

YOU'VE GOT MAIL

by

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Based on

"The Shop Around the Corner"

By Nikolaus Laszlo

FADE IN ON:

CYBERSPACE

We have a sense of cyberspace-travel as we hurtle through a sky that's just beginning to get light. There are a few stars but they fade and the sky turns a milky blue and a big computer sun starts to rise.

over a computer version of the New York City skyline. We move over Central Park. It's fall and the leaves are glorious reds and yellows.

We reach the West Side of Manhattan and move swiftly down Broadway with its stores and gyms and movies theatres and turn onto a street in the West 80s.

Hold in front of a New York brownstone.

At the bottom of the screen a small rectangle appears and the words:

ADDING ART

As the rectangle starts to fill with color, we see a percentage increase from 0% to 100%. When it hits 100% the image pops and we are in real life.

EXT. NEW YORK BROWNSTONE - DAY

Early morning in New York. A couple of runners pass on their way to Riverside Drive Park.

We go through the brownstone window into:

INT. KATHLEEN KELLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

KATHLEEN KELLY is asleep. Kathleen, 30, is as pretty and fresh as a spring day. Her bedroom cozy, has a queen-sized bed and a desk with a computer on it. Bookshelves line every inch of wall space and overflow with books. Framed on the children's classic. Madeleine.

As Kathleen wakes up, her boyfriend FRANK NAVASKY walks into the room. He wears blue jeans and a workshirt. He's carrying the New York Times.

KATHLEEN

Good morning.

FRANK

(as he reads)

Listen to this -- the entire work force of the state of Virginia had to have solitaire removed from their computers --

Kathleen gets out of bed and goes to brush her teeth in the bathroom, and we stay with Frank.

FRANK

-- because they hadn't done any work in six weeks.

Kathleen comes out of the bathroom in her robe.

KATHLEEN

Aren't you late?

FRANK

(continuing)

You know what this is, you know what we're seeing here? We're seeing the end of Western civilization as we know it.

KATHLEEN

This is so sad.

She tosses him his jacket.

FRANK

(points at her computer)

You think that machine is your friend, but it's not.

(checks his watch)

I'm late.

INT. LIVING ROOM - KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As Frank walks to the apartment door. We see a charming room with a couch, fireplace, books, and a dining table with a typewriter with a cover on it.

KATHLEEN (O.C.)

I'll see you tonight.

FRANK

Sushi.

KATHLEEN (O.C.)

Great. Bye.

Frank goes out the door. It closes.

Kathleen tiptoes into the hall and looks through the fish-eye peephole watching as he goes down the stairs, disappearing from sight. She walks into:

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

And looks out the front window as Frank walks out onto the street and turns toward Broadway.

He's gone. Good.

She sits down at her computer. An expression of anticipation and guilty pleasure as she clicks the mouse.

INT. COMPUTER SCREEN - DAY

As we see the logo for America On Line come up and Kathleen's code name: Shopgirl. She logs on and the computer makes all its little modem noises as the computer dials the access number and connects and we hear the machine:

COMPUTER

Welcome.

And we see Kathleen, listening for the words she's waiting to hear:

COMPUTER

You've got mail.

And Kathleen smiles as her mail page comes up:

INT. COMPUTER SCREEN - DAY

We see a list of letters:

Big Cash Op: You can make \$\$\$ in your spare time. OIL MKT: You can turn \$20 into \$20,000 THIS REALLY WORKS U CAN DO IT: Maximize your selling ability nowwww!!! NY152 Brinkley

Kathleen hits the "delete" key and the first three letters -- all of them junk-mail -- are deleted and drop offscreen.

Then she selects the "Read Mail" key for "NY 152 Brinkley".

And the letter comes up:

To: Shopgirl  
From: NY152  
Re: Brinkley

Kathleen starts to read the letter aloud:

KATHLEEN

Brinkley is my dog. He loves the streets of New York as much as I do --

And now we hear Kathleen's voice replaced by the voice of NY 152, a man named JOE FOX --

JOE (V.O.)  
 -- although he likes to eat bits of  
 pizza and bagel off the sidewalk, and I  
 prefer to buy them. Brinkley is a great  
 catcher and was offered a tryout on the  
 Mets farm team --  
 (continuing)

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A dog is sitting on a large green pillow on the floor. This is BRINKLEY. The pillow has "Brinkley" embroidered on it. Brinkley's master, JOE FOX, a great-looking guy, full of charm and irony, comes into the kitchen and pours himself some orange juice. He's half-dressed.

JOE  
 (continuing)  
 -- but he chose to stay with me so that  
 he could spend 18 hours a day sleeping  
 on a large green pillow the size of an  
 inner tube. Don't you love New York in  
 the fall? It makes me want to buy  
 school supplies. I would send you a  
 bouquet of newly-sharpened pencils if I  
 knew your name and address. On the  
 other hand, this not knowing has its  
 charms.

VOICE  
 Darling --

JOE  
 Mmmmmhmmm --

Joe's girlfriend PATRICIA EDEN, in Armani head to toe, comes into the kitchen and turns on the \$2000 espresso machine, which starts grinding beans. She's carrying the morning papers.

PATRICIA  
 I'm late.  
 (indicating the  
 newspaper)  
 Random House fired Dick Atkins. Good  
 riddance. Murray Chilton died. Which  
 makes one less person I'm not speaking  
 to --

(MORE)

PATRICIA (CONT'D)  
 (she drains a cup of  
 espresso as a second  
 starts to come out  
 of the machine)

Vince got a great review. He'll be  
 insufferable. Tonight, PEN dinner --

JOE  
 Am I going?

PATRICIA  
 You promised.

JOE  
 Can't I just give them money? That's  
 the cause? Free Albanian writers? I'm  
 for that.

Patricia drains another cup of espresso, looks at him.

JOE  
 All right, I'll go. You're late.

PATRICIA  
 I know I know I know.

She tears out of the kitchen and the door slams behind her.

Hold on Joe, listening as he hears the elevator door open and  
 close on the landing outside.

IT. JOE'S DEN - DAY

As he comes in and sits down at his laptop computer and logs  
 on.

JOE & THE COMPUTER (TOGETHER)  
 Welcome... You've got mail.

And as he starts to read his letter, we hear:

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
 I like to start my notes to you as if  
 we're already in the middle of a  
 conversation. I pretend that we're the  
 oldest and dearest friends --as opposed  
 to what we actually are, people who  
 don't know each other's names and met in  
 a Chat Room where we both claimed we'd  
 never been before.

INT. JOE'S ELEVATOR - DAY

As Joe, dressed for work, takes the elevator down with his elevator man CHARLIE. There's a certain amount of Good morning, etc., as the elevator goes down and the voice-over continues:

KATHLEEN (V.O., CONTINUES)  
What will he say today, I wonder. I  
turn on my computer, I wait impatiently  
as it boots up.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE - DAY

As Joe comes out of his building.

KATHLEEN (V.O., CONTINUES)  
I go on line, and my breath catches in  
my chest until I hear three little  
words: You've got mail.

And the camera now pans from 152 Riverside uptown to:

EXT. NEW YORK BROWNSTONE - MORNING

KATHLEEN (V.O., CONTINUES)  
I hear nothing, not even a sound on the  
streets of New York, just the beat of my  
own heart. I have mail. From you.

EXT. BROADWAY - MORNING

As Kathleen comes onto Broadway at the corner of 83rd Street and starts downtown.

Through a long lens we can see Joe, walking into blocks behind her.

As Kathleen and Joe make their way down Broadway we see the West Side of Manhattan in the morning. Mothers and fathers taking their kids to school, people on their way to work, dogs being walked. School buses picking up kids, bakery trucks dropping off brown bags of bread in the doorframes of unopened restaurants.

Kathleen stops at a newsstand, says good morning to the newsstand dealer, and picks up a New York Times.

Metal grates are pulled up to open flower shops, nail salons, the pharmacy, fish store, the Cuban Chinese Restaurant, Zabar's.

Joe stops at the same newsstand. He buys all the papers -- the Times, Wall Street Journal, Post and Daily News.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

As Kathleen picks up her coffee, walks out.

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - DAY

As Kathleen walks down Columbus, we see Joe a block behind her. She stops to buy flowers and Joe passes her, crosses to the East side of Columbus Avenue.

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - DAY

A building under construction, with plywood board covering the front and wrapping around the corner. Joe goes to a side entrance and enters.

As Kathleen comes around the corner onto 73rd and stops in front of her store, a children's bookstore called "The Shop Around the Corner." It is an irresistibly inviting store. There are twinkle lights in the windows, framing large stuffed animals reading children's books: Madeleine, Good Night Moon, Where the Wild Things Are. A teddy bear in a pinafore is reading The Stupids Step Out. Waiting for Kathleen in front is one of her employees, CHRISTINA.

KATHLEEN

Hello, Christina. It's a beautiful day.  
Isn't it the most beautiful day?

Christina looks up at the sky as if seeing it for the first time.

CHRISTINA

I guess. Yeah, sure.

Kathleen unlocks the shop and cranks the grate, which rises, making a horrible noise. Two cabs almost collide in front of the store, with a screech, and one cabdriver starts yelling obscenities at the other. Kathleen unlocks the door to the store.

KATHLEEN

Don't you love New York in the fall?

Christina looks at her puzzled.

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen turns the CLOSED sign on the door over to read "OPEN" and she activates the computer system. She looks around, and we see a small but charming children's bookstore, with wooden shelves, a tiny area where kids can sit and read, some charming posters and a glass case full of first editions of the Oz books and Alice In Wonderland, etc.

There's a playful display of witches, lit with twinkle lights covered with orange pumpkin globes and a sign reading "The Ten Best Witch List" and a collection of witch books -- "The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe," "The Witches," "The Wizard of Oz." On the counter is a glass jar full of sugar-free lollipops.

Kathleen hangs up her coat in the back of the store and suddenly stops to daydream. A smile creeps onto her face. Christina looks at her.

CHRISTINA

What's going on with you?

KATHLEEN

Nothing.

CHRISTINA

You're in love.

KATHLEEN

In love? No. Yes. Of course I am. I'm in love with Frank. I'm practically living with Frank. Do you think you could get our Christmas mailers out this week?

CHRISTINA

By Monday I promise. I have a paper due Friday. Now what's going on?

(she looks at  
Kathleen)

I'm just going to stand here till you tell me.

A beat.

KATHLEEN

Is it infidelity if you're involved with someone on E-mail?

CHRISTINA

Have you had sex?

KATHLEEN

Of course not. I don't even know him.

CHRISTINA

I mean cybersex.

KATHLEEN

No!

CHRISTINA

Well, don't do it. The minute you do, they lose all respect for you.

KATHLEEN

It's not like that. We just E-mail. It's really nothing, on top of which I'm definitely thinking of stopping because it's getting --

CHRISTINA

Out of hand?

KATHLEEN

Confusing. But not really. Because it's nothing.

CHRISTINA

Where did you meet him?

KATHLEEN

I can't even remember.

(off Christina's look)

The day I turned thirty I wandered into the Over Thirty Room for a joke, sort of and he was there, and we started chatting.

CHRISTINA

About what?

KATHLEEN

Books. Music. How much we both love New York. Harmless. Harmless. Meaningless.

(starts smiling)

Bouquets of sharpened pencils.

CHRISTINA

Excuse me?

KATHLEEN

Forget it. We don't talk about anything personal. We made a rule about that. I don't know his name, what he does or exactly where he lives, so it will be really easy to stop seeing him, because I'm not.

CHRISTINA

God, he could be the next person to talk into the store. He could be...

(as George walks in)

George.

GEORGE PAPPAS, in his twenties, one of Kathleen's salespeople, is a cute guy who has no idea that he's supposed to look in the mirror when he gets dressed.

GEORGE

Morning.

CHRISTINA

Are you On Line?

GEORGE

As far as I'm concerned, the Internet is just another way to be rejected by a woman.

BIRDIE walks in. She is in her seventies, has white hair, and is tiny, like a little sparrow. She is the store's oldest employee, having worked there for over forty years, and serves as a accountant as well as salesperson.

KATHLEEN

Good morning, Birdie.

BIRDIE

What are you all talking about?

CHRISTINA

Cybersex.

BIRDIE

I tried to have cybersex once but I kept getting a busy signal.

CHRISTINA

I know, I know. One Saturday night I was really depressed about not having a date, so I thought, no problemo, I'll go on line and I won't be lonely, but I couldn't get on, there were hundreds of thousands of people who didn't have dates trying to get on.

(MORE)

You have to wonder which is harder, getting a date or getting On Line when you don't have a date.

GEORGE

Getting a date is harder.

We hear the bell jingle as TWO WEST SIDE MOTHERS come in with two KIDS IN STROLLERS.

KATHLEEN  
 (to the kids)  
 Jessica and Maia, how are you today?

We hear the sound of the garbage truck. Kathleen goes out the front door to:

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

As the commercial garbage truck pulls up and TWO GARBAGEMEN start to load her trash.

KATHLEEN  
 Hey, you forgot to pick up the garbage last week and I got a ticket. And you're late today -- I could have gotten another.

GARBAGEMAN #1  
 We were here, there was no garbage.

GARBAGEMAN #2  
 Yeah.

KATHLEEN  
 Of course there was --

GARBAGEMAN #1  
 What do you think, I don't want to pick up garbage? You think I go up and down the street picking up garbage, I'm not going to pick up yours? What's the matter with you?

GARBAGEMAN #2  
 Yeah.

Kathleen is standing there, tongue-tied.

GARBAGEMAN #1  
 You don't even bundle it right, you're supposed to bundle it and leave it near the curb, you leave it near the store and you use cheap garbage bags, they smear all over the place, and then I got to pick it up with my shovel --

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

As Christina, who's helping one of the customers, looks out the window as the harangue continues.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

GARBAGEMAN #1

And now you're busting my chops. You're just another garbage pick-up to us, okay?

GARBAGEMAN #2

Yeah.

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

As Kathleen comes back into the store. Christina is ringing up a sale.

KATHLEEN

That guy went ballistic on me.

CHRISTINA

I hope you told him off.

KATHLEEN

Not exactly.

Another customer enters the store. The bell jingles.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE ON COLUMBUS - DAY

A little truck carrying a knife sharpener, its bells ringing, passes the building under construction.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

WORKERS, ELECTRICIANS, MASONS, CARPENTERS, etc. in the process of building what looks like a large store. Wires hanging everywhere.

KEVIN

The electrical contractor called. His truck hit a deer last night, he won't be in 'til tomorrow. The shelves are late because the shipment of pine had beetles. And there's some question about whether we're installing the stairs in the right spot --

JOE

That sounds great.

KEVIN

Testing one two three four.

JOE

Is the electrician here?

KEVIN

I just told you -- he hit a deer.

JOE

I hear nothing. Not a sound on the city streets, just the beat of my own heart. I think that's the way it goes. Something like that.

KEVIN

(beginning to glean something)

Did you and Patricia get engaged?

JOE

Engaged? Are you crazy?

KEVIN

I thought you liked Patricia --

JOE

I love Patricia. Patricia's amazing. Patricia makes coffee nervous.  
(suddenly all business)

Are we still on schedule?

KEVIN

We open two weeks before Thanksgiving.

JOE

I guess we should announce ourselves soon. Tell people we're coming.

KEVIN

This is the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The minute they hear they'll be lining up --

JOE

-- to picket --

KEVIN

-- the big bad --

JOE

--chain store --

KEVIN

-- that destroys --

JOE

-- everything we hold dear. But we'll seduce them with our square footage and our deep armchairs and our amazingly swift checkout lines and our discounts and our...

JOE & KEVIN  
(the trump card)

-- cappuccino.

JOE

They hate us in the beginning, but we get them in the end. Meanwhile we should just put up a sign -- Coming soon, a Foxbooks Superstore and The End of Western Civilization As We Know It.

INT. FOXBOOKS - WORLD HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Joe is in the office with his father, NELSON FOX, and his grandfather, SCHUYLER FOX. The office has been recently redecorated; everything is new and a little overdone.

On the wall we see the Foxbooks logo.

JOE

Kevin and I are both a little concerned about the neighborhood response --  
(suddenly notices the garish couch)  
What is this fabric? Does it have a name?

NELSON

Money. Its name is money.

JOE

Gillian selected it.

NELSON

Of course.

SCHUYLER

Your father is getting married again.

JOE

Oh, great, congratulations, Dad. Why?

NELSON

Who knows? Why does anyone get married?

JOE

Love.

NELSON

Yes, that is one reason.

