe, Lissie?

LISSIE

Yeah.

PEGGY
Did you like it?

LISSIE
Yeah.

PEGGY
Well, we might see Babe today. A
real Babe.

LISSIE
Can I pet it?

PEGGY
I think you can.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Bret's BMW has left the city and is driving through farmland.
Over this, we HEAR:

PEGGY (O.S.)
The place we're going they rescue
pigs like Babe and chickens like
yours and goats and cows - so they
don't have to be killed and eaten.
Isn't that nice?

EXT. ANIMAL SANCTUARY - DAY

The BMW pulls up in front of a small farm. There is a sign
that reads - "ANIMAL HOME - A SAFE PLACE FOR FARM ANIMALS."

LISSIE (O.S.)
If the animals didn't get eaten,
what would they do?

PEGGY (O.S.)
We wouldn't need them anymore - so
there'd probably be less of them.

LISSIE (O.S.)
So then would they be dead?

EXT. ANIMAL SANCTUARY - DAY

A very merry Peggy, holding Lissie's hand and Benjy in her
arms, is being escorted around the grounds by HOLLY, one of
the volunteers. They come upon a sheep.

HOLLY

This is Eva. She's a Merino sheep.
We found her - she was tied up
behind a gas station for three days
by an immigrant family. Being
"fattened".

Holly gives Peggy a pointed look. Peggy nods, somber.

HOLLY

She's been here for three years.
You can see she's a sweetheart.
Yeah, you can touch her.

LISSIE

She's nice.

HOLLY

Yeah, she is nice. And over here
is Dilbert.

Dilbert is a big cow.

HOLLY

Dilbert is always getting into
things, aren't you, Dilbert? He
was dropped into a night box when
he was a newborn at an animal
shelter. And the shelter was going
to raffle him off to a
slaughterhouse. But we intervened
and now he's here.

PEGGY

That's a big cow, hunh, Lissie? So
the animals just stay here for the
rest of their lives?

HOLLY

Yep. They're on permanent
vacation.

PEGGY

I know Lissie is dying to see her
chicken. Right, Lissie?

EXT. FARM SANCTUARY - MOMENTS LATER

Holly has led them to a chicken pen where dozens of chickens
are strutting around.

HOLLY

(chooses a chicken)

Lissie is over there. That one.
Yep. She and a few of the others
here fell off a truck on their way
to a chicken farm just a mile up
the road.

LISSIE

They fell out of a truck?

HOLLY

Yeah - and it's a good thing, too,
because if they hadn't, they'd be
somebody's lunch. Before she came
here, Lissie had never touched the
ground with her feet or felt the
sun or even stretched her wings.
Isn't that sad?

It is to Peggy - tears well up in her eyes.

PEGGY

It's just... ugh.

EXT. ANIMAL SANCTUARY - LATER

As Holly lets Lissie pet a few of the farm animals...

Peggy wanders around, holding Benjy.

CLOSE ON A GOAT - staring back at Peggy.

CLOSE ON PEGGY - she stares back, as if waiting for some kind
of communication.

CLOSE ON A PIG - looking up at her, from the mud.

CLOSE ON PEGGY - she smiles sweetly at the pig.

CLOSE ON DILBERT, the cow - locking eyes with Peggy.

CLOSE ON PEGGY - she is becoming emotional.

CLOSE ON EVA, the sheep - with her doleful eyes.

ON PEGGY - it's too much. She is overcome with emotion. She
wipes away her tears.

So lost in her thoughts, she does not notice Holly and Lissie
approaching.

LISSIE

Aunt Peggy, are you crying?

PEGGY

Aunt Peggy is just happy for the animals who are here - and sad for the animals who aren't.

Holly puts a comforting arm around Peggy.

HOLLY

The first time here can be very emotional for people.

PEGGY

I just feel very... connected here.

Holly nods - as if she totally gets it.

HOLLY

We Buddhists say it's all just one life, you know? One big river flows - and it comes upon a waterfall - and the water breaks into millions of separate drops - and that's our life here on earth - we're just little drops - man or woman or animal, it doesn't matter - and when we die we just return to the river.

Peggy considers this unexpected metaphor, nodding.