SCHUYLER

I think you're a damn fool.

NELSON

Dad, Matthew is four. It would be nice for him if his parents were married.

SCHUYLER

Annabel is eight and I'm not married to her mother. I can't even remember her mother's name.

(he laughs merrily)

JOE

I have a very sad announcement to make. City Books on 23rd Street is going under ...

Nelson, Shuyler, and Joe high-five each other.

NELSON

Another independent bookstore bites the dust --

SCHUYLER

On to the next.

JOE

And I'm buying their entire stock -- architecture, New York history -- for the new store.

NELSON

How much are your paying?

JOE

Whatever it costs, it won't be as much as this exquisite mohair episode.

(indicates the couch)

We're also going to have a section on West Side Writers --

SCHUYLER

-- as a sop to the neighborhood.

NELSON

Perfect. It'll keep those West Side liberal nut pseudo-intellectual bleeding hearts --

JOE  
Readers. They're called readers.

NELSON  
Don't romanticize them. It'll keep them  
from jumping down your throat --

SCHUYLER  
What's the competition?

JOE  
One mystery store. Sleuth, on 86th and  
Amsterdam. And a children's bookstore.  
The Shop Around the Corner. Been there  
forever.

SCHUYLER  
Cecilia's store.

JOE  
Who's that?

SCHUYLER  
Cecilia Kelly, lovely woman. I think we  
might have had a date once. Or maybe we  
just exchange letters.

JOE  
You wrote her letters?

SCHUYLER  
Mail. It was called mail.

NELSON  
(fondly nostalgic and  
kidding it slightly)  
Stamps. Envelopes.

JOE  
Wait. I've heard of it. It was a means  
of communication before I was born.

NELSON  
Exactly.

SCHUYLER  
Cecilia had beautiful penmanship. She  
was too young for me, but she was...  
enchanting. Her daughter owns it now.

NELSON  
Too bad for her.

As a DECORATOR walks into the office carrying a pile of upholstered pillows, and Joe turns to look at them.

COMPUTER VOICE (OVER)  
Welcome. You've got mail.

JOE (V.O.)  
My father is getting married again. For five years he's been living with a woman who studied decorating at Caesar's Palace.

COMPUTER VOICE (OVER)  
You've got mail.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Kathleen looks up from her book as a butterfly flies through the subway car.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
Once I read a story about a butterfly in the subway, and today I saw one. I couldn't believe it. It got on at 42nd --  
(continued)

The train comes to a stop. The butterfly flies out.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
-- and got off at 59th, where I assume it was going to Bloomindale's to buy a hat that will turn out to be a mistake. As almost all hats are.

EXT. H & H BAGELS - NIGHT

A flour truck is unloading flour into a hole in the ground.

JOE (V.O.)  
Did you know that every night a truck pulls up to H&H Bagels and pumps about a ton of flour into the ground? The air is absolutely amazing.

As Joe comes around the corner and sees the dust filling the air. It is amazing.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
I guess I've read Pride & Prejudice about 100 times --

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - DAY

As Joe reads a copy of Pride and Prejudice. He can't stand it.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

-- and every time I read it I worry that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are not going to get together -- but the truth is whenever I think about my favorite book I always think about the books I read as a child --

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

As Kathleen takes a copy of Homer Price off the shelf.

JOE (V.O.)

Did you ever read Homer Price? My all-time favorite children's book.  
(continued)

She opens it to the illustration of the doughnut machine that won't stop making doughnuts.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)

There's a doughnut machine in it that won't stop making doughnuts, they just keep coming down the chute just as regular as a clock can tick.

EXT. KRISPY KREME STORE - DAY

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

Have you been to Krispy Kreme?  
(continued)

Joe, eating a doughnut, looks through the window at the huge doughnut machine as the doughnuts roll down the chute just as regular as a clock can tick.

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)

There's a doughnut machine right in the window that makes 110 dozen doughnuts an hour.

EXT. STARBUCKS - DAY

As Joe leaves with his morning coffee.

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - NEW YORK - MORNING

Joe goes to his painter at work: COMING SOON is as far as he's gotten.

EXT. STARBUCKS - DAY

She enters Starbucks.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

As Kathleen buys her morning coffee and listens to everyone ordering.

We can hear the sounds of Starbucks: "Short decaf cap," "Tall mocha latte." "Grande lowfat regular." Etc.

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - A HALF HOUR LATER

The painter is further along on the sign. It now reads: COMING SOON, A FOXBOOKS SU --

Kathleen walks past the construction site. She doesn't really pay attention to the sign painter.

We see two police cars barreling up 75th Street, followed by a television news truck.

EXT. BROADWAY - CONTINUOUS

The police cars and TV truck barrel uptown.

EXT. 101ST STREET - CONTINUOUS

They turn left onto West 101st and stop in front of an apartment building on the block. There are more police cars and a horde of television reporters with microphones, etc.

George emerges from the building as a newscaster broadcasts.

TV REPORTER

The body of a woman was found this morning on the roof of a New York building...

As George comes out of his building into a horde of REPORTERS with microphones, cameras, etc. and listens to the reporter, who, seeing George, sticks the microphone into his face.

TV REPORTER

Here is a resident of the building. Your name, please?

GEORGE

George Pappas.

REPORTER

Did you see or hear anything unusual last night?

GEORGE

No. I didn't go out.

At that moment, George sees a young woman. This is MEREDITH CARTER. He is struck dumb.

REPORTER

The victim was red-haired, about thirty-five, wearing a jogging suit. Did you encounter anyone by that description in the building? Sir?

George hasn't heard a word.

REPORTER

Have there been any wild parties lately?

George doesn't answer.

REPORTER

Could it perhaps be one of your neighbors?

George continues to stare at the beautiful woman. As he does, she notices him. She stares back. The reporter, ignored, finally turns away.

REPORTER

(to camera)

As you can see, no one here knows anything.

He continues to stand there, dumbstruck for a moment. Meredith Carter starts to walk away.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

As George walks along Broadway, past the sign, which now says: "COMING SOON: A FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE". He sees it.

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER

Kathleen and several CUSTOMERS in the store.

George walks in and goes to the back to hang up his coat. Christina is unpacking boxes. Birdie is at the desk. George looks at Christina meaningfully.

CHRISTINA

(totally mystified)

What?

GEORGE

The coup de foudre. I had one. I never believed in them, but I just had one.

BIRDIE

Is that the thing where you get cold suddenly, bang?

CHRISTINA

No, that's the coup de vieux.

BIRDIE

I had that.

GEORGE

The coup de foudre is where you get love suddenly, bang. A thunderbolt.

BIRDIE

I had that too. Only I had it in Seville, where it was called, el estruendo de amor.

GEORGE

I don't know her name, or anything about her. I may never see her again.

CHRISTINA

And if you ever do meet her, you'll find out all the horrible details, and that will be that. She'll turn out to have pictures of the Virgin Mary all over the walls.

GEORGE

I won't care.

Kathleen sticks her head into the back.

KATHLEEN

Can someone help me out here?

CHRISTINA

George had a coup de foudre.

GEORGE

And Christina's making fun of me.

KATHLEEN

Don't let her. I believe in this, I completely believe in this. It happened to Madame Bovary, at least six times.

CHRISTINA

And she was wrong every time.

KATHLEEN

Yes!

(beat)

Who was she?

GEORGE

I don't know. She was standing outside my building with the police and the reporters.

KATHLEEN

What police and reporters?

GEORGE

Someone died.

KATHLEEN

Who?

GEORGE

I have no idea about that either. They found her on the roof.

KATHLEEN

A dead body. That's so sad. But you fell in love. That's so great.

GEORGE

Oh. One other thing.

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - DAY

The sign is now complete and it says: "Coming soon, just around the corner. A Foxbooks Superstore."

Kathleen and George and Christina stand there looking at it.

CHRISTINA

Quel nightmare.

KATHLEEN

It has nothing to do with us. It's big, impersonal, overstocked and full of ignorant salespeople.

GEORGE

But they discount.

KATHLEEN

But they don't provide any service. We do.

George and Christina nod.

INT. BARNEY GREENGRASS - LUNCHTIME

Kathleen is having lunch with Birdie.

KATHLEEN

So really it's a good development. You know how in the flower district, there are all these flower shops in a row so you can find whatever you want. Well, this is going to be the book district. If you don't have it, we do.

BIRDIE

And vice versa.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Kathleen in the kitchen, unloading groceries. Frank is standing there, plugging in an Olympia Report deluxe Electric typewriter.

FRANK

When you are finished with Foxbooks, the Shop Around the Corner is going to be responsible for reversing the entire course of the Industrial Revolution.

KATHLEEN

That is so sweet, Frank. Thank you. That is so sweet.

FRANK

Hey --

He holds his arms out. They hug.

KATHLEEN

Although...

FRANK

What?

KATHLEEN

(over his shoulder, she notices the typewriter, breaks from the hug)

What is that doing there?

FRANK

Listen to it. Just listen--

He strikes a key. Practically swoons.

FRANK

The Olympia Report deluxe Electric Report. As in gunshot.

KATHLEEN

That sound is familiar.

FRANK

Now listen to this.

He puts his ear to the typewriter.

Kathleen listens too.

KATHLEEN

That whirring?

FRANK

The gentle and soothing lullaby of a piece of machinery so perfect --

KATHLEEN

I know where I've heard it before. I know.

She whips a cover off the other typewriter on the table. It's the same machine exactly.

FRANK

I needed a backup.

KATHLEEN

Don't you have another one at your apartment?

FRANK

I might, I might. So what?

KATHLEEN

You're turning my apartment into a typewriter museum.

FRANK

I'll stop. I'll try. I probably can't. I see one and my knees go weak. Anyway, what were you starting to say?

KATHLEEN

When?

FRANK

Before.

KATHLEEN

Nothing.

FRANK

Come on.

KATHLEEN

I don't know. I was just wondering about my work and all. I mean, what is it I do exactly? All I really do is run a bookstore --

FRANK

All you really do is this incredibly noble thing --

Kathleen nods.

KATHLEEN

But I don't know if I --

FRANK

(stopping her)

Kathleen --

KATHLEEN

But I just --

FRANK

You are a lone reed.

Kathleen looks puzzled.

He sticks a piece of paper in the typewriter, starts typing.

FRANK

You are a lone reed waving in the breeze standing strong and tall in the corrupt sands of commerce.

He whips the piece of paper out of the typewriter and hands it to her.

KATHLEEN

(reading from it)

I am a lone reed.

(tries it on again)

I am a lone reed.

Clutching her piece of paper, she wanders into the bathroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

We hear the sound of a typewriter begin to clack away in the next room.

Kathleen walks past her computer, looks at it. Then she goes over to the window, looks out at her street at dusk.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S STREET - DUSK

A group of schoolgirls in uniform, in two straight lines, walk past with a tall woman.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DUSK

She goes over to the bookshelf and pulls out a copy of Madeleine by Ludwig Bemelmans and opens it to the illustration of the twelve little girls in two straight lines marching through the streets of Paris. She looks at it, then looks up, lost in thought. We hear the sound of the computer keys.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

Sometimes I wonder about my life. I lead a small life. Well, not small, but circumscribed. And sometimes I wonder, do I do it because I like it, or because I haven't been brave? So much of what I see reminds me of something I read in a book, when shouldn't it be the other way around?

(continued)

And hold on her as she thinks about this.

In the other room, we hear Frank typing.

Kathleen goes to the computer, turns it on.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

As we see Kathleen, through her curtains, a small figure barely lit by her computer.

KATHLEEN (V.O., cont'd)

I don't really want an answer. I just want to send this cosmic question out into the void. So goodnight, dear void.

INT. DRIP - DAY

Drip is a cafe on Amsterdam Avenue with Fifties-style couches and chairs in cozy seating arrangements. Kathleen is standing at the front counter with Christina, getting drinks.

CHRISTINA

I went to the Foxbooks Website and you can buy anything. They ship it to you in a day. Maybe we should get a website.

KATHLEEN

My mother would never have wanted us to have a website. "Every book you sell is a gift from your heart." She always said that.

As they walk toward the back of the cafe, Kathleen notices a stack of loose-leaf binders on the table.

CHRISTINA

What if they put us out of business?

KATHLEEN

It's out of the question. We're a fixture in the neighborhood. We're practically a landmark.

(indicating the  
binders)

Men For Women, Women for Men, Women for Women -- what is this?

CHRISTINA

You fill out one of these forms and they file it in the book and if someone wants to meet you, they arrange it.

KATHLEEN

What a stupid way to meet someone.

CHRISTINA

Compared to the Internet?

KATHLEEN

My little thing on the Internet is just a lark.

CHRISTINA

So it's still going on?

KATHLEEN

And I do not plan to meet him.  
(indicating the book)

Why do I get the feeling that you are in here somewhere?

Christina flips the book open to her application.

CHRISTINA

I came in here one night and drank too much coffee and filled one out.

(off Kathleen's look)

Well how am I supposed to meet someone?

KATHLEEN

You are a runner. Some day you will make eye contact with another runner and --

CHRISTINA

No one ever even looks at me. They don't. On top of which, who are they? They could like the symphony. I could never fall in love with someone who likes to go to the symphony --

KATHLEEN

I know. What are you supposed to do there?

CHRISTINA

I don't know.

KATHLEEN

Sit. You're supposed to sit.

CHRISTINA

I could never fall in love with anyone who smokes cigars either.

KATHLEEN

I'll tell you what I hate. Big fat legs like stumps.

CHRISTINA

Yeah. I hate that too.

KATHLEEN

The worst, the worst -- I could never, under any circumstances, love anybody who had a sailboat.

CHRISTINA

Neither could I.

KATHLEEN

If I had to get up on Saturday morning knowing that I was about to go down to the pier and unravel all those ropes and put on all that sunblock --

CHRISTINA

All that talk about the wind.

KATHLEEN

And then you have to go out on the boat, and you sail and sail and sail until you are bored witless, and then, only then, do they say, let's turn around and you realize the trip is only half over, only it's not, because the wind has changed --

CHRISTINA

It hasn't changed. It's died.

KATHLEEN

So then there's more talk about the wind. While you just float up and down trying not to get nauseous. And when you finally get back, you have to clean up the boat.

CHRISTINA

Why don't people have boat maids?

KATHLEEN

I know. There're all these people who wouldn't be caught dead polishing a doorknob in their house but put them on a boat and they want to rub down everything in sight.

EXT. 19TH STREET BOAT BASIN - ANOTHER DAY

Joe is on his sailboat. He is polishing his brass and whistling.

ANNABEL

Joe --

Joe jumps off the boat onto the dock to greet his grandfather's daughter ANNABEL, 8, who is coming toward the dock with GILLIAN, his father's overdecorated 32-year-old fiance, her son, MATTHEW, 4, and the Nanny, MAUREEN.

JOE

Hello.

(picks up Annabel)

Annabel, how are you today?

ANNABEL

Great.

JOE  
 (picks up Matt)  
 Hey, big guy --

GILLIAN  
 Don't I get a hello?

JOE  
 Hello, Gillian.

GILLIAN  
 Kiss me. I'm going to be your wicked  
 stepmother.

Joe gives her a peck on the cheek.

JOE  
 Who is this?

GILLIAN  
 Nanny Maureen. I brought her in case  
 you couldn't handle the kids.

ANNABEL  
 Maureen's getting a divorce.

JOE  
 I'm sorry to hear that.

MAUREEN  
 It's my own fault. Never marry a man  
 who lies.

JOE  
 That is so wise. Remember that, Annabel.

ANNABEL  
 She taught Matt to spell his name.

MATT  
 Fox. F-O-X.

JOE  
 Excellent, Matt.  
 (to Maureen)  
 Good work. You can have the day off.  
 I'll take over from here.  
 (to Gillian)  
 You must be late for something.  
 Volunteer work at the Henry Street  
 Settlement. Packing bandages for  
 Bosnian refugees. A course in Chinese  
 literature at Columbia.

GILLIAN

I am. I'm having my eggs harvested.

EXT. STREET FAIR - DAY

There's a block street fair with little booths, sausage sandwich concessions, etc. Annabel and Matt have been to the makeup booth. Annabel is a cat and Matt is a pirate. Annabel is carrying a goldfish in a baggie as they walk toward Broadway.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S STORE - DAY

As Joe, Annabel and Matt walk past. There's some sort of toy miniature princess in a pointed hat sitting outside the store and a sign lit with twinkle lights: Storybook Lady today 3:30.