INT. BRET'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

An emotional Peggy is reeling from her trip to the farm. Lissie and Benjy are in the back.

PEGGY

That woman is a saint. And that place is Heaven. It's Heaven. And there is a Hell just one mile up the road - and we need to see it.

Peggy puts her keys in the engine and starts it.

PEGGY

We need to see it because there's a Holocaust going on right now - they're slaughtering chickens up there right this second.

(MORE)

PEGGY (cont'd)

And that's just reality - we can't ignore it. Life isn't like Babe, Lissie. They show kids movies like that - but then they don't tell you what happens to Babe in real life - but you need to know.

Peggy peels away from the farm.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - LATER

Bret's car pulls up outside a large chicken ranch.

INT. BRET'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car is parked. Peggy is holding and consoling a hysterical Lissie. In the back, Benjy is also crying.

PEGGY

It's okay, honey. We don't have to go inside. It's okay.

LISSIE

(blubbering)

I don't want to see them hurt the chickens.

PEGGY

I don't either. And you're not going to. It's okay.

Peggy rocks Lissie back and forth as she cries.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN SHOW is on TV.

Peggy is in the kitchen. She pours herself a glass of wine.

INT. PIER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Peggy watches TV, drinking her glass of wine.

ON TV - TIMES SQUARE, an hour away from the ball drop.

Peggy looks bored, she starts to flip around.

ON TV - sitcom reruns, informercials... she finally lands on a nature documentary about PENGUINS.

Peggy smiles at the sight of a family of penguins.

INT. PIER'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy stands in front of the refrigerator. It is covered in Christmas cards - attractive couples and their well-scrubbed offspring. Peggy scrutinizes the collection for a moment.

Peggy opens the refrigerator and searches for something she can eat. She stumbles upon some refrigerated meat. She holds the bag of steaks in her hand, sickened.

INT. PIER'S BEDROOM - LATER

Peggy has made her way up to Pier and Bret's bedroom. She has refreshed her wine glass. She is now tipsy.

She goes into the walk-in closet. She finds what she is looking for - FURS.

Peggy pulls one of the furs off the hanger, grimacing.

INT. LISSIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Lissie is asleep when Peggy enters and flips on the light. Peggy is drunk.

PEGGY

Lissie, Lissie, honey. It's almost
New Year's. Let's see the ball
drop. Wanna? Wake up.

Peggy gently shakes Lissie's shoulder.

INT. PIER'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy and Lissie are watching the ball drop.

PEGGY/ LISSIE

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five,
four, three, two, one!

PEGGY

Happy New Year!

LISSIE

Happy New Year!

Peggy gives Lissie a drunken hug.

INT. PIER'S MASTER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy and Lissie are draping Bret's furs across the tub.

PEGGY

What do you think of these, Lissie?

LISSIE

I don't like 'em.

PEGGY

Me neither. I think they're mean.

LISSIE

Me, too. I think they're mean.

Lissie suddenly turns on the tub faucet, drenching one of the coats. Peggy is stunned.

PEGGY

Lissie!

But then Peggy begins to laugh. Lissie joins in. Peggy tickles Lissie and they collapse on the floor in giggles.

The water continues to flow, soaking the furs.

INT. PIER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Peggy rouses. She is hung-over. Lissie is asleep beside her. Peggy rubs her head.

INT. PIER'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is brushing her teeth when she sees...

The bathtub, filled with Bret's wet furs.

Peggy's mouth hangs agape.

EXT. PIER'S HOUSE - DAY

Pier and Bret have followed Peggy out to her car.

PIER

Thanks again, Sis. You're the best. I'll call you tomorrow.

BRET

I hope it wasn't too boring for you. But we really appreciated getting away.

PEGGY

Oh, please. It was my pleasure.
It was fun. Love you guys.

Peggy starts the engine and drives away. Pier and Bret wave her off.

EXT. NEWT'S HOUSE - DAY

Peggy's car pulls up in front of Newt's house.

INT. NEWT'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

In the living room, Peggy sits down across from a stricken Newt. A moment of tense silence.

NEWT

Pepper killed Buttons.