INT. KATHLEEN'S STORE - DAY

Kathleen is sitting on a stool reading to a group of CHILDREN, including Annabel and Matt, who are crammed into her store. Joe is watching, along with some PARENTS as Kathleen reads from a Roald Dahl book.

INT. KATHLEEN'S STORE - LATE

Matt is sitting on the floor reading a book. Kathleen is showing Annabel a copy of a book called Betsy-Tacy.

KATHLEEN

This is her best friend Tacy, whose real name is Anastasia, and then in the next book Betsy and Tacy become friends with Tib, whose real name, I am sorry to tell you, is Thelma.

In another section of the store:

George is showing Joe a first edition of Swiss Family Robinson from the glass case.

GEORGE

The illustrations are hand-tipped, which is why --

JOE

It costs so much.

GEORGE

It's why it's worth so much.

Joe smiles and turns to see Kathleen and Annabel at a whole shelf of Betsy-Tacy books.

ANNABEL  
I want all of them.

KATHLEEN  
That might be an awful lot for your dad  
to buy at one time.

ANNABEL  
My dad gets me all the books I want.

KATHLEEN  
(looking over at Joe)  
Well, that's very nice of him.

ANNABEL  
That's not my dad. That's my nephew --

KATHLEEN  
Oh, I don't really think that's your  
nephew --

As Joe approaches.

JOE  
It's true. Annabel is my aunt. Aren't  
you, Aunt Annabel?

Annabel nods solemnly.

ANNABEL  
And Matt is --

KATHLEEN  
Let me guess.  
(to Matt)  
Are you his uncle?

MATT  
No.

KATHLEEN  
His grandfather?

Annabel and Matt start giggling.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)  
His great-grandfather?

MATT  
(shouting with glee)  
I'm his brother.

JOE

Annabel is my grandfather's daughter.  
And Matt is my father's son. We are an  
American family.

He smiles at Kathleen, who finds herself smiling back.

Annabel suddenly sneezes.

Kathleen takes a handkerchief from her sleeve. It's an old  
fashioned hankie that's embroidered. She offers it to  
Annabel, who instead wipes her nose with her hand and then  
looks at the handkerchief, a little puzzled.

ANNABEL

What is that?

KATHLEEN

A handkerchief. Oh my, do children not  
even know what handkerchiefs are? A  
handkerchief is a Kleenex you don't  
throw away. My mother embroidered it  
for me --you see? My initials and a  
daisy, because daisies are my favorite  
flower.

ANNABEL

Orchids are my favorite flower.

KATHLEEN

(to Joe)

You know what else children don't know?  
They don't know what a telephone booth  
is?

Joe is looking at Kathleen.

JOE

Who are you?

KATHLEEN

Kathleen Kelly. I own this store. And  
you are?

JOE

Joe. Just call me Joe.  
(quickly)  
We'll take these books.

He gets the one Matt is reading. And the two other Kathleen  
has gotten for Annabel.

KATHLEEN

These are wonderful books. As Annabel gets older the characters in the books do, too.

(to Annabel)

You can grow up with Betsy.

GEORGE

You're going to come back again, aren't you?

JOE

Of course.

GEORGE

This is why we're never going to go under. Our customers are loyal.

KATHLEEN

(by way of  
explanation)

They're opening a Foxbooks around the corner.

ANNABEL

Foxbooks! My Daddy --

JOE

(gently putting his  
hand over her mouth)

-- likes to buy at discount. Don't tell anyone that, Annabel, it's nothing to be proud of --

MATT

(spelling)

F-o-x.

KATHLEEN

That's amazing. You can spell fox. Can you spell dog?

MATT

F-o-x.

JOE

Matt, look at this dinosaur book. Wouldn't you like a dinosaur book? Annabel, maybe you could read this to Matt while I wrap things up here.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)  
(moves them to a  
corner, to them  
quickly)

Sit down, read, and don't listen to  
anything I say.

Returns to counter and gives Kathleen some cash.

JOE  
And the dinosaur book too.

KATHLEEN  
The world is not driven by discounts,  
believe me. I've been in business  
forever. I started helping my mother  
here after school when I was six years  
old. I used to watch her, and it wasn't  
that she was selling books, it was that  
she was helping people become whoever  
they were going to turn out to be. When  
you read a book as a child it becomes  
part of your identity in a way that no  
other reading in your life does.  
(stops herself)  
I guess I've gotten carried away.

JOE  
You have, and you've made me feel...

He can't finish the sentence. He looks at her and sees,  
behind her on the shelf, a picture of a woman who is  
unmistakably Kathleen's mother, with a young Kathleen.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Enchanting, your mother was enchanting.

KATHLEEN  
She was. How did you know that?

JOE  
Lucky guess.

KATHLEEN  
Anyway. She left the store to me, and  
I'm going to leave it to my daughter.

JOE  
How old is your daughter now?

KATHLEEN  
Oh, I'm not married. But eventually.

She smiles at Joe...

KATHLEEN  
So Foxbooks can...

KATHLEEN AND GEORGE TOGETHER  
Go to hell.

KATHLEEN  
(handing him his  
books)  
Here you go.

JOE  
We ready?

Annabel and Matt join him at the counter. Kathleen gives them each a lollipop.

ANNABEL  
Bye, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN  
Goodbye, Annabel. Bye, Matt. What about cat? Can you spell cat?

MATT  
F-o-x.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Someplace like the auditorium at the Museum of Broadcasting. PATRICIA EDEN, Joe's girlfriend, who is the editor-in-chief of a New York publishing house called Eden Books, is standing at a podium at a sales conference. In the audience are sales reps, wholesalers, etc. There's a screen behind her with pictures of the authors being flashed on it as she speaks.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)  
And now, the book you've all been waiting for, the book it's been my dreams to publish. The legendary Veronica Grant has written her memoirs --

There's a burst of applause as a photograph of Veronica Grant flashes on screen.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)  
-- and I'm happy to report it is just crammed with tragedy.  
(she laughs gaily)  
Just kidding, but seriously, it's all here: poverty, addiction, divorce, tracheotomies --

We see pictures of Veronica at eight with her sharecropper family, Veronica at 14 with her first child, Veronica with a series of husbands, Veronica in a wheelchair, etc.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

-- her third husband beat her up, hip replacement, and an amazing face lift where all the injected fat fell to her chin.

Now we see a blow-up of the book's jacket, with a picture of Veronica on it and the title: "Am I Rising from Ashes, or Did I Just Forget to Dust?"

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

This book is fabulous. And even if it weren't, it would sell like crazy, because Veronica is going to plug it to death on every talk show in America. This book...

Patricia bursts into tears.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I can't talk about it without crying. Veronica and I have so much in common -- well, not all the sad parts --but we were both famous by the time we were 29 and, believe me, that's rough.

(wipes her nose with a Kleenex, pulling herself together)

Anyway, I just want to say that I'm especially thrilled to be publishing it. Veronica lives in my building and we met in the elevator. By the time we had traveled from the eighth floor to the first, we had a deal. First printing: one million copies.

Everyone applauds enthusiastically.

INT. AUDITORIUM LOBBY - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Patricia is leaving, still surrounded by colleagues and sales reps congratulating her. She is the soul of graciousness. Her assistant, Sarah, comes up.

SARAH

(quickly)

You have a dentist appointment in twenty minutes. So you should leave soon...

PATRICIA  
What's my car number?

SARAH  
Car? You didn't say anything about a car --

PATRICIA  
Are you an idiot? Of course I need a car. God!

She walks toward the exit.

EXT. 57TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Patricia in the pouring rain, trying to hail a cab. She spots one across the street.

PATRICIA  
Taxi! Taxi! Taxi!

She whistles -- a longshoreman's whistle.

The cab makes a U-turn, but instead of stopping for Patricia it stops about twenty feet ahead for a MAN in an overcoat who gets into it.

PATRICIA  
Excuse me -- what are you doing? This is my taxicab.  
(to the driver)  
Don't take him. I am telling you right now, and I am memorizing your number, don't take him.  
(to the man)  
Who the fuck do you think you are?

MAN IN OVERCOAT  
Are you going uptown?

PATRICIA  
Yes.

MAN IN OVERCOAT  
Get in. I'll drop you.

INT. TAXI - A MINUTE LATER

As the cab turns onto Eighth Avenue, starts uptown.

Patricia is dialing her cell phone. She's elaborately ignoring the man who stole her cab.

PATRICIA

Veronica, it's Patricia, you should have been there, it was unbelievable, we're going to sell truckloads of your book. Call me.

She hangs up, folds up the phone, puts it back in her purse as the cab moves on.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

Are you an editor?

PATRICIA

Yes.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

I am a rabbi.

PATRICIA

Oh, my God, I said fuck to a rabbi. I'm sorry.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

I hope you don't mind my asking, but are you Jewish?

PATRICIA

Yes.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

You should come to our temple.

PATRICIA

I'm not really religious.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

Oh, I am surprised, you seem like a very religious person.

PATRICIA

You're kidding, right?

MAN IN OVERCOAT

We are at West End Avenue and 83rd Street. Every Friday night, we have a joyous time, everyone dancing, everyone singing. Also some wisdom. Perhaps you have heard of us, we are known as The Singles Temple.

He smiles at her.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

It's a very good place to calm down.

The cab stops.

MAN IN OVERCOAT

Oh, look, I am already here. Very nice to meet you.

(gives the cabbie money)

Take this woman to her destination.

He gets out. Closes the door. A beat too late:

PATRICIA

Goodbye.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Frank comes up the stoop.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kathleen is dressed up for a party.

Frank walks in, looks meaningfully at her.

FRANK

I saw him. I actually saw him.

KATHLEEN

Who?

FRANK

I can't believe it. I saw William Spungeon.

KATHLEEN

I thought he was in Mexico.

FRANK

Maybe he's in Mexico, but today he was in New York. The most brilliant and reclusive novelist in the history of the world is here, in this neighborhood. He may be living on this very block.

KATHLEEN

Where did you see him?

FRANK

I was on the subway --

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

FRANK (V.O.)  
-- and this musician got onto the  
train --

Frank is sitting on the subway, reading the Village Voice. The door between the cars opens and a man playing the clarinet enters the car.

No one looks up except Frank.

FRANK (V.O.)  
-- and I suddenly saw him, sitting  
directly across from me doing the  
crossword puzzle.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
How'd you know it was him?

FRANK (V.O.)  
He looked exactly the same as his high  
school yearbook picture, which happens  
to be the last photograph ever taken of  
him.

Frank takes out his billfold on the subway, pulls out a piece of paper.

CLOSE UP - FOLDED PIECE OF PAPER

As Frank unfolds a newspaper clipping of a yearbook picture of William Spungeon at 17.

Frank compares the photo of Spungeon with the person sitting across the way. They don't look remotely alike except that the boy in the picture and the man on the subway are both wearing the same style glasses.

The subway stops at 79th Street, and William Spungeon gets off. Frank follows.

EXT. BROADWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Frank comes out of the subway station and looks around.

FRANK  
So I followed him.

Frank sees Spungeon cross 79th. He follows.

EXT. H&H BAGELS - CONTINUOUS

Frank follows Spungeon, who hurries into H&H Bagels passing a HOMELESS MAN holding a paper cup at the door.

FRANK (V.O.)  
He went into H&H and bought a bagel with everything.

EXT. H&H BAGELS - A MINUTE LATER

As Spungeon leaves the store, passing the paper cup, which we now realize that Frank, in dark glasses, is holding.

Spungeon drops his newspaper in a garbage container.

FRANK (V.O.)  
He dropped his crossword into the garbage and I rescued it.

Frank plucks the puzzle from the trashcan, follows Spungeon.

INT. SPORTING GOOD STORE - CONTINUOUS

Spungeon at the counter in the shoe store.

FRANK (V.O.)  
Then he went into a sporting good store and bought tube socks, 6 pair for \$7.99.

We see Frank, peeking out at him from behind a stack of running pants. Suddenly he's distracted by a couple of joggers.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
William Spungeon and tube socks.

FRANK (V.O.)  
I know. I don't want to dwell on it.

Frank looks back at the counter. Spungeon's gone.

FRANK (V.O.)  
And then I lost him.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Frank waves the crossword puzzle in front of Kathleen.

FRANK  
Do you know what this is worth?

He takes an empty instant-frame from the closet, puts the puzzle into it and sets it next to the typewriters.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As the two of them eat dinner.

FRANK

What I was thinking as I was trailing him was that eventually I would have the courage to say hello to him, you know, not in a horrible, intrusive or slavering fan-slash-acolyte kind of way, but more like, "Hi." "How ya doing?" "Have you ever thought about trading up in the sock area?" "Who knows, maybe he's read my work -- and then we'd become friends, and eventually I'd introduce him to you --you know how much he loves children's books, there's a whole long section in Relativity's Smile about The Wizard of Oz -- and then maybe he'd come out of hiding so he could help save the store.

KATHLEEN

What are you talking about?

FRANK

From Foxbooks. I mean, if things got tough, he could help rally support --

KATHLEEN

It's never going to get to that. The store is fine.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As they walk along after dinner.

FRANK

I don't even know why you would say that?

KATHLEEN

Neither do I. It just flew out of my mouth.

FRANK

There's enough business for us all.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

As they go up in an elevator.

KATHLEEN

I mean, we're fine.

FRANK

You're more than fine, you're absolutely fine.

KATHLEEN

We're fine.

The elevator opens onto:

INT. VINCE MANCINI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A publication party for an author named VINCE MANCINI. A mix of book people, journalists and various other media folk.

FRANK

Hey, Vince. Congratulations. You know Kathleen Kelly.

VINCE

How are you?

FRANK

Guess who I saw today on the subway? William Spurgeon.

VINCE

I thought he was in Mexico.

They start chatting. Across the room, Joe is with Patricia, who is telling two other people the story of meeting the rabbi in the taxicab. Joe looks over and sees Kathleen. He suddenly looks stricken.

Shifts his position so Kathleen can't see his face, but sneaks a look.

PATRICIA

Would you get me another drink, sweetie? I'm all out.

(continues chattering)

So then the rabbi says, "It's a very good place to calm down." Isn't that hysterical?

They all laugh. Joe moves over to the bar.

JOE

Absolut on the rocks.

As he is waiting, Kathleen comes up next to him.

KATHLEEN  
 A white wine, please.  
                   (very friendly)  
 Oh, hello.

                  JOE  
 Hi.

                  KATHLEEN  
 Remember me, from the bookstore?

                  JOE  
 Of course I remember you.

                  KATHLEEN  
 How's your aunt?

                  JOE  
 Good. She's good.  
                   (gets his drink)  
 I have to deliver this. I have a very  
 thirsty date. She's part camel.

Kathleen laughs.

                  KATHLEEN  
 Joe. It's Joe, isn't it?

                  JOE  
 And you're Kathleen.

Joe vanishes into the party.

INT. VINCE MANCINI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - A MINUTE LATER

                  VINCE  
 I can't believe you were talking to Joe  
 Fox.

                  KATHLEEN  
 Joe Fox? As in --

She can't even finish the sentence.

INT. VINCE MANCINI'S APARTMENT - A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER

Joe is standing at a table of food, his back to the room.

                  KATHLEEN  
 Fox? Your last name is Fox?

Joe spins around, looks at her.

JOE

F-O-X.

KATHLEEN

God, I didn't realize. I didn't know  
who you --

(she trails off)

JOE

-- were with.

(quoting)

"I didn't know who you were with."

KATHLEEN

Excuse me?

JOE

It's from the Godfather. When the movie  
producer realizes that Tom Hagen is the  
emissary of Vito Corleone --

(continued)

Kathleen is staring at him.

JOE (CONT'D)

-- just before the horse's head ends up  
in his bed never mind --

KATHLEEN

You were spying on me, weren't you? You  
probably rented those children.

JOE

Why would I spy on you?

KATHLEEN

I am your competition. Which you know  
perfectly well or you would not have put  
up that sign saying "Just around the  
Corner."

JOE

The entrance to our store is around the  
corner. There is no other way to say  
it. It's not the name of our store, it's  
where it is. You don't own "around the  
corner."

KATHLEEN

Next thing you'll be using twinkle  
lights.

JOE

Twinkle lights?

KATHLEEN

Little white Christmas lights that twinkle. I use them in my window and on all my displays, as if you didn't notice.

JOE

Look, the reason I came into your store is that I was spending the day with Annabel and Matt. I like to buy them a present when I see them because I'm one of those guys who likes to buy his way into the hearts of children who are his relatives. There was only one place to buy children's books in the neighborhood -- although that will not always be the case, and it was yours, and it is a charming little bookstore. You probably sell \$250,000 worth of book a year --

KATHLEEN

How do you know that?

JOE

I'm in the book business.

KATHLEEN

I'm in the book business --

JOE

Oh, I see, and we're the Price Club. Only instead of a ten-gallon can of olive oil for \$3.99 that won't even fit into your kitchen cabinet, we're selling cheap books. Me a spy.

(beat)

Absolutely. And I managed to get my hands on a secret printout of the sales figures of a bookstore so inconsequential and yet full of its own virtue that I was instantly compelled to rush over and check it out for fear it would drive me out of business --

Kathleen stares at him. She's speechless.

JOE (CONT'D)

What?

(off her look)

What?

Kathleen shakes her head.

Frank turns up.

FRANK

Hi. I'm Frank Navasky --

JOE

-- Joe Fox.

FRANK

Joe Fox? Inventor of the Superstore, enemy of the mid-list novel, destroyer of City Books -- tell me something: How do you sleep at night?

Patricia joins them.

PATRICIA

I use a wonderful over-the-counter drug, Ultrason. Don't take the whole thing, just half, and you will wake up without even that tiniest hangover. You're Frank Navasky, aren't you?

FRANK

Yes.

PATRICIA

Your last piece in the Independent, the one about Anthony Powell, was brilliant. I'm Patricia Eden, Eden Books. Joe, this man is the greatest living expert on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg --

JOE

And this is Kathleen Kelly --

Kathleen glares at him.

FRANK

You liked my piece. God, I'm flattered. You know you write these things and you think someone's going to mention them and then the whole week goes by and the phone doesn't ring, and you think Oh, God, I'm a fraud, a failure --

PATRICIA

You know what's always fascinated me about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg is how old they looked when they were really just our age.

Everyone is stopped dead by this observation and looks at Patricia, who smiles at them all.

PATRICIA  
(to Frank)

I'm so happy to have finally met you.  
We will talk. Have you ever thought  
about doing a book?

FRANK  
Oh sure, it's passed through my head.  
Something really relevant for today like  
the Luddite movement in 19th century  
England.

At the same time:

JOE  
Patricia --

KATHLEEN  
Frank --

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Kathleen and Frank get into bed.

FRANK  
I really like Patricia Eden. She's a  
very nice person.

Kathleen doesn't respond. Frank turns out the light.

FRANK  
She needs educating, that's all.

A beat.

FRANK  
She's hopelessly driven by money and  
power, but there's a hope for anyone  
who's that familiar with my work --

On Kathleen, as she turns away from Frank and lies there,  
eyes open.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Joe and Patricia get into bed. Brinkley is already on the  
bed.

PATRICIA  
I had no idea that Frank Navasky was so  
down-to-earth.

Joe doesn't respond. Patricia turns out the light.

PATRICIA

You read his stuff, you think he's going to be so obscure and abstruse.

A beat.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

He's always talking about Heidigger and Foucault and I have no idea what any of it's about, really.

Joe gets up. Brinkley follows.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

JOE

I'm not really tired.

INT. JOE'S DEN - NIGHT

Joe writes on his computer. Brinkley on the floor next to him.

And cut between Joe and his computer screen.

JOE (V.O.)

Do you ever feel you become the worst version of yourself? That a Pandora's Box of all the secret hateful parts -- your arrogance, your spite, your condescension -- has sprung open. Someone provokes you, and instead of just smiling and moving on, you zing them. Hello, it's Mr. Nasty. I'm sure you have no idea what I'm talking about.

INT. KATHLEEN'S COMPUTER SCREEN - DAY

And cut between screen and

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

As Kathleen reads the end of Joe's letter.

Kathleen hits the Reply key and starts to type:

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I know what you mean and I'm completely jealous. What happens to me when I'm provoked is that I get tongue-tied. My mind goes blank. Then I spend all night tossing and turning trying to think of what I should have said.

INT. JOE'S COMPUTER SCREEN AND JOE'S DEN - NIGHT

As he replies:

JOE (V.O.)

Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could pass all my zingers to you and then I would never behave badly and you could behave badly all the time and we'd both be happy? On the other hand, I must warn you that when you finally have the pleasure of saying the thing you mean to say at the moment you mean to say it, remorse inevitably follows. Do you think we should meet?

INT. KATHLEEN'S COMPUTER SCREEN AND BEDROOM - DAY

Kathleen stares at Joe's letter in her computer.

She's frozen.

KATHLEEN

Meet? Omigod.

She sits staring at the letter. She has no idea what to do.

EXT. 75TH STREET & COLUMBUS - DAY

As the iron gates on all the stores start to open, just the way we saw them open in the opening sequence of the movie. The pharmacy. The optician. The cosmetics supply store. The video store.

And now, finally, we see the new grate on the new Foxbooks Superstore start to open upwards. This is the finest grate on Broadway, no question of it. It's electric and almost soundless. We see a sign saying, OPENING DAY. 35% OFF ON ALL BEST-SELLERS.

People on the street notice the store. One walks in...

CAMERA follows him...

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DAY

The inside is beautiful. Gleaning staircase, a cafe, comfortable chairs to sit, a bank of cashiers, everyone decked out in gray alligator shirts with a fox where the alligator should be, a rope for the checkout line, and seven cash registers with seven cashiers. Of course, books, books, books, as far as the eye can see.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME SCENE - LATER THAT DAY

The store is jam-packed. Joe with his father Nelson, his grandfather Schuyler, and Kevin, the store manager.

JOE

No pickets, no demonstrations.

KEVIN

The neighborhood loves us.

NELSON

They're wondering where we've been all these years. They're wondering how they ever did without it.

SCHUYLER

It's a hit.

They admire their own store, walk through the downstairs and start up the staircase to the second floor.

NELSON

How's the children's book department?

JOE

It's early yet. School isn't out. And there's that children's bookstore nearby --

SCHUYLER

Cecilia's store --

JOE

Her daughter's --

NELSON

We'll crush it --

SCHUYLER

She was enchanting.

And as they walk on upstairs, several mothers with children come up the stairs behind them.

EXT. BROADWAY - MORNING

A little group of children dressed as Pilgrims walk down the street as Kathleen comes around the corner to buy her morning paper. Joe is at the newsstand. She turns and pretends to be staring at a wall until he finishes buying his paper and walks on.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I don't think it's a good idea for us to meet...

INT. STARBUCKS - ANOTHER DAY

Joe is putting sugar into his coffee at the sugar counter as Kathleen comes in. He pretends he didn't see her.

KATHLEEN (V.O., cont'd)

I love our relationship. There's a lot going on in the day-to-dayness of my life and there's something magical...

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DUSK

We see Kathleen and George at the end of the day, counting the receipts. Birdie is using a calculator to total them. Christina is shelving books. There are Thanksgiving decorations -- cardboard turkeys and pilgrims, books on colonists like Myles Standish.

... and thrilling about this island in cyberspace I have with you. SO PLEASE DON'T ASK ME AGAIN.

BIRDIE

About \$1200 less than the same week last year.

KATHLEEN

That could be a fluke, right?

They look at each other.

BIRDIE

Or not.

KATHLEEN

Their store is new. It's a novelty. But it will all shake out. Do you think I should put up more twinkle lights?

BIRDIE

That's a lovely idea.

CHRISTINA

What if we have to fold? I'll never find another part time job and I won't be able to pay the rent and I'll have to move to Brooklyn.

GEORGE

The joy of rent control. Six room for \$450 a month.

CHRISTINA

We know. You've told us a million times. I can't believe you're bringing it up at a time like this. It's like bragging because you're tall. Birdie never brags about her rent and she pays even less than you.

BIRDIE

Ten rooms. I just rattle around from one to the other.

KATHLEEN

Hey, guys. We are not going to fold.

The door opens, and Meredith Carter, the woman George had swooned over in front of his building, walks in.

George stares, frozen in place, as she walks up to him.

MEREDITH

George Pappas?

GEORGE

(I have died and gone  
to heaven)

Yes.

MEREDITH

(flashing her badge)

Detective Carter, 23rd precinct. I'd like to ask you a few questions.

Kathleen suddenly sees George, following Meredith out of the store. He's in a complete daze.

KATHLEEN

George? Where are you going?

He goes out the door.

LAURA MARGULIES, a well-known children's book author, enters as George leaves.

LAURA

Kathleen, are you surviving?

KATHLEEN

Laura! We're so excited about your new book. When should we schedule your signing?

LAURA

Oh, it's being published in January. Are you going to be in business in January? I'm so worried.

KATHLEEN

We're doing great, aren't we?

CHRISTINA

Great.

BIRDIE

No difference whatsoever.

LAURA

Thank God. Well, you know you can count on me. For anything, support, rallies. Picket lines. We can get the Times to write something. Or that nut in the Independent --

KATHLEEN

What nut in the Independent?

LAURA

Frank Navasky. This is just the sort of thing that would outrage him.

She smiles brightly.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

George and Meredith are sitting in a booth.

MEREDITH

Mr. Pappas, I'm investigating the murder of the woman found on the roof of your building. Do you live alone there?

GEORGE

Do I live alone? Yes I do. Do you live alone?

MEREDITH

Yes.

George takes her hand in his and looks at it as if it were the eighth wonder of the world. He starts stroking it, caressing it...

Meredith pulls it away. A beat. Then she gives it right back to him. He continues stroking. They stare at each other. He puts her fingers into his mouth.

MEREDITH  
(overwhelmed)  
What are you doing?

GEORGE  
I don't know. I have no idea.

MEREDITH  
You have to stop.

GEORGE  
I can't.

She utters a little moan.

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - A SHORT WHILE LATER

They come into the apartment. She throws herself into his arms.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE PARK - DAY

As Christina runs, desperately trying to make eye contact with men running in the opposite direction. No one will look at her.

INT. ZABAR'S CHEESE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

The place is mobbed -- the usual crush the night before Thanksgiving.

Kathleen, pushing a shopping cart, is trying to wedge her way through the crowd in the cheese department. As she reaches across three people to grab some Brie, she sees Joe walk into the store. Quickly, she turns her back so he can't see her. She stands there frozen. A beat...

Peeks around, doesn't see him anywhere. Cranes her neck this way and that. No Joe.

INT. ZABAR'S CASHIER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen, now wearing dark glasses but looking not at all disguised, looks around and spots a short line and makes a beeline for it.

At that moment, Joe comes from the Appetizing Department and gets on the line she was heading for.

Panicked, Kathleen retreats onto another line and stands with her back to him.

INT. SAME SCENE - MOMENTS LATER

The CASHIER totals up Kathleen's purchases and Kathleen hands over her credit card.

CASHIER  
This is a Cash Only line.

KATHLEEN  
What?

CASHIER  
Cash Only.

KATHLEEN  
Omigod, I only have a credit card. Is that okay?

PERSON BEHIND HER IN LINE  
Of course it's not okay, there's a sign.

CASHIER  
There's a sign.

PERSON IN LINE  
(to the person behind her)  
She doesn't have cash.

"She doesn't have cash" is repeated all the way down the line.

Joe turns to see what's going on.

ANOTHER PERSON  
Get on another line, lady.

JOE  
Oh, hello.

KATHLEEN  
Hello.

JOE  
Do you need some money?

KATHLEEN  
No, I don't need any money. Thank you very much.

CASHIER  
Get on another line.

JOE

Hi.

(off her nametag, big  
smile)

Rose. Great name. Rose, this is  
Kathleen, I'm Joe, and this is a credit  
card machine. Happy Thanksgiving.

Rose just stares at him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Now it's your turn to say happy  
Thanksgiving back.

ROSE

Happy Thanksgiving back.

Joe looks at her, winks.

JOE

Mississippi is a hard word to spell.  
How do you spell it? I-T.  
(big smile)

Now take this credit card and put it  
through the machine, zip zip.

The cashier, completely charmed, takes Kathleen's credit card.

Kathleen is appalled.

Everyone on the line sighs irritably and audibly.

JOE

So you're fine.

KATHLEEN

Fine.

JOE

Happy Thanksgiving.

As Kathleen signs the charge slip and the cashier  
exasperatedly starts to put her groceries into a bag.

INT. JOE'S FATHER'S APARTMENT - THANKSGIVING DAY

An elegant East Side apartment. Schuyler, his youngish  
French wife, YVETTE, Nelson, Gillian and their child Matt,  
and Joe are sitting and listening as Annabel sings Tomorrow.

ANNABEL

The sun'll come up tomorrow, bet your  
bottom dollar that tomorrow, there'll be  
sun --

Joe is on a loveseat with Matt. Gillian lifts Matt up, sits down in his place next to Joe and plunks Matt into her lap. Nelson is already seated in a chair in front of the loveseat and can't see her without turning around.

Joe's leg. Joe edges away. He looks around the room, sees Nanny Maureen standing behind the couch. He stands, offers her his seat. She sits.

INT. KATHLEEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A much more informal Thanksgiving dinner. We see the leftovers on a sideboard near a round table in Kathleen's living room.

Kathleen, Frank, Birdie, Christina, George and George's new girlfriend, Meredith and TWO OTHER FRIENDS are standing around the upright piano. Birdie is playing a Christmas song, and everyone is singing.

As the singing continues, over, we cut to:

EXT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DECEMBER DAY

As the Christmas decorations and twinkle lights go into the window.

Birdie walks by the store. She stops to look at the customers inside, and then notices a sign in the window:

"Book Signing January 10 - Best Selling Children's Author Laura Margulies." There's a picture of Laura Margulies.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DECEMBER DUSK

Kathleen is in the window decorating a little tree with lovely decorations from a box. Two people are carrying a tree home, there's the sound of church bells.

Kathleen looks up as a couple of people walk past the store, carrying Foxbooks shopping bags.

Then she unwraps a pair of ruby slipper ornaments, and as she starts to hang them on the tree we hear the sound of the computer.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

This is such an odd Christmas. I find myself missing my mother, who's been dead for ten years. New York at Christmas is so loaded with all the things we used to do --

INT. NEW YORK STATE THEATER - 1972 - DAY

As Young Kathleen, dressed in a little velvet dress, sits in the audience next to her mother watching the ballet.

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)  
-- going to the Nutcracker --

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER SKATING RINK - 1972 - DAY

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)  
-- ice skating at Rockefeller Center,  
where I was knocked into a 6-year-old  
maniac --

A SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY knocks into her.

YOUNG KATHLEEN  
Hey, watch out --

SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY  
Me watch out, why don't you watch out?  
I'm not sliding around like a baby. You  
think I come here to skate with babies?

Young Kathleen's jaw drops and she stands there tongue-tied.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
My first experience as a speechless  
person.

Her mother skates up and takes her hand. The boy skates off.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
I always miss my mother at Christmas,  
but somehow it's worse this year since  
I need some advice from her.

And we hear the sound of another computer.

INT. JOE'S DEN

As he replies to Kathleen.

JOE (V.O.)  
My mother took me ice skating too --

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER SKATING RINK - DAY

We see a little boy, YOUNG JOE, 8, skate past holding someone's hand --

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
-- although my mother did not skate.  
The nanny skated --

And we now see JOE'S NANNY, a young Sonja Henie, who suddenly peels off into a series of triple lutzes, as JOE'S MOTHER absently reads a copy of Vogue in the spectators' section.

INT. LINCOLN CENTER THEATER - 1972 - DAY

JOE (V.O.)  
And I was in the Nutcracker.

We see the stage now. There's Young Joe, among the children at the Christmas party.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
So was my nanny.

As JOE'S NANNY #2 pirouettes past.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
Different nanny. By the way, I'm surprised you aren't a writer. Although you probably are a writer and don't know it. Are you a writer and I don't know it?

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - 1972 - NIGHT

Young Joe, at the dinner table with his father. A wide shot of a big room with a huge table and servants. Joe looks very small at the table as he eats his soup.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
My mother died when I was ten. I was staying with my father, who is not famous for intimacy, and whose way of breaking the news of her death was to tell me she would not be coming to pick me up as usual. It was a car accident, and I don't know where she was going or who she was with, and I assume what I owe her is my tendency to cover almost any emotion with a joke. A useful gift, unless you want to know what you're feeling. She was very beautiful. People toss that word around a lot, but my mother was.

The camera moves closer to the dining table. We see that tears are rolling down little Joe's cheeks.

INT. JOE'S DEN - NIGHT

Joe stops typing. He is surprised to find his eyes watering. A moment of confusion as he cannot believe he has moved himself to tears. Shakes his head, shakes the emotion off. Starts typing again.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
Ancient history. So what kind of advice  
do you need? Can I help?