Newt starts to sob. He lets out a high-pitched whine.

PEGGY

What? What? What?

Newt buries his head in his hands.

NEWT

It happened so fast. One minute we
were in the back and then she...

Newt starts muttering something incomprehensible.

PEGGY

Newt, I am so sorry. I am so...

NEWT

It's not your fault. It's not your
fault.

PEGGY

My god. Oh my god. Oh my god,
Newt.

He continues to cry. She moves to comfort him.

NEWT

It's a mess in the back. Don't go
back there.

PEGGY

My god.

NEWT

I tried to call you, but I... I
don't know... Poor Buttons.

PEGGY

Yeah. Oh, I am so sorry.

He cries. After a moment...

PEGGY

Newt. Where's Pepper?

NEWT

(wiping his tears)
The city came and picked her up.

PEGGY

(softly)
What?

NEWT

I told them to put her down.

Peggy's face slowly registers her horror.

PEGGY

You what?

NEWT

It's the only thing to do - and I
knew you couldn't do it - so I took
it out of your hands - so you don't
have to carry the guilt of that
decision.

PEGGY

(stunned)
You... you...

NEWT

A dog like that has to be put down.
I thought we could save her, but we
couldn't.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

PEGGY

You...

Peggy backs away from him, reeling.

INT. CITY POUND - LATER

A wild-eyed Peggy arrives, breathless, to the city shelter. A female employee, TRISHELLE, is working the desk.

PEGGY

There's been a mistake. My dog was brought in today - her name is Pepper - she's a pit mix - brown - I'd like to pick her up.

TRISHELLE

She was brought here? From what location?

PEGGY

My friend's house. Uh, sixty-four Palm Street.

TRISHELLE

Well, while I'm looking her up, you can walk back - all the dogs that were brought in today are in the first hall.

INT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy walks through the kennel, looking for Pepper.

DOGS are everywhere - barking, whimpering, jumping up on the cages, sleeping.

Peggy locks eyes with a few of them.

CLOSE ON A SMALL PATHETIC MUTT - looking up at her, crying.

ON PEGGY - she is distressed.

CLOSE ON A SWEET-FACED LABRADOR - also looking at her.

ON PEGGY - she smiles back at it.

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF GERMAN SHEPHERDS - both staring at her.

ON PEGGY - she is becoming increasingly untethered.

Trishelle approaches her.

TRISHELLE

Ma'am, my records indicate the dog was involved in a mauling.

(MORE)

TRISHELLE (cont'd)
She was euthanized a few hours ago.
(PEGGY is silent)
Ma'am?

Peggy looks like she's been punched in the gut. She just turns and walks away from her, down the long hallway.

INT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is overcome. She has wandered to a corner of the kennel and stands amongst the caged dogs, overwhelmed.

After a moment, she sees a POUND EMPLOYEE removing a dog from a cage.

She watches the man lead the dog down the hall. The dog is resisting. The man is rough with the dog.

POUND EMPLOYEE
Come on. Let's go.

Suddenly, it occurs to Peggy what might be happening. She chases after the man.

PEGGY
Excuse me, sir. Sir?! Where are you taking that dog?

POUND EMPLOYEE
Who are you?

PEGGY
Where are you taking that dog?

POUND EMPLOYEE
(pointed)
Where do you think? It's been here six days.

PEGGY
Well, I want the dog.

POUND EMPLOYEE
What?

PEGGY
I want to adopt this dog right now.
So just give it to me.

POUND EMPLOYEE
You want to adopt this dog?
(annoyed)
Hold on.

INT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

The Pound Employee has called Trishelle to the scene.

TRISHELLE

Ma'am, you're gonna have to fill out some paperwork...

PEGGY

Yeah, fine. I want this dog. And I want every dog you're gonna euthanize tonight.

POUND EMPLOYEE

That's like fifteen dogs.

PEGGY

(steely)

Fine. That's fine.

TRISHELLE

Ma'am, you can't take fifteen dogs. The limit is three.

PEGGY

Well, I work with the ASPCA. I'm in the adoption program. And I'm gonna place every one of these dogs. So that should be fine then.

TRISHELLE

You work for the ASPCA?