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kathleen in bed with her laptop reading Joe's letter.

She starts to type a response.

Suddenly there's harp arpeggio and an Instant Message flashes on screen.

From NY 152

CLOSE ON KATHLEEN - TOTAL SHOCK

ON SCREEN AS WE SEE THE MESSAGE

JOE (V.O.)  
I had a gut feeling you would be on line  
now.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe is in bed with his laptop. And cut back and forth between them and their computer screens as they type Instant Messages to one another. Possible split screens.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
I can give you advice. I'm great at  
advice.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
I don't think you can help.

JOE (V.O.)  
Is it about love?

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
My business is in trouble. My mother  
would have something wise to say.

JOE (V.O.)  
I'm a brilliant businessman. It's what  
I do best. What's your business?

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
No specifics, remember?

JOE (V.O.)  
Minus specifics, it's hard to help.  
Except to say, go to the mattresses.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
What?

JOE (V.O.)  
It's from The Godfather. It means you  
have to go to war.

CLOSE ON KATHLEEN - LOOKING AT THE COMPUTER

KATHLEEN  
(to herself)  
The Godfather?

She starts to type.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
What is it with men and The Godfather?

JOE (V.O.)  
The Godfather is the I Ching. The  
Godfather is the sum of all wisdom. The  
Godfather is the answer to any question.  
What should I pack for my summer  
vacation? "Leave the gun, take the  
cannoli." What day of the week is it?  
"Maunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Wednesday."  
And the answer to your question is "Go  
to the mattresses."  
(continued)

CAMERA ON KATHLEEN - CONSIDERING WHAT HE SAYS

JOE (CONT'D)  
You're at war. "It's not personal, it's  
business. It's not personal it's  
business." Recite that to yourself  
every time you feel you're losing your  
nerve. I know you worry about being  
brave, this is your chance. Fight.  
Fight to the death.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Patricia comes in as Joe is waiting for Kathleen's response.

PATRICIA  
Look what I bought.

Joe types "Ciao" and signs off. Looks up to see Patricia showing him a Plexiglas menorah.

PATRICIA

I was just passing this store on Columbus Avenue and it caught my eye.

JOE

What is it?

PATRICIA

A Menorah.

JOE

It doesn't look like a Menorah.

PATRICIA

I know. I don't know what came over me. I don't even celebrate Hanukkah.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

As Kathleen logs off, Frank comes in.

KATHLEEN

Frank, I've decided to go to the mattresses. Do you think it would be a gigantic conflict of interest if you wrote something about us?

INT. THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

It's January. The store is more crowded than we've seen it. Frank is there with several copies of the Independent. The phone is ringing off the hook. Christina and George are fielding calls. Birdie is reading Frank's article.

BIRDIE

(reading)

"Kathleen Kelly and her mother Cecilia Kelly have raised your children. If this precious resource is killed by the cold cash cow of Foxbooks, it will not only be the end of Western civilization as we know it, but the end of something even dearer: our neighborhood as we know it. Save the Shop Around the Corner and you will save your own soul." Frank, that's charming.

FRANK

You think it's a little over the top?

BIRDIE  
Just say thank you.

FRANK  
Thank you.

CHRISTINA  
(calling to Kathleen)  
Channel 2's outside.

INT. BACK ROOM - THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - SAME TIME

Kathleen is primping in a tiny wall mirror. She takes a deep breath.

KATHLEEN  
In a second.

GEORGE  
(from the other room)  
The Village Voice is coming.

KATHLEEN  
Omigod.

Frank sticks his head in.

FRANK  
(in shock)  
It's him.

KATHLEEN  
Who?

FRANK  
God. It is God.

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen comes out of the storage room.

William Spungeon is standing there.

WILLIAM SPUNGEON  
I'm William Spungeon.

KATHLEEN  
I'm very pleased to meet you. I'm  
Kathleen Kelly.

Frank is practically levitating.

SPUNGEON

I knew your mother. Although she knew me only as W. That enormous bookstore is obscene.

FRANK

I'm Frank Navasky. I carry your picture in my wallet.

He pulls it out. Spungeon looks at him like he's crazy.

KATHLEEN

We've organized pickets. Channel 13 is doing a special.

SPUNGEON

I'd be glad to talk to the press if it's all right with you. They've been trying to interview me for years.

FRANK

The press? I'm the press.

KATHLEEN

You'd allow that? For me? For the store? That's incredible. Although you wouldn't have to be photographed. I respect that. If it's television, they could just put one of those blurry dots in front of your face.

SPUNGEON

No television.

CHRISTINA

(referring to the TV crew)

They're waiting for you --

FRANK

I know all your books. Phaelox the gnome, the little man who comes from nowhere... and is going nowhere...

(quoting)

"Where did you come from?" "Nowhere."

"Where are you going?" "Nowhere."

SPUNGEON

Cool it. I'm starting to break out in hives.

(to Kathleen)

Here's my phone number.

KATHLEEN

I had no idea William Spugeon had a phone.

SPUNGEON

Adios.

He gives a little wave and leaves.

FRANK

This is historic.

(beat)

Do you realize what I've done? By writing that piece, do you realize? I've brought William Spungeon in from the cold. Holy shit. I am completely amazing.

At that moment a TV REPORTER sticks her head into the store.

TV REPORTER

Kathleen Kelly?

Kathleen takes a deep breath, walks out the door.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

CHANNEL 2 TV REPORTER

Are you ready, Miss Kelly?

KATHLEEN

Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes.

CHANNEL 2 TV REPORTER

What?

KATHLEEN

Never mind. I'm ready. Shoot.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - THAT NIGHT

CHANNEL 2 TV REPORTER

We're here in front of the Shop Around the Corner, the famous West Side children's bookstore now on the verge of having to close its doors because the big bad wolf, Foxbooks, has opened only a few hundred feet away, wooing customers with its sharp discounts and designer coffee.

KATHLEEN

They have to have discounts and lattes,  
because most of the people who work  
there have never read a book.

And pull back now to reveal that we're in:

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Five TV sets are on, over adjoining treadmills, Joe and Kevin  
are on two of the treadmills, walking and watching.

JOE

She's not as nice as she seems on  
television.

KEVIN

You've met her?

JOE

She's kind of a pill.

KEVIN

She's probably not as attractive as she  
seems on television either.

JOE

No, she's beautiful. But a pill.

KEVIN

So you don't feel bad about basically  
destroying her livelihood not to mention  
her legacy not to mention her raison  
d'etre.

JOE

It's not personal --

KEVIN

It's business.

JOE

Right. Exactly.

They look up at the television.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

Joe onscreen, with a super: Joe Fox, Vice-President Foxbooks.

JOE

I sell cheap books. Sue me. I sell cheap books, and as a result -- listen to this, because it's really bad -- more people can buy books.

The show immediately cuts back to the newscaster.

On Joe and Kevin.

KEVIN

That's what you said?

JOE

(outraged)

That's not all I said. I said -- I can't believe those bastards -- I said we were great, I said people can come and sit and read for hours and no one bothers them, I said we stock 150,000 titles, I showed them the New York City section. I said we were a goddamn piazza where people could mingle and mix and be.

KEVIN

A piazza?

JOE

I was eloquent. Shit. It's just inevitable, isn't it? People are going to want to turn her into Joan of Arc --

KEVIN

-- and you into Attila the Hun.

JOE

Well it's not me personally, it's more like it's the company --

KATHLEEN

(on the television)

And I have to say, I have met Joe Fox, who owns Foxbooks, and I have heard him compared his store to a Price Club and the books in it to cans of olive oil.

On Joe, reacting.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER

A small rally is taking place, with picket signs. Kathleen is standing on a small speaker's platform, along with the Borough President.

KATHLEEN

My mother used to say to me that every  
book you sell is a gift from the heart...

EXT. FOXBOOKS - DAY

As 20 CHILDREN march in front of the store, holding little  
makeshift picket signs and singing songs. "One, two, three,  
four, we don't want this Superstore."

Customers go right through the line and into the store.

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DAY

We can hear the pickets marching and singing outside --  
although the store is full of customers anyway. The Fox  
men -- Joe, Nelson and Schuyler -- are sitting in the cafe.  
Nelson is holding a copy of a weekly newspaper, which has the  
old high-school yearbook picture of William Spungeon on the  
front page and a headline: William Spungeon Emerges from  
Hiding to Support Bookstore.

SCHUYLER

Who is this Spungeon anyway?

JOE

He's a writer.

NELSON

Well, I've never heard of him. And  
neither has anyone else in this place.

INT. TV SET - NIGHT

As we see SIDNEY-ANN STRONGIN, a young and attractive PBS  
talk show hostess for a show called Inside Media.

SIDNEY-ANN

The New York Literary world was shocked  
this week when William Spungeon, the  
most famously reclusive author since  
J.D. Salinger, announced that he was  
coming out of hiding because of his  
loyalty to a small children's bookstore  
on the West Side of Manhattan.  
Discussing this tonight is a man I  
happen to think of as one of this city's  
most underappreciated assets, Frank  
Navasky.

FRANK

Thank you.

SIDNEY-ANN

This all happened because of you, didn't  
it --

FRANK

Well, I knew William Spungeon loved  
children's books so I wrote a  
provocative column --

SIDNEY-ANN

Your specialty.

Frank laughs. Sidney-Ann laughs.

FRANK

And it kind of smoked him out.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As she and Frank watch the television show.

FRANK ON TELEVISION

Technologically speaking, the world's  
out of hand. Take the VCR. The whole  
idea of a VCR is that it makes it  
possible for you to tape what's on  
television while you're out of the  
house. But the whole point of being out  
of the house is so you can miss what's  
on television. Radio. Now there's a  
medium I can get behind.

SIDNEY-ANN ON TELEVISION

Well, we're on television... and you're  
good at it.

FRANK ON TELEVISION

Thank you.

Another little moment between them.

SIDNEY-ANN ON TELEVISION

The bookstore. Tell us about it.

FRANK ON TELEVISION

Are you planning to collect radios?

SIDNEY-ANN ON TELEVISION

Do you think I should?

FRANK ON TELEVISION

The Shop Around the Corner is a true New  
York treasure.

SIDNEY-ANN ON TELEVISION  
As are you. I'd love to have you back.

FRANK ON TELEVISION  
Any time. Are we done?

SIDNEY-ANN ON TELEVISION  
Not at all.

FRANK ON TELEVISION  
Because I just want to say that the only  
show I do watch is yours.

KATHLEEN  
(appalled)  
Omigod.

FRANK  
Hey, I was just being polite. Okay, I  
admit, I slobbered all over her.

The show continues.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DUSK

As we see Kathleen flip the open sign to closed.

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DUSK

George is talking to Kathleen and Birdie, who is toting up  
the week's receipts.

GEORGE  
And I can't decide whether to put  
sausages into the meat sauce or just  
chopped meat. Last time I made it,  
Detective Carter and I never even sat  
down to dinner because --  
(he makes some sort  
of hand gesture  
indicating that sex  
prevented them from  
dining)  
and last night, I made margaritas in the  
blender, and I took the ice cube and --

BIRDIE  
Spare us.

George goes out the door.

Birdie looks at Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

Don't tell me. Not the slightest difference?

Birdie can't bring herself to answer.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

How could that be? All this publicity and not one bit of difference? Oh Birdie, what am I going to do? What would Mom have done?

BIRDIE

Let's ask her.

She opens the locket hanging around her neck. There's a picture of Kathleen's mother inside it. Birdie holds the locket up to her face.

BIRDIE

Cecilia, what should we do?

Birdie holds the locket to her ear and listens. A pause.

KATHLEEN

Birdie?

BIRDIE

Shhhh.

(after a beat, shrugs)

She has no idea, but she thinks the window display is lovely. Good night dearie.

Birdie smiles and picks up her shopping bag, goes out the door.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - NIGHT

It's starting to rain. Kathleen lowers the grate over the store. As she turns to walk away, William Spungeon steps in her path out of the shadows.

KATHLEEN

Oh my goodness, hello. What are you doing here.

SPUNGEON

Loitering. Lurking. Skulking. Stalking.

He laughs. So does she. Dramatically, he whips out an umbrella and opens it over the two of them.

SPUNGEON (CONT'D)  
You look very beautiful.

KATHLEEN  
Thank you. But I'm a wreck.

He touches her cheek suddenly. Kathleen starts. Then he blows on his hand.

SPUNGEON  
An eyelash. It's gone.

Kathleen relaxes. They start walking.

KATHLEEN  
Are you writing another book?

SPUNGEON  
I'm in the home stretch. I'll be done in approximately six more years.

KATHLEEN  
Should I discount?

SPUNGEON  
It's about a man on a quest for knowledge who meets a woman he cannot resist.

KATHLEEN  
If I discount I have to fire someone because I can't discount with this overhead but whom could I fire? I couldn't fire anyone.

Spungeon suddenly puts his hand through Kathleen's hair. She stops, frozen in place.

SPUNGEON  
You have your mother's hair. Thick, wild, the color of Nebraska wheat.

He grabs her and tries to kiss her.

KATHLEEN  
What are you doing? Let me go.

He backs her into a wall.

KATHLEEN  
Stop it. Are you crazy?

She kicks him in the shins, wiggles free and runs away.

SPUNGEON  
 (calling after her)  
 If you change your mind, you can E-mail  
 me. Hermit@AOL.com.

INT. COMPUTER SCREEN - NIGHT

The mail form says "To:" and Kathleen types in "NY 152".

The form says "Re:" and Kathleen types in: "Advice"

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rain is falling.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
 I need help. Do you still want to meet  
 me?

EXT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rain is falling.

We hear the sound of the computer.

JOE (V.O.)  
 "Where? When?"

INT. NUT SHOP OF BROADWAY - DAY

George, Kathleen and Christina in the shop. Kathleen is  
 buying more lollipops.

KATHLEEN  
 We're meeting in a public place.

CHRISTINA  
 Well don't go anywhere with him. Don't  
 even go out to the street with him  
 afterwards. Get a dial cab to just sit  
 there and wait for you.

GEORGE  
 Did you tell Frank?

KATHLEEN  
 There's nothing to tell.

CHRISTINA  
 But did you tell him?

KATHLEEN  
 He's away. At the 32nd anniversary of  
 the Chicago Seven trial.

GEORGE

And he's gone to a place where there are no phones. Do you even know this guy's name?

Kathleen shakes her head no.

CHRISTINA

And you're going to meet him in a bar?

KATHLEEN

Not a bar. That place on 83rd with the cheesecake.

GEORGE

And he will wear a flower in his lapel, and you will be carrying a copy of Anna Karenina with a rose in it.

No answer.

CHRISTINA

Oh God, no.

KATHLEEN

Not Anna Karenina. Pride and Prejudice.

EXT. FOXBOOKS - NIGHT

As Joe and Kevin walk out of the store and start downtown.

KEVIN

I suppose she's carrying a copy of a book with a flower in it.

Joe doesn't say anything.

KEVIN

Not really.

JOE

Really.

KEVIN

Which Jane Austen is it?

JOE

Pride and Prejudice.

KEVIN

She could be a real dog.

JOE  
I know. Look, I'll just stay ten minutes. I'll say hello. Drink a cup of coffee and split. I'm outta here.

He looks at Kevin.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Walk me there, okay?

EXT. 83RD STREET - NIGHT

As the two men walk toward Cafe Lalo, the European cafe on West 83rd Street.

JOE  
What if she has a really high, squeaky voice? I hate that. It reminds me of those mice in Cinderella.

KEVIN  
What mice in Cinderella?

JOE  
Gus-gus and oh shit, I can't remember the other one. Why am I compelled to meet her? I'm just ruining a good thing.

KEVIN  
You're taking it to the next level. I always do that. I always take a relationship to the next level, and if it works okay I take it to the next level after that, until I can finally get to the level where it becomes absolutely necessary for me to leave.

JOE  
I'm not going to stay long anyway. I already said that, didn't I. Christ. I'm a total wreck.

As they reach:

EXT. CAFE LALO - CONTINUOUS

Joe stops and looks at Kevin.

JOE  
Kevin, this woman is the most adorable creature I have ever come in contact with.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

If she turns out to be even as good-looking as a mailbox, I will be crazy not to turn my life upside down and marry her.

KEVIN

She could be a real dog.

JOE

(a total panic)

You go look.

KEVIN

Me?

JOE

Just go to the window and check her out.

KEVIN

You're pathetic.

Kevin goes to the window and looks inside.

EXT. CAFE LALO - NIGHT

Joe and Kevin in front.