PEGGY

With Newt Erdrich. He's a client services manager.

TRISHELLE

I know Newt. He didn't say anything about someone coming by. Maybe I should call him.

PEGGY

Well, it's a holiday. And he's very ill. But go ahead, I guess. If you feel it's necessary. Do what you have to do. But he's very ill.

Trishelle and the Pound Employee consider Peggy.

EXT. PEGGY'S CAR - TRAVELING - DUSK

Peggy is driving her car home with all fifteen dogs stuffed into the car. She can barely see the road through all the dog commotion.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Peggy is leading the dogs two at a time from the car and into her house. Some of the dogs left in the car are BARKING.

PEGGY

Come on. Come on, girl.

INT. AL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Al's new girlfriend is sitting on the couch, watching TV. Al stands by the window, watching Peggy deal with the dogs.

AL

(astounded)

What the hell?

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Peggy's house is overrun with dogs. Some are play-fighting; some are eating out of bowls; some are sleeping on the furniture.

Peggy is trying to take stock.

PEGGY

No biting, no. Okay, you go out back. Little dogs in. Hi, sweetheart. Big dogs out. That means you.

She spots one of the dogs taking a crap on the floor.

PEGGY

No, no, no, no, no!

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Peggy is wide awake in bed. The littler dogs have been kept inside and are wreaking havoc in her bedroom.

Outside, the bigger dogs are HOWLING at the moon.

Peggy can't believe what she's done. She's frozen in her bed, watching all of the activity in a silent stupor.

EXT. PEGGY'S BACK YARD - MORNING

A bleary-eyed Peggy is filling every plastic bowl she has with water from a hose.

She is surrounded by dogs - they jump up on her, lick her, tug at her skirt.

PEGGY

No, no, don't jump. Oh, no.
Mommy's late. Be good. Okay? Oh
my goodness. Please be good.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - LATER

A harried Peggy arrives late for work. She looks like she's been hit by a truck.

A FEMALE CO-WORKER passes her in the hall.

FEMALE CO-WORKER

Peggy, Robin's been looking for you
for an hour. He seems pretty
agitated.

PEGGY

Where is he?

FEMALE CO-WORKER

He's in a meeting now with Jeff.

Peggy hustles to her cubicle.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy arrives at her cubicle. The PHONE is RINGING.

PEGGY

(answering)

Hello? Uh-hunh. Uh-hunh. Well,
she wanted to see her chicken,
Pier. I thought it would be nice.
Well, I'm sorry you feel that way.
No, she's not traumatized. Well,
what's so important about eating a
ham sandwich anyway? If she
doesn't want to eat it...

We can HEAR Pier shouting.

PEGGY

I'm at work now. What? I have no idea. What, you think I stole her furs? I have no idea. Look, I have to go now. I'm at work.

Peggy hangs up the phone, rattled.

INT. WOMENS RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is looking at herself in the mirror. She tries to straighten herself up but it's hopeless.

Then Gretchen enters.

GRETCHEN

Hey, Peggy. Robin was looking for you. What happened to you? Are you okay?

Peggy nods, distracted.

GRETCHEN

Peggy, you're gonna be really disappointed. But it's not working out with Sparkle.

PEGGY

Sparkle. What's that?

GRETCHEN

The dog we got. It's peeing all over the place and it's chewing the furniture. Pete...

PEGGY

(snapping; derisive)

Pete! Please. That dog will be loyal to you his whole life. Pete's not even loyal to you now.

GRETCHEN

(thrown)

Pete wants to keep it. It's me.

(beat)

What do you mean Pete's not loyal to me?

Peggy doesn't know what to say.

GRETCHEN
(disturbed)
What, Peggy? Say it.

Peggy looks at Gretchen for a moment.

PEGGY
Nothing. I didn't mean anything.
Robin's looking for me.

Peggy flees the bathroom. Gretchen is perplexed.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy sits across from Robin.