Kevin looks in the window.

JOE

See her?

KEVIN

There's a beautiful, whoa, a very beautiful girl.

JOE

Yes.

KEVIN

But no book. Let me see, let me see... Wait a minute. There's a book with a flower, so it must be her.

JOE

What does he look like?

KEVIN

There's a waiter blocking, I can't see her face. He's serving her a cup of tea and she's putting in three spoonfuls of sugar --

JOE  
Well, why shouldn't she?

KEVIN  
No reason. Unless she has hypoglycemia.  
Oh, he's moving.

JOE  
Can you see her?

KEVIN  
Yes.

JOE  
And? --

KEVIN  
(clearly frustrated)  
She's very pretty.

JOE  
She is. I knew she would be. She had  
to be.

KEVIN  
She looks... I would say she has a  
little of the coloring of that Kathleen  
Kelly person.

JOE  
Kathleen Kelly of the bookstore.

KEVIN  
Why not? You said you thought she was  
attractive.

JOE  
So what? Who cares about Kathleen Kelly?

KEVIN  
Well, if you don't like Kathleen Kelly,  
I can tell you right now you ain't gonna  
like this girl.

JOE  
Why not?

KEVIN  
Because it is Kathleen Kelly.

Joe elbows Kevin aside and looks.

JOE  
Oh, God.

A long beat.

KEVIN  
What are you going to do?

JOE  
Nothing.

KEVIN  
You're going to let her just wait there?

JOE  
Yes. Yes I am. That's exactly what I'm going to do. Why not?

KEVIN  
But she wrote the letters.

JOE  
Good night, Kevin. I'll see you tomorrow.

He walks away, leaving Kevin.

Kevin stares after him. Then he walks away in the other direction.

INT. CAFE LALO - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen, sitting alone, at a table for two, is drinking her tea. She's starting to feel a little foolish. She checks her watch.

A loud, boisterous group comes in and sits at the table next to hers. They're laughing. A man from the group grabs the empty chair at Kathleen's table.

MAN  
Do you mind?

Kathleen jumps up.

KATHLEEN  
Oh, yes. I'm expecting someone. Please.

She takes the chair back. Sits down again. She watches the group as they playfully fight over the menus.

She checks her watch again. Then she opens her copy of *Pride and Prejudice* and looks at it. She can't focus.

A man comes into the restaurant and she looks up hopefully at him. But he's going to meet another group of people.

As he passes her table, he knocks the book and the flower onto the floor.

KATHLEEN

Oh!

She jumps up and rescues the book and flower as if they were precious china.

In the window, now, behind her, Joe appears. He watches, as she rearranges the book and the flower.

He disappears from sight.

A beat...

He walks in the door.

JOE

Kathleen Kelly. Hello. What a coincidence. Mind if I sit down?

KATHLEEN

Yes I do. I'm expecting someone.

Joe picks up her book, looks at it.

JOE

Pride and Prejudice.

Kathleen grabs it back.

KATHLEEN

Do you mind?

She places it back on the table, puts the rose into it.

JOE

I didn't know you were a Jane Austen fan. Not that it's a surprise. I bet you read it every year. I bet you just love Mr. Darcy, and that your sentimental heart beats wildly at the thought that he and whatever her name is are really, honestly and truly going to end up together.

KATHLEEN

Would you please leave?

Joe sits down.

KATHLEEN

Please?

JOE

I'll get up as soon as your friend comes. Is he late?

KATHLEEN

The heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* is Elizabeth Bennet and she's one of the greatest, most complex characters ever written, not that you would know.

JOE

As a matter of fact I've read it.

KATHLEEN

Well, good for you.

JOE

I think you'd discover a lot of things if you really knew me.

KATHLEEN

If I really knew you, I know what I would find -- instead of a brain, a cash register, instead of a heart, a bottom line.

Kathleen is shocked at herself.

JOE

What is it?

KATHLEEN

I just had a breakthrough, and I have to thank you for it. For the first time in my life, when confronted with a horrible, insensitive person I actually knew what I wanted to say and I said it.

JOE

I think you have a gift for it. It was a splendid mixture of poetry and meanness.

KATHLEEN

Meanness? Let me tell you --

JOE

Don't misunderstand me, I'm just paying you a compliment.

He lifts the book off the table. Kathleen grabs for it.

KATHLEEN

Why are you doing this?

She manages to get the book, leaving Joe with the rose.

JOE

What have we have? A red, no, crimson rose, tucked into the pages. Something you read about in a book, no doubt. One of those books with a lady in a nightgown on the cover about to throw herself off a cliff.

She holds her hand out for it.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Give it to me.

Joe puts it between his mouth and his nose like a mustache.

JOE

It's a joke to you, isn't it?  
Everything's a joke to you.

She grabs the rose. Puts it back in the book.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Please leave. I beg you.

He stands up, walks from the table, sits down at the very next table, with his back to her.

The door to the restaurant opens. Kathleen looks at it hopefully. A pleasant looking man, who's immediately joined by a pleasant looking woman.

For a moment, Kathleen looks just a little droopy, as if the wind has just gone out of her sails. She takes out her compact, looks into her mirror. She slides it over to look behind her, at him, just as he's looking sideways at her. He turns away suddenly.

Then she blots her lipstick with her handkerchief.

JOE

You know what the handkerchief reminds me of? The first day I met you --

KATHLEEN

The first day you lied to me --

JOE

I didn't lie to you --

KATHLEEN

You did too --

JOE

I did not --

KATHLEEN

I thought all that Fox stuff was so charming. F-O-X.

JOE

I never lied about it --

KATHLEEN

"Joe. Just call me Joe." As if you were one of those stupid 22-year-old girls with no last name. "Hi, I'm Kimberley." "Hi, I'm Janice." What's wrong with them? Don't they know you're supposed to have last names? It's like they're a whole generation of cocktail waitresses.

She stops herself -- it's a tangent she never meant to go off on. But Joe has stood up and seated himself back at her table.

JOE

I am not a stupid 22-year-old girl --

KATHLEEN

That's not what I meant --

JOE

And when I said the thing about the Price Club and cans of olive oil, that wasn't what I meant either --

KATHLEEN

Oh, you poor sad multimillionaire. I feel so sorry for you.

The door opens and a large and very attractive TRANSVESTITE in a boa comes in the door.

JOE

I am going to take a wild guess that this isn't him, either. Who is he, I wonder. Not, I gather, the world's greatest living expert on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, but someone else entirely. Will you be you be mean to him too? Will you start out sweet as sugar candy and then suddenly, miraculously, like a bolt from the blue, find that sharp little tongue of yours?

KATHLEEN

No, I won't. Because the man who's coming here tonight is completely unlike you. The man who is coming here is kind and funny -- he has the most wonderful sense of humor --

JOE

But he's not here.

KATHLEEN

If he's not here, he has a reason, because there is not a cruel or careless bone in his body. I can't expect you to know anything about a person like that. You've nothing but a suit.

A beat. Joe gets up.

JOE

That is my cue. Good night.

Joe leaves.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Kathleen comes down the street. She drops the rose in the trash can.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - A MINUTE LATER

Kathleen comes in, drops the book on the table, takes off her coat and goes immediately to the computer. She clicks on American Online. Waits impatiently to connect. Looks with anticipation at the mail box.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN - NO MAIL

Hold on Kathleen as a tear starts down her face.

She takes her handkerchief out of her sleeve and wipes her face and blows her nose. Then looks at her handkerchief and tosses it over her shoulder.

She goes over to the bed and turns it down and slips out of her shoes.

Then she lies down on the bed, fully clothed. She reaches up to turn out the light.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Joe turns on his closet light and hangs up his jacket. The computer is on the desk, and the light on it illuminates the room.

Patricia is in the next room, eating matzos.

PATRICIA (O.C.)

So I said to her, "If you think I will even talk to you about paying that kind of advance for an author whose last book is being used as trivets all over the world, you are completely crazy."

On Joe's face, barely bearing.

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DAY

As Kevin and Joe walk through the store.

KEVIN

But underneath that disagreeable exterior she could turn out to be --

JOE

A real bitch. Let's not talk about it. I'm going back to the office. You must have work to do.

KEVIN

Not really. This place is humming like a top.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

As Kathleen comes around the corner. Christina is waiting.

CHRISTINA

What happened?

KATHLEEN

He never came.

CHRISTINA

He stood you up?

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER

As Kathleen puts her purse into the drawer.

KATHLEEN

I think something happened, something terrible and unexpected that made it impossible for him --

George walks in.

GEORGE

What happened?

KATHLEEN

He wasn't able to make it.

GEORGE

He stood you up.

KATHLEEN

What could have happened?  
(continued)

George looks suddenly stricken.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Why didn't he come? Maybe he showed up, took one look at me and left.

CHRISTINA

Not possible.

KATHLEEN

Maybe there was a subway accident.

CHRISTINA

Absolutely.

KATHLEEN

A train was trapped underground with him inside.

CHRISTINA

And no phone.

George continues to look stricken. He's starting to shake his head.

KATHLEEN

Or an automobile accident. Those cab drivers are maniacs.

CHRISTINA

They hit something and you slam right into that plastic partition.

KATHLEEN

His elbows could be in splints -- so he  
can't really dial --

CHRISTINA

Or he could be in the hospital in one of  
those semi-private room with like --

CHRISTINA & KATHLEEN

(together)

-- no phone.

They look at George. Still shaking his head.

KATHLEEN

(to George)

What?

George hands them a New York Post. They look at the cover:  
COPS NAB ROOFTOP KILLER

KATHLEEN

What are you saying?

GEORGE

It could be.

Dead silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He was arrested two blocks from the  
cheesecake place.

CHRISTINA

Is there a picture?

There it is. It's of a man with his jacket pulled over his  
head.

They all look at it.

CHRISTINA

So that explains it.

GEORGE

He was in jail.

CHRISTINA

And there was a phone --

GEORGE

-- but he got only one call and he had  
to use it to call his lawyer.

CHRISTINA  
You are so lucky.

GEORGE  
You could be dead.

KATHLEEN  
Are you crazy? This man couldn't  
possibly be the rooftop killer.

CHRISTINA  
Remember when you thought Frank might be  
the Unabomber?

KATHLEEN  
That was different.

CHRISTINA  
How long did you sit there all alone?

KATHLEEN  
Not that long. Joe Fox came in --

CHRISTINA  
Joe Fox!

KATHLEEN  
I don't want to talk about it.  
(closes her eyes)  
Let's get to work.

They look around. There's no one in the store and nothing to do.

A pause.

KATHLEEN  
There must be something to do. There's  
always something to do.

They hear the jingle of the front door. They look hopefully toward it. It's only Birdie.

CHRISTINA  
He stood her up.

Hold on Kathleen as the computer sound begins.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
I have been thinking about you. Last  
night I went to meet you and you weren't  
there. I wish I knew why. I felt so  
foolish.

(continued)

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As she types. And we cut from her face to the screen as we hear a voice-over:

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

And as I waited, someone else showed up, a man who has made my professional life a misery, and an amazing thing happened --I was able, for the first time in my life, to say the exact thing I wanted to say it. And of course, afterwards, I felt terrible. Just as you said I would.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - LATE

The E-mail from Kathleen continues as Joe reads.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I was cruel, and I'm never cruel. And even though I can hardly believe what I said mattered to this man -- to him, I'm just a bug to be crushed -- but what if it did? No matter what he's done to me, there's no excuse for my behavior. Anyway, you are my dear friend, and I so wanted to talk to you. I hope you have a good reason for not being there last night, but if you don't, and if we never really connect again, I just want to tell you how much it has meant to me to know you were there.

Joe sits there a second. A moment of intense ambivalence. Then he hits the Menu key and signs off.

COMPUTER

Goodbye.

Joe stands and leaves the room.

The computer sits there.

Hold on the computer. We hear him open the refrigerator door. We hear him close the refrigerator door. He passes the den without even looking into it. A moment later he comes back into the room, stares at the computer. He starts for the bedroom, changes his mind. Circles the computer. He's going to go cold turkey if it kills him.

Fuck it. He sits down. Sign on. Starts to type.

JOE (V.O.)  
I am in Vancouver.

He stops... Hits the delete button and erases the message. He starts typing again:

JOE (V.O.)  
I was stuck in a meeting, which I  
couldn't get out of it, and there was no  
phone.

He backspaces to erase "there was no phone."

Screen now reads: I was stuck in a meeting, which I couldn't get out of it. Joe sits there thinking for a moment. Then he starts typing.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
The electricity went out in the building  
and we were trapped on the 18th floor  
and the telephone system blew too.

He stops and looks at it. Then he types:

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)  
Amazingly enough.

He sits looking at it.

Then he deletes the whole thing.

Sits looking at the blank screen.

JOE  
Fuck you.

He clicks the Yes box.

Then he starts to type again.

JOE (V.O.)  
Dear friend: I cannot tell you what  
happened to me last night, but I beg you  
from the bottom of my heart to forgive  
me for not being there.

He deletes "for not being there."

Then types again, after "to forgive me".

JOE (V.O.)

-- for what happened. I feel terrible that you found yourself in a situation that caused you additional pain. But I'm absolutely sure that whatever you said last night was provoked, even deserved. And everyone says things they regret when they're worried or stressed. You were expecting to see someone you trusted and met the enemy instead. The fault is mine.

(continued)

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

As Kathleen and Christina walk down the street together.

JOE (V.O., cont'd)

Someday I'll explain everything. Meanwhile, I'm still here. Talk to me.

CHRISTINA

Did he say anything about meeting again?

KATHLEEN

Not really. It doesn't matter. We'll just be like George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell and write letters our whole lives --

They go into an apartment building.

INT. BIRDIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

pouring tea. There's a plate of cookies.

Christina is looking at the picture of Birdie as a young woman, dressed in a sort of Carmen Miranda getup.

CHRISTINA

Where was this taken, Birdie?

BIRDIE

Seville.

KATHLEEN

When you had the thunderbolt?

BIRDIE

Yes. What did you decide, dearie?

KATHLEEN

Close. We're going to close.

CHRISTINA

Close.

KATHLEEN

Although it feels like such a failure.  
It feels like I'm quitting. It feels  
like... Mom...

She closes her eyes.

Birdie sits down on the loveseat next to Kathleen, puts her  
arms around her. Hold on them.

BIRDIE

Keeping the store open doesn't keep your  
mother alive, although sometimes I think  
we all think it does.

Christina looks over at the picture of Birdie.

CHRISTINA

Who was it, Birdie? That you had the  
thunderbolt over?

Birdie shakes her head. She's not going to tell them.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

It's so romantic.

BIRDIE

But it wasn't meant to be.

CHRISTINA

Why not?

BIRDIE

He ran Spain.

CHRISTINA

Spain?

BIRDIE

The country. He ran it. That was his  
job. And then he died. Just as well.

INT. SONY LINCOLN SQUARE THEATRE - NIGHT

As Frank and Kathleen go up the escalator, on their way to a  
movie.

FRANK

She fell in love with Generalissimo  
Franco?

KATHLEEN

Don't say that. We don't know that for sure.

FRANK

Who else could it have been? It was probably around 1960 --

KATHLEEN

I mean, it's not like he was something normal, like a socialist or an anarchist or something --

FRANK

It happened in Spain. People do really stupid things in foreign countries.

KATHLEEN

Absolutely. They buy leather jackets, they go see Flamenco, they ride in gondolas, they eat in restaurants where guitarists sing Malaguena sola Rosa, but they don't fall in love with fascist dictators.

They enters one of the theatres.

INT. THEATER - CONTINUOUS

As they find seats and sit down. A trailer is playing.

KATHLEEN

Birdie is a very kind person, she's practically my surrogate mother.

FRANK

Well she's out of her mind.

KATHLEEN

She is not.

FRANK

I could never ever be with anyone who doesn't take politics as seriously as I do.

The person in front of them turns around.

PERSON IN FRONT OF THEM

Do you mind?

FRANK

A hot dog is singing. You need quiet while a hot dog is singing?

The two of them sit there.

KATHLEEN

I have something to tell you. I didn't vote.

FRANK

What?

KATHLEEN

In the last mayoral election, when Rudy Giuliani was running against Ruth Messinger, I went to get a manicure and forgot to vote.

FRANK

Since when do you get manicures?

KATHLEEN

Oh, I suppose you could never be with a woman who gets manicures.

FRANK

Forget it. It's okay. I forgive you.

PERSON IN FRONT OF THEM

Shhhhhh.

KATHLEEN

You forgive me.

Hold on them a beat.

Kathleen stands and walks out of the theatre.

INT. SONY LINCOLN SQUARE THEATRE ESCALATOR - NIGHT

Kathleen on the down escalator. Frank scrambling to catch up with her.

FRANK

What's going on?

Kathleen's upset.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey. What is it?

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - NIGHT

As they walk uptown.

FRANK

Look, this has been a big week, you're closing the store --

KATHLEEN

It's not that, Frank, really it's not. It's just... Frank...

FRANK

I know, that was terrible of me.

KATHLEEN

What was?

FRANK

To jump all over you when I'm the one who's really... Oh, God, I don't know how to say this --

KATHLEEN

What is it?

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE - NIGHT

As we see Kathleen and Frank being served drinks in a glassed-in extension of a restaurant.

INT. COLUMBUS AVENUE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As Kathleen looks at Frank, waiting for him to begin.

FRANK

You're a wonderful person, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

So are you.

FRANK

And I'm honored that you want to be with me because you would never be with anyone who wasn't truly worthy --

KATHLEEN

I feel exactly the same way about you.

FRANK

Oh, God, don't say that, please, that just makes it worse.

KATHLEEN

What?

(he shakes his head)

You don't love me?

Frank shakes his head no.

KATHLEEN  
Me either.

FRANK  
You don't love me?

Kathleen shakes her head no.

FRANK  
But we're so right for each other.

KATHLEEN  
I know.

A long beat.

KATHLEEN  
That woman on television, right? Sidney-Ann.

Frank nods.

FRANK  
I mean, nothing's happened or anything.

KATHLEEN  
I think she's a Republican.

FRANK  
I can't help myself.

Kathleen pats him.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
What about you? Is there someone else?

KATHLEEN  
Oh, somewhere out there, I'm sure.  
Somewhere --  
(she throws up her  
hands)  
In cyberspace.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

As Frank, carrying a typewriter, walks out off Kathleen's building and puts it into the back of a taxicab.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DAY

As a sign goes up in the window: "Closing This Week: All Stock 40% off."

INT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - LATE THAT DAY

The store is crowded. People are buying stacks of books. We hear brief snatches of conversation: Birdie telling a customer she's planning to travel, Christina saying she's finally going to have to finish her dissertation, George saying he's been offered a job at Foxbooks but even though it's okay with Kathleen, he wouldn't work there if it were the last place on the earth.

There is a frantic, rummage sale atmosphere.

Kathleen, busy at the cash register, looks up for a minute at her beautiful store being ravaged by vultures. We hear the sound of the computer and hear her voice-over:

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

My store is closing this week. I own a store. Did I ever tell you that? Probably not. It's a lovely store --

As a woman dumps a huge stack of books on the checkout table.

WOMAN SHOPPER

This is a tragedy.  
(yelling across the shop to her husband)  
Honey, grab a copy of The Trumpet of the Swan.

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)

-- and in a week, it will be something really depressing, like a Baby Gap. I am being amazingly brave --

WOMAN SHOPPER

What are you going to do with yourself?

KATHLEEN

I don't know. I'm going to take some time. I have a little money saved. I'm almost looking forward to it --

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)

I am so cheerful I would make Pollyanna throw up.

SECOND SHOPPER

I came here every Saturday when I was a little girl. I remember when your mother gave me Anne of Green Gables. "Read it with a box of Kleenex," that's what she told me.

THIRD SHOPPER  
She's looking down on you right now.

KATHLEEN  
I'm sure she is.

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)  
I have promised myself I'm not going to  
cry.

A FORTH SHOPPER approaches the counter with a stack of books  
up to his chin, and manages to slide the stack on the counter.

FOURTH SHOPPER  
We should bomb Foxbooks.

KATHLEEN  
It's not their fault. The truth is, the  
world is just... different.

She starts ringing up the sale.

EXT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - NIGHT

As Kathleen walks home.

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)  
Soon we'll just be a memory. In fact,  
someone, some foolish person will  
probably think it's a tribute to this  
city, the way it keeps changing on you,  
the way you can never count on it, or  
something. I know, because that's the  
sort of thing I'm always saying. But  
the truth is, I'm heartbroken. I feel  
as if part of me has died, and my  
mother has died all over again, and no  
one can ever make it right.

She stops in front of the window, watching the customers  
lined up to buy books.

EXT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - NIGHT

As Kathleen enters and looks around.

She goes up the stairs.

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

As Kathleen walks into it.

It's huge, of course. With its reading area, and stage, and room for displays, and child-size furniture, and so many books and so many customers.

Kathleen sits down on a little child-size chair, completely wilted.

KATHLEEN FROM ANOTHER P.O.V.

And now we see Joe watching her, from a distance. She doesn't see him.

A woman browsing, stops a sales person.

WOMAN SHOPPER

Do you have the "Shoe" books?

SALESPERSON

The "Shoe" books? Who's the author?

WOMAN SHOPPER

I don't know. My friend told me my daughter has to read the "Shoe" books, so here I am.

KATHLEEN

Noel Streatfeild. Noel Streatfeild wrote Ballet Shoes and Skating Shoes and Theater Shoes and Movie Shoes...

(she starts crying as she tells her)

I'd start with Skating Shoes, it's my favorite, although Ballet Shoes is completely wonderful.

SALESPERSON

Streatfeild. How do you spell that?

KATHLEEN

S-T-R-E-A-T-F-E-I-L-D.

WOMAN SHOPPER

Thank you.

As she walks away.

KATHLEEN

(to herself)

They know nothing, they know absolutely nothing.

ON JOE

as he watches her. We hear the sound of the computer.

She starts out of the store. And hold on him.

JOE (V.O.)  
I'm sorry.

INT. JOE'S COMPUTER SCREEN

A screen which says Reply and which now reads "I'm sorry."

INT. JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

On Joe at his computer, staring at the screen.

JOE  
Asshole.

He backspaces, deleting. Starts typing again.

JOE (V.O.)  
I'm sorry. I don't know what to say.  
Truly I don't. And anything I do say  
will sound trite. I hope you feel  
better.

He sits there, appalled at his own triteness.

EXT. JOE'S STREET - NIGHT

As a taxi comes down the street and stops in front of Joe's building.

PATRICIA (V.O.)  
What I was thinking was she'd probably  
make a great children's book either.

JOE (V.O.)  
Why would you think that?

They get out of the cab.

PATRICIA  
She knows everything. She has flawless  
taste. She's famous for it. The  
salesmen swear by her. If she likes it,  
it sells. Period.

INT. JOE'S LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

As they enter the lobby and walk toward the elevator.

JOE  
So you're going to offer her a job?

PATRICIA  
Why not? What else has she got to do?

JOE  
Now that she's destitute --

PATRICIA  
Thanks to you.

JOE  
Well, I can't imagine her working for you.

PATRICIA  
Why not?

JOE  
She has a horrible personality, she's... nice to everyone all the time. It's exhausting. And her staff turnover is ... non-existent. They've been there forever. Until... recently, when they all found out they were going to lose their jobs.

PATRICIA  
Thanks to you.

The elevator door is closing.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)  
Hold the elevator!

They get in.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

JOE  
Hello, Charlie, Veronica.

PATRICIA  
Last time, we rode in an elevator, we made the deal of the century. What is going to happen this time?

CHARLIE  
Miss Grant's going to get me a part in one of her movies, that's what's going to happen.

VERONICA  
In your dream, Charlie.

PATRICIA  
 (back to the  
 conversation with  
 Joe)

I love how you've totally forgotten you  
 had any role in her current situation.  
 It's so obtuse. It reminds me of  
 someone ... Who? Who does it remind me  
 of?

(thinks for a moment)

Me!

The elevator suddenly stops.

PATRICIA  
 Shit.

VERONICA  
 Shit.

JOE  
 It is stuck?

CHARLIE  
 Could be.

He pushes the open button. Nothing. Turns the key, hits the  
 open button, flicks the emergency switch. Then he starts  
 hitting the buttons in every possible combination.

JOE  
 Charlie, what are you doing?

CHARLIE  
 Bang the door.

PATRICIA  
 Really.

Joe bangs the door. Nothing.

CHARLIE  
 I hope this thing doesn't plummet to the  
 basement.

VERONICA  
 Can it do that?

JOE  
 No.

He picks up the phone.

JOE  
This is Joe Fox. Who is this? Hi,  
Juan. We're stuck on the sixth floor.  
There are four of us --

PATRICIA  
(grabs the phone)  
-- and if you don't get your ass up here  
in two shakes and get us out --

He hangs up.

JOE  
(to Veronica)  
Are you all right?

VERONICA  
It's hot.

Joe hands her his handkerchief.

CHARLIE  
Everyone should jump in the air.

PATRICIA  
What?

CHARLIE  
We jump. The elevator thinks that no  
one is here and it opens.

Everyone stares at each other.

JOE  
One -- two -- three --

They all jump into the air.

They all land.

Nothing happens.

INT. ELEVATOR - A LITTLE LATER

Patricia is sitting on the elevator floor, polishing her  
nails.

We hear the fire department banging outside...

VERONICA  
If I ever get out of here, I'm going to  
start speaking to my mother.  
(MORE)

VERONICA (CONT'D)

She slept with Oscar, and maybe it was Oscar's fault, I don't know, and then she sold the story to Inside Edition. That could have been Oscar's idea, too. Who knows? But I divorced him. I wonder what she's doing right this minute. I think of her... whenever I hear about a new pill. Ecstasy, Zoloft, Fenphen, I just think, I hope Mama knows about that.

She takes out a tissue and dabs at her eyes.

PATRICIA

Maybe you can make up on Rosie. That would be so great for the book.

CHARLIE

(trying to figure it out)

If I ever get out of here...

PATRICIA

If I ever get out of here, I'm having my eyes lasered.

CHARLIE

I'm marrying Oreet. I love her. I should marry her. I don't know what's been stopping me.

He takes out his wallet and looks at a picture of Oreet, shows it to Joe.

JOE

If I ever get out of here, I'm going to --

He stops, he looks at Patricia who is fishing through her purse.

PATRICIA

Where is my TicTacs?  
(looks at Joe)  
What?

The firemen crowbar open the elevator door.

EXT. 79TH STREET BOAT BASIN - NIGHT

Joe and Brinkley walk out on the dock toward Joe's boat. Joe is carrying Brinkley's pillow, his laptop and a suitcase.

He boards his boat and goes below. A light goes on. We hear the sound of the computer.

JOE (V.O.)

I came home tonight and got into the elevator to go to my apartment. An hour later, I got out of the elevator and Brinkley and I moved out. Suddenly everything had become clear.

(continued)

INT. BOAT - NIGHT

A small sleeping area with a berth and a little table, where Joe's laptop has been hooked up to the phone.

Joe is on the narrow berth, as is Brinkley.

JOE (V.O.,cont'd)

It's a long story. Full of the personal details we avoid so carefully...

Joe puts Brinkley on the floor, on his pillow. Brinkley jumps back onto the berth with Joe.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Kathleen is making tea. She starts toward the bedroom. We see her computer, now hooked up in the living room, where all of Frank's typewriters used to be.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I wonder whether change isn't a kind of infection. You start with one thing -- something you never ever thought would change and it does --

(continued)

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATHLEEN (V.O.,cont'd)

and the next thing you know even your bed is in a different place.

Kathleen enters the bedroom and we see the entire room has been rearranged.

She gets into bed and turns on the television set.

EXT. SHOP AROUND THE CORNER - DUSK

The bookshelves are empty.

KATHLEEN (V.O., cont'd)

Six months ago, when you and I first met, I knew everything about myself -- what I would be doing for the rest of my life and even the person I would be doing it with. Now I know nothing.

On the door is a small sign. "After 42 years, we are closing our doors. We have loved being part of your lives."

Kathleen turns out the light in the store and opens the door.

The little bell over the door jingles.

Kathleen reaches up on her tiptoes for the bell and detaches it.

Then she comes out of the store, carrying the bell.

Kathleen locks the door and reaches down to operate the grate for the last time.

The grate starts to lower.

Kathleen looks at her store, one last time. Then she walks off, carrying the bell. We hear it jingle in the night.

And hold on The Shop Around the Corner, and it slowly turns into a computer-enhanced version of itself.

And then, suddenly, it vanishes with a poof, leaving an empty screen.

EXT. A BLUE SKY WITH A BIG COMPUTER SUN SHINING IN IT,  
AND PAN DOWN TO:

A COMPUTER VERSION OF COLUMBUS AVENUE

The trees sprout leaves and birdies start to tweet. And the scene turns into a real version of:

EXT. COLUMBUS AVE. - FOXBOOKS - MORNING

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DAY

George is now the head of the children department at the store and he is sitting in the children's section on an itty-bitty chair. His staff is sitting on little itty-bitty chairs too.

GEORGE

Then, in the 19th century, Caldecott revolutionized the publishing of children's books by the introduction of color illustrations --

We see:

THE STAFF

Several are dozing.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE & 72ND - DAY

Joe walks past the Eleanor Roosevelt statue. He's with Annabel and Matt:

JOE

What about going to the Children's Zoo?

ANNABEL

I don't want to go to the Children's Zoo.

JOE

Okay. The Staten Island Ferry.

ANNABEL

I want to go to the Storybook Lady.

MATT

I want to go to the Storybook Lady.

JOE

Well we can't go to the Storybook Lady.

INT. JAPANESE NOODLE RESTAURANT - DAY

Annabel is sitting in her chair, staring glumly at a bowl of Japanese soup and noodles.

JOE

I'll read you a story.

ANNABEL

Where did she go?

JOE

She had to close her store.

ANNABEL

Why?

JOE

She didn't have enough business.

ANNABEL

Why?

JOE

Well. Her store was very close to our store, and you know our store sells books at a slightly lower cost --

ANNABEL

Why?

JOE

Why do we sell at a lower cost? So more people can buy books.

ANNABEL

Why couldn't she sell that way too?

JOE

Because she's small and we're big. How about we go get some candy?

ANNABEL

So now she's gone and it's all your fault.

JOE

It's business, Annabel. It's not personal. How about we go get so much candy you'll be bouncing off the walls for days?

MATT

What's personal?

ANNABEL

Personal means that she's gone forever, and now we'll never get another book from her as long as we ever live.

She burst into tears. Matt bursts into tears too.

JOE

Remember the man who worked with her?

ANNABEL

(a wail)

No.

JOE

Well I hired him.

ANNABEL

You killed the Storybook Lady.

Matt throws himself on the ground, crying.

Annabel sobs hysterically.

INT. FOXBOOKS SUPERSTORE - DAY

George is wearing the same pointed hat Kathleen wore as the Storybook Lady. There's a sign that says: Storybook Person.

Several children are listening.

We see:

ANNABEL

She's glowering.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kathleen is in bed with a huge box of Kleenex. She has a terrible cold. Her nose is red, her eyes are watery. On the bedside table are a huge assortment of atomizers, pills, etc.

We hear the sound of computer keys clicking.

JOE (V.O.)  
Why haven't you written?

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
I have a cold.

INT. JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

We see Joe on his computer.

JOE (V.O.)  
How's your cold?

KATHLEEN (V.O.)  
My ears are blocked, my nose is clogged.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's drinking cranberry juice. Joni Mitchell on the stereo.

The sound of computer keys clicking again.

JOE (V.O.)  
Are you feeling any better?

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I'm lying in bed listening to Joni Mitchell and drinking cranberry juice which I am sorry to say is the exact same color as my nose. I keep thinking about my future. What future? What am I going to do?

EXT. 79TH STREET BOAT BASIN - LATE AFTERNOON

As Joe is walking Brinkley back to the boat. A limousine has pulled up near the pier and the driver is unloading bags. Joe stops to see the passenger: his father, Nelson Fox.

JOE

What are you doing here?

EXT. 79TH STREET BOAT BASIN - DUSK

Next to Joe's boat is a larger yacht.

INT. YACHT - NIGHT

In the main cabin Joe and Nelson are having drinks. Nelson lifts his glass in a toast.

NELSON

To us.

JOE

Father and son, together at last. What happened with Gillian?

Nelson ignores the question.

NELSON

I've stayed here after, let's see, your mother, Laurette that ballet dancer --

JOE

-- the nanny --

NELSON

Was she the nanny? I forgot that. How ironic. Then there was the ice skater --

JOE

-- also the nanny --

NELSON

Really. How amazingly ironic. Sybil the astrologer.

JOE

Whose moon turned out to be in somebody else's house, as I recall.

NELSON

Just like Gillian.

JOE

Gillian ran off with someone?

NELSON

The nanny.