ROBIN
So I just got a call this morning
from a woman named...
(looks at notebook)
Jocelyn Kleinhoffer. She works for
the Animal Action something. She
was very enthusiastic. She wanted
to thank me for my generous
contribution of two hundred dollars
to help prevent the clubbing of
baby seals in Canada. Then I
called the bank. Seems I've been
very philanthropic this Christmas.
(stung)
I trusted you with the most
valuable thing I have. You stole
from me. I thought we were on the
same team.

He looks to Peggy for a response. There is none.

ROBIN
I trusted you. You know how many
people I let in? What were you
thinking?
(still no response)
You're fired. Effective
immediately.

PEGGY
(rising)
Well, I can't work here anymore
anyway. I have too much to do.

Peggy walks to the door, then turns back.

PEGGY

That was the best money you ever
spent.

Robin looks wounded, then angry.

ROBIN

Yeah? You're lucky I'm not calling
the police.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy walks out of the office with a box of her belongings.
She seems emboldened, but also a bit crazed. A few of her CO-
WORKERS spot her on the way out.

MAN #1

Peggy - what happened?

She just keeps walking, a delirious smile on her face.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Al walks up the lawn to Peggy's porch. He KNOCKS on her
door.

Inside we HEAR the sounds of DOGS BARKING and RUNNING.

Al knocks again - this time, much harder.

Finally, Peggy opens the door, just a crack. She looks
terrible - she wears a dirty bathrobe and her hair is a rat's
nest.

AL

What is going on in there?

PEGGY

Who wants to know?

AL

I have not slept ten minutes in a
week. How many dogs have you got
in there?

PEGGY

(quietly)

They need a home.

AL

Well, get 'em one. So I don't have
to put up with this racket.

(covering his nose)

What is that smell?

PEGGY

You're a jerk.

AL

I'm telling you - you deal with
this or I will.

Peggy shuts the door on him.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Peggy walks away from the door and back into her living room.

We now SEE the extent of insanity that is going on in the
house. The house is scattered with dog bowls, chew toys,
clothes, feces, wrecked furniture.

The dogs themselves are mangy and wild.

Peggy, clearly overwhelmed, crosses to the couch where she
resumes watching TV.

Chaos continues around her, but she tries to tune it out as
she caresses one of her dogs.

INT. PEGGY'S BEDROOM - LATER

This room is also destroyed. Peggy is in her bed. Dogs
engulf her.

The PHONE RINGS and RINGS.

It takes Peggy a moment to find it. She finally answers.

PEGGY

(almost ethereal)

Hello?

NEWT'S VOICE

Peggy, it's Newt. I hadn't heard
from you. Are you still mad at me?

PEGGY

No, I'm not mad.

NEWT'S VOICE
What is all that noise?

PEGGY
My dogs.

NEWT'S VOICE
You got new dogs? That's great.
Where'd you get them?

PEGGY
From the pound.

NEWT'S VOICE
You sound weird, Peggy. Is
everything okay?

PEGGY
Uh-hunh. I was just thinking,
Newt, just now... My house is full
of love. I have too much love in
my life. I've never had that
before.

NEWT'S VOICE
Peggy?

A dog gets up on her and she decides to set the phone down.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Peggy, in her filthy clothes and bed-hair, arrives at the pet
supplies section.

She fills her grocery cart with dog food, practically
cleaning out the store. The CANS make a loud CLATTER.

Other SHOPPERS turn and stare.

Peggy fills the cart until there's no more room.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Newt stands outside Peggy's door. Her pack of dogs can be
HEARD inside.

NEWT
Peggy? Peggy?

Newt goes to the window and peers in...

Inside, the house is a disaster. Dogs are everywhere.
Newt is floored.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Peggy waits for all of her canned dog food to be rung up.
The MALE CASHIER sneaks a look at her.
She catches his eyes and smiles back, brightly.
He musters a strained smile, but it's clear he thinks she's
an escaped lunatic.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Peggy hobbles up the porch with one of her bags of dog food.
She arrives at her door - there is an OFFICIAL NOTICE taped
to the door.
She drops her bag, pulls off the notice and reads it.
Her eyes widen. She quickly opens her front door.

INT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is still in total disarray, but there is not a dog
in sight. Peggy is in shock.

INT. PEGGY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is on the phone, pacing the floors.

PEGGY
(hysterical)
Well, I want them back. I don't
care. Well, what are you gonna do
with them? Well, that's not good
enough. I want a record of every
one of those dogs - if even one of
them is hurt, I am hiring a lawyer.
Who called you? Who called? Tell
me who!

EXT. AL'S HOUSE - DUSK

Peggy strides up to Al's door. She looks deranged.

She POUNDS on the door. No answer.

She looks around to the side of the house.

INT. AL'S GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy has climbed over Al's fence and entered his open garage. She has been searching around the garage.

She unceremoniously pushes over a pile of his stuff.

Suddenly, her eyes widen. Finally, she has found what she's been looking for.

ON THE FLOOR - an OPEN BAG of SNAIL BAIT.

She picks up the bag of snail bait and inspects it.

ON BAG OF SNAIL BAIT - "CONTAINS METALDEHYDE - KEEP AWAY FROM PETS - POISONOUS."

Peggy bites her lower lip, her mind racing.

INT. AL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Peggy is hiding in Al's coat closet, waiting for him. The door is open just a crack and a sliver of light reveals her.

Al and his girlfriend have just returned home.

PEGGY'S POV - she watches as Al and his girlfriend enter.

AL

And Dale was in the military. But then she divorced him and married Darrel who was Japanese, actually. Had a kid with him...

Peggy tenses and her eyes squint as she watches Al cross the room. She is breathless with anticipation.

GIRLFRIEND (O.S.)

How many kids has she had?

AL (O.S.)

Two - with two different fathers.

INT. AL'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

Al's girlfriend flops down on the couch. But something catches her eye.

The glass case housing Al's knife collection is shattered and one of the knives is missing.

GIRLFRIEND

(scared)

Al. I think we've been robbed.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Al has taken off his coat. He is about to open the closet door, then stops in his tracks.

AL

What? What'd you say?

GIRLFRIEND (O.S.)

I think you've been robbed.

Suddenly, the closet door bursts open. Peggy springs out at him, wielding one of his knives. She lunges at him.

Before he can react, she's attempting to stab him in the shoulder. She only manages to nick him with the knife. Al looks down and sees a little blood on his shirt.

AL

Holy shit!

Al pushes her back, knocking her against the door.

PEGGY

How does it feel? You murderer!

Al's girlfriend enters the room and SCREAMS.

Peggy stands there, still holding the weapon.

PEGGY

You're right! It's a real rush!

Al pounces on Peggy, grabbing the knife out of her hand.

PEGGY

How many dogs are you gonna kill?!

He wrestles her to the floor and pins her. She struggles under his weight.

Al looks down at her in disbelief. His girlfriend continues to scream.

AL

Call 9-1-1!

His girlfriend runs from the room.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bret is in the living room with Lissie, Benjy and their Nanny, when the front door opens.

Pier and a sedated Peggy enter the house.

BRET

(to NANNY)

Can you take them upstairs please?

The Nanny leads the children from the room.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - LATER

Peggy, stupefied, sits across from Pier and Bret as they discuss her situation in hushed voices.

PIER

The lawyer thinks because she didn't actually hurt anybody - it's gonna be all right. Expensive but... And I talked to her boss for a long time. He says because of their years together, if she gets help and repays what she stole, he's willing to give her back her job.

(turns to PEGGY)

Peggy, what happened to you?

BRET

We love you, Peggy. We're so worried.

PIER

I always think of you as the girl who believed in Santa Clause 'til she was nine years old.

BRET

Honey, maybe you just aren't
getting enough protein.

A faraway look from Peggy.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

An embarrassed Peggy returns for her first day back on the job. She arrives at her cubicle...

Her desk is covered in flowers and balloons. There is a little makeshift banner that reads "WELCOME BACK, PEGGY."

She is suddenly surrounded by her CO-WORKERS. Many of them give her hugs and greet her.

CO-WORKERS

Hey, Peggy./ Hey, girl./ Welcome
back./ We missed you.

Gretchen pushes her way to the front of the pack. She gives Peggy a big tearful hug. Peggy, too, is moved to tears.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Peggy sits with notebook and pen. Robin is at his desk.