JOE

Nanny Maureen? Gillian ran off with Nanny Maureen? That's incredibly ironic.

NELSON

True true.

JOE

There's no other word for it.

NELSON

Who did you break up with?

JOE

Patricia. You met her.

NELSON

Would I like her?

(cracks himself up)

Just kidding. Isn't this great? Have some peanuts. Of course I have to live out of a suitcase for a least three weeks, and then there's the inevitable legal hassle, more of your inheritance down the drain.

JOE

Don't worry about it.

NELSON

I won't. But then I get to meet someone new. That's the easy part.

JOE

Oh, right, a snap to find the one single person in the world who fills your heart with joy.

NELSON

Don't be ridiculous. Have I ever been with anyone who fits that description? Have you?

JOE

On to the next.

NELSON

Isn't it a beautiful night?

Hold on Joe.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S STREET - DAY

Joe, on his way to Kathleen's apartment building, carrying a bunch of daisies, wrapped in cellophane.

Joe goes up the stoop to her building and looks at buzzer. Sees Kelly, 3A. He presses. Nothing. Presses again.

KATHLEEN

(voice clogged,  
through intercom)

Who is it?

JOE

Joe Fox.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Kathleen, in her pajamas, at the intercom, horrified.

KATHLEEN

What are you doing here?

JOE

May I please come up?

KATHLEEN

It's really not a good idea.

Someone else walks up to the door, unlocks it and walks in. Joe follows.

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

KATHLEEN

(into the intercom)

I have a terrible cold, can you hear it?  
I'm sniffing and not really awake --

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As Kathleen continues to talk through the Intercom to an empty stoop.

KATHLEEN'S VOICE  
and I'm sleeping practically twenty-four  
hours a day, and taking echinacea --

INT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

KATHLEEN  
(into intercom)  
-- and vitamin C, so I would really  
appreciate it if you would come some  
other time --

There's a knock on the door right next to her. Kathleen practically jumps out of her skin. She looks through the peephole. There he is.

JOE  
Kathleen?

KATHLEEN  
Just a second.

She puts on a robe, runs frantically about picking up various scattered wadded-up Kleenexs, opens the front door. Joe is holding a bunch of flowers wrapped in paper.

JOE  
Hello.

KATHLEEN  
What are you doing here?

JOE  
I heard you were sick and I was worried  
and I wanted to --  
(he hears voices)  
Is someone here?

KATHLEEN  
Just the Home Shopping Network.

JOE  
Bought any porcelain dolls?

KATHLEEN  
I was thinking about it.  
(beat)  
You put me out of business --

JOE  
I know that --

KATHLEEN  
And now you turn up with flowers? Did you come to gloat?

JOE  
No.

KATHLEEN  
To offer me a job --

JOE  
No, I wouldn't think of --

KATHLEEN  
Because I have plans, I have lots of offers. I've been offered a job by -- well, actually by --

JOE  
My former?

KATHLEEN  
Former?

JOE  
We broke up.

KATHLEEN  
That's too bad. You seemed so perfect for each other.  
(she claps her hand over her mouth)  
I don't mean to say things like that. No matter what you have done to me, there is no excuse for my saying anything like that. But every time I see you --

JOE  
Things like that just seem to fly out of your mouth.

KATHLEEN  
Yes. I'm sorry. I'm starting over.  
(sharply)  
Thank you for coming. Goodbye.  
(she says it again, a little more nicely)  
Thank you for coming. Goodbye.

She starts to the door.

JOE  
I bought you flowers.

KATHLEEN  
Oh.  
(trying as hard as  
she can)  
Thank you.

She takes them.

He takes them back.

JOE  
Why don't I put them in water?

He heads for the kitchen. A beat, while she stares after him. Then follows.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

When Kathleen gets to the kitchen, Joe is checking the kettle for water. Turns on the stove.

JOE  
You're sick. Sit down, please.

He pulls out a kitchen chair. Kathleen sits. She's a little woozy.

JOE  
Vase?

KATHLEEN  
Upper left.

He gets out a vase. Fills it with water.

JOE  
George says hello. He told me you weren't feeling well.

KATHLEEN  
How is George?

JOE  
Great. He's revolutionizing the place. No one is allowed to work in his department who doesn't have a Ph.D. in children's literature.

He unwraps the paper around the flowers. Daisies. Puts them in a vase.

KATHLEEN  
I love daisies.

JOE  
You told me.

He puts the vase on the kitchen table. Kathleen plays with the petals.

KATHLEEN  
They're so friendly. Don't you think they are the friendliest flower?

JOE  
I do.

KATHLEEN  
When did you break up?

JOE  
Oh, a couple of weeks ago.

KATHLEEN  
Everyone is breaking up. You. Me. This other person I know broke up with someone in an elevator. I think it was in an elevator. Or just outside it. Or after it. It got stuck. I think. And suddenly everything became clear. When I saw you, at the coffee place, I was waiting for him and I was --

JOE  
-- charming.

KATHLEEN  
I was not charming.

JOE  
Well, you looked charming.

The teakettle whistles. Joe turns off the burner.

JOE  
Tea?

KATHLEEN  
Upper right.

He gets out mugs and teabags and pours the water.

KATHLEEN  
I was upset. And I was horrible.

JOE

Honey?

Kathleen nods. He puts in two spoonfuls, gives it to her.

JOE

I was horrible.

KATHLEEN

True. But I have no excuse.

She picks up the daisies and carries them into:

INT. KATHLEEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joe follows her. They both sit.

JOE

Whereas I am a horrible person and have no choice but to be horrible, is that what you're saying?

KATHLEEN

No I am not saying that because I am done saying horrible things, even to you.

JOE

You did it again.

She claps her hand over her mouth.

JOE

I put you out of business. You're entitled to hate me.

KATHLEEN

I don't hate you --

JOE

But you'll never forgive me. Like Elizabeth.

KATHLEEN

Who?

JOE

Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice. She was too proud --

KATHLEEN

I thought you hated Pride and Prejudice.

JOE

-- or was she too prejudiced and Mr. Darcy too proud? I can never remember.

(beat)

It wasn't personal --

KATHLEEN

-- It was business. What is that supposed to mean? I am so sick of that. All it means is it's not personal to you, but it's personal to me, it's personal to a lot of people.

(she shrugs helplessly)

What's wrong with personal anyway?

JOE

Nothing.

KATHLEEN

I mean, whatever else anything is, it ought to begin by being personal.

Kathleen stands up, picks up the daisies.

KATHLEEN

My head's starting to get funny. I have to go back to bed.

They walk to...

EXT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen puts the daisies next to the bed and gets into it. She fluffs up the pillows, pulls up the blankets, surrounds herself with Kleenex and Evian and sneezes a gigantic sneeze.

KATHLEEN

Why did you stop by? I forget.

JOE

I wanted to be your friend.

KATHLEEN

Oh.

JOE

I knew it wasn't possible. What can I say? Sometimes a person just wants the impossible. Could I ask you something?

KATHLEEN

What?

JOE  
What happened with that guy at the cafe?

KATHLEEN  
Nothing.

JOE  
But you're crazy about him --

KATHLEEN  
Yes. I am.

JOE  
Then why don't you run off with him?  
What are you waiting for?

A long beat.

KATHLEEN  
I don't actually know him.

JOE  
Really.

KATHLEEN  
We only know each other -- oh God,  
you're not going to believe this --

JOE  
Let me guess. From the Internet.

KATHLEEN  
Yes.

JOE  
You've Got Mail.

KATHLEEN  
Yes.

JOE  
Very powerful words.

KATHLEEN  
Yes.

Joe sits on the edge of the bed.

JOE  
I'm happy for him. Although -- could I  
make a little suggestion? I think you  
should meet him. No. I take it back.  
Why meet him?

KATHLEEN  
 (starting to get  
 sharp again)  
 I hardly think I need advice from  
 someone who --

He reaches out and gently claps his hand over her mouth. And holds it there. It's unexpectedly tender and sexy.

JOE  
 I concede I bring out the worst in you,  
 but let me help you not to say something  
 you'll just torture yourself about for  
 years to come.

She starts to smile and he removes his hand.

They look at each other.

JOE  
 I hope you're better soon. It would be  
 a shame to miss New York in the spring.

Joe stands.

KATHLEEN  
 Thank you for the daisies.

He starts for the door.

JOE  
 Take care.

KATHLEEN  
 I will.

JOE  
 Goodbye.

KATHLEEN  
 Goodbye.

We hear the door close.

Hold on Kathleen.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Christina is running. She sees a good-looking MALE RUNNER coming toward her. She has no hope that he will notice her, and starts to look away as they get close to one another.

MALE RUNNER  
 Hi.

CHRISTINA

Hi.

He passes her. Christina can't believe it.

She does a little dance of joy.

Camera pulls back as we see her by the reservoir on a beautiful morning doing her little celebratory spin.

Then she resumes her morning exercise, running on.

INT. THE SINGLES TEMPLE - FRIDAY EVENING

Patricia comes in.

The place is packed. There are hundreds of young Jewish New Yorkers singing folk songs and dancing the hora. The Rabbi is dancing among them.

Patricia sees the rabbi, leading the dance.

The rabbi whirls madly toward her, like a human dreidel.

RABBIT

Shabbat shalom!

He grabs Patricia's hand, and to her surprise, they go whirling off together.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kathleen at the computer, typing.

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I have been thinking about this and I think we should meet.

She clicks the send button and then exits from American On Line.

On her computer screen we now see the standard screen with several icons: American On-Line, Word, Recycle Bin, etc.

She clicks Word.

She goes to File: New.

There are several choices of format.

She stares at the choices. Then she clicks Book format.

A blank page appears in the computer.

She starts to type: "Once upon a time there was a little girl named..."

She pauses for a moment and looks around the room. She sees the flowers that Joe brought her.

And then she types: "Daisy."

As she goes on typing...

INT. JOE' BOAT - NIGHT

On Joe typing.

JOE (V.O.)  
We should meet. And we will meet. But  
I'm in the middle of a project that  
needs...  
(he pauses to think  
of the right word)  
... tweaking.

A look of calculation on his face.

EXT. STARBUCKS - DAY

We can see Kathleen through the window, drinking a cup of coffee.

And now we see Joe walk into Starbucks. He waves at her, pretending surprise at seeing her. Has he been watching the store and waiting for her to come in? We'll never know.

INT. STARBUCKS - A FEW MINUTES LATER

He's sitting next to her at the counter in the window.

JOE  
Tweaking?

KATHLEEN  
That's what he said.

JOE  
He's probably married.

KATHLEEN  
That's a terrible thing to say. It's  
not possible.

JOE  
Have you asked him if he's married?  
Have you said, "Are you married?"

KATHLEEN

No.

Joe looks at her, shrugs.

INT. KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As she types:

KATHLEEN (V.O.)

I know this is probably a little late to be asking, but are you married?

INT. JOE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

As he answers:

JOE (V.O.)

Am I married? What kind of a question is that? How can you ask me that? Don't you know me at all? Oh wait, I get it. Your friends are telling you the reason we haven't met is that I'm married. Am I right?

INT. SIDEWALK CAFE - ANOTHER DAY

Kathleen and Joe having nachos.

JOE

So he didn't exactly answer.

KATHLEEN

He did too. He nailed me. He knew exactly what I was up to. Which is just like him.

JOE

But he didn't exactly answer, did he? Did he?

KATHLEEN

No.

JOE

Maybe he's fat.

KATHLEEN

I don't care about that.

JOE

You don't care that he might be one of those guys who's so fat he has to be removed from his house with a crane?

KATHLEEN

That's very unlikely.

JOE

Why else do you think he's putting off meeting you? Although... maybe that's not it. Maybe...

KATHLEEN

What?

JOE

Never mind.

KATHLEEN

What????

JOE

He could be waiting til he's paroled.

KATHLEEN

Oh, you won't believe this, there was a moment when George thought he might be the rooftop killer, which was completely ridiculous --

Her voice trails off, as she considers whether it could be true.

JOE

What's his handle?

She shakes her head.

JOE

Come on, I'm not going to write him. Is that what you think?

KATHLEEN

NY 152.

JOE

One five two. One hundred fifty two. Very interesting. He's 152 years old. He has 152 hairs remaining on his head. He's had 152 moles removed and now he has 152 pockmarks.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET ON BROADWAY - LATE

As they walk past tables of bread and flowers, etc.

JOE

His combined college board scores.

KATHLEEN

His IQ.

JOE

The number of women he's slept with.

KATHLEEN

The number of times he's seen The Godfather.

JOE

That's the first good thing I've heard about him.

KATHLEEN

His address. No, no, no. He would never do anything that prosaic.

On Joe, looking a little wounded.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

The only thing I really care about besides the married thing... and the jail thing... is the boat thing.

JOE

The boat thing?

KATHLEEN

I could never be with anyone who has a boat.

JOE

Oh.

KATHLEEN

So that clinches it. We'll never be together. I'll take care of these.

He picks up a mango, squeezes it.

JOE (CONT'D)

I could never be with anyone who likes Joni Mitchell.

(singing, imitating  
Joni)

"It's cloud's illusions I recall, I really don't know clouds at all." What does that mean?

Joe waits for Kathleen to say she likes Joni Mitchell.

But Kathleen doesn't say anything.

She starts intently picking over apples, trying to find some she wants.

JOE

How's your book coming?

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

As they walk away from the market, going uptown.

KATHLEEN

There's a children's book editor I know, from the store, and she's excited to read it. When I finish it. Who would ever have thought I'd write? I mean, if I didn't have all this free time, I would never have discovered --

She stops, realizing what she's saying.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

The truth is, he was the one who made me start thinking about writing --

JOE

Mister 152 Felony Indictments --

KATHLEEN

Mister 152... insights into my soul.

JOE

Yes. Well. Can't compete with that.

KATHLEEN

Well. I keep bumping into you. Hope your mango's ripe.

JOE

I think it is. Want to bump into me Saturday? Around lunchtime?

EXT. COMPUTER SCREEN - NIGHT

As Joe types.

JOE (V.O.)

How about meeting Saturday? The first day of spring. 4 P.M. There's a place in Riverside Park at 88th Street where the path curves and when you come around the curve, you'll find me waiting.



They stop walking, they look at each other.

JOE

If I hadn't been Foxbooks and you hadn't been The Shop Around the Corner and we'd just met --

KATHLEEN

Don't.

JOE

I would have asked for your phone number and I wouldn't have been able to wait 24 hours before calling and asking, "How about coffee, drinks, dinner, a movie, for as long as we both shall live?"

KATHLEEN

(almost a swoon)

Joe...

JOE

And then we would never have been at war.

KATHLEEN

No.

JOE

The only fight we'd ever have is what video to rent on Saturday night.

KATHLEEN

Who fights about that?

JOE

Some people. Not us.

KATHLEEN

We would never.

A long beat.

JOE

If only...

KATHLEEN

Please. I have to go.

She doesn't move.

JOE

Let me ask you something? How come you'll forgive him for standing you up and you won't forgive me for a little tiny thing like putting you out of business?

Kathleen looks at him. Shakes her head.

They look at each other.

JOE

Oh how I wish you would.

It's all Kathleen can do not to forgive him.

It's all Joe can do not to kiss her.

KATHLEEN

I really do have to go.

JOE

You don't want to be late.

She's in agony.

He turns and walks away.

After a moment, she does too.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - LATE

As we see Kathleen come down the street and walk into her house.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT - LATE

As she comes out of the apartment house, having changed her clothes.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE - LATER AFTERNOON

As she comes toward the entrance to the park.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

As Kathleen comes down a path in the park, near 88th Street.

She comes to a stop.

Looks around.

A young woman in running clothes passes by.

A young father pushing a baby in one of those strollers runners use to push babies in.

Kathleen looks at her watch.

Suddenly she hears a noise. A dog barking.

And Brinkley comes around the corner.

VOICE  
Brinkley! Brinkley!

And hold on Kathleen as she sees.

JOE

And she starts to cry.

And he comes to her. And puts his arms around her.

JOE  
Don't cry, Shopgirl, don't cry.

KATHLEEN  
I wanted it to be you. I wanted it to  
be you so badly.

And as they kiss, we hold on them.

And crane up and away as we see them, a couple kissing in the park on a beautiful spring day.

A dog is leaping around them.

And as we get further and further away from them, the screen turns into

CYBERSPACE

And the dog turns cartwheels and flipflops.

And we tilt up to see the clouds and the sky

and hear the sound of computer keys, clicking, clicking, clicking

FADE OUT:

THE END