ROBIN

I had a talk with Jerry. It was good. He moved us to the orange team with Brad and Denise. I just thinks that's a better fit. Denise is great with people. Brad's good with strategy. And I'm the numbers guy. I don't know, but I'm starting to feel like this could be a productive and profitable year, you know? Sparkle, no.

Unexpectedly, Robin lifts Gretchen's white dog up from behind his desk.

ROBIN

You'll find this amusing. Your friend, Gretchen couldn't find anybody to take her dog so I took it. I don't know what came over me - momentary lapse of reason... I hate leaving him home all day so I sneak him in sometimes.

(MORE)

ROBIN (cont'd)

I don't like the name, but he answers to it. Okay, Sparkle, down. There you go.

Robin puts the dog back on the floor. Peggy smiles.

ROBIN

Anyway, so where we? Oh, yeah, the orange team - so you should coordinate with their assistants all the information and...

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Peggy is at her desk. After a moment of reflection, she turns to her computer.

ON COMPUTER - Peggy types in ANIMALACTION.ORG.

A web site comes up. "ACTION ALERT. BELLAGIO COSMETICS KILLS ANIMALS! PROTEST SCHEDULED TOMORROW IN DALLAS!"

Peggy reads the announcement.

GRETCHEN (O.S.)

Peggy.

Peggy is startled. She looks up.

GRETCHEN

Guess what? We have a date. June 21st.

PEGGY

That's great, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

I'm so happy. Took some work, that's for sure. And I want you to be a bridesmaid - unless you think you're too old. You want to go to lunch? Pete's got plans.

PEGGY

I can't. I have so much to catch up on.

GRETCHEN

Ok. Well, I'll see you soon.

Gretchen walks off. Peggy looks back at her computer. She then looks around the empty office - her co-workers all gone to lunch.

INT. PEGGY'S CUBICLE - LATER

ON COMPUTER - We read: *"If you all didn't think I was crazy, I'm sure you will now. How do I explain the things I've said and done? How do I explain the person I've become?..."*

The voice over we heard at the beginning is the letter she is writing now.

ON PEGGY - she is engrossed in her letter, typing away.

EXT. PEGGY'S OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY

Peggy crosses the lot and gets into her car.

PEGGY (V.O.)

I know I've disappointed everyone
and I'm sorry for that. I wish I
was a more articulate person.

EXT. PEGGY'S HOUSE - DAY

Peggy has packed a suitcase and carries it to her car.

PEGGY (V.O.)

I believe life is magical. It is
so precious.

INT. AL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Standing at his window, Al watches Peggy get in her car.

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - DAY

As sick dogs are being admitted, Newt reads Peggy's letter at the receptionist's desk.

PEGGY (V.O.)

And there are so many kinds of life
in this life. So many things to
love.

INT. GRETCHEN'S CUBICLE - DAY

Gretchen reads Peggy's letter at her computer. Pete stands over her, rubbing her shoulders.

PEGGY (V.O.)
The love for a husband or a wife.
A boyfriend or girlfriend.

INT. PIER'S HOUSE - DAY

Pier is reading her letter on his Black Berry as Bret and her Nanny fuss over Lissie and Benjy.

PEGGY (V.O.)
The love for children.

INT. ROBIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Robin reads her letter at his computer. Sparkle is at his feet.

PEGGY (V.O.)
The love for yourself. And even
material things.

INT. BUS - DAY

Peggy is riding a bus with a group of ANIMAL ACTIVISTS, mostly women. They are on their way to a protest. Some hold placards with different slogans - "STOP ANIMAL TESTING"; "NO MORE CRUELTY TO ANIMALS"; "BELLARIO KILLS".

Peggy sits by herself, looking out the window.

OUTSIDE - a truck with CHICKENS in cages passes by.

Peggy watches it for a moment.

PEGGY (V.O.)
This is my love. It is mine. And
it fills me - and it defines me -
and it compels me on.

Peggy looks across the aisle of the bus.

An OLDER WOMAN is feeding little treats to her TINY DOG, who is burrowed in the woman's purse.

Peggy locks eyes with the woman. They exchange knowing smiles.

Peggy looks back out the window and we...

FADE TO BLACK.