

BRUTAL AFFAIRS

Written by

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INT. JOHNNY & LUCIANA'S APARTMENT-EVENING

Several pictures of a couple are scattered throughout a lower class apartment that's tiny and unkept, but full of love.

The most prominent picture is a giant, nicely framed one by the front door that's noticeably crooked.

JOHNNY (Mid-30s) stands in front of a mirror by the picture, dressed to the nines. He struggles with his tie.

LUCIANA (O.S.)
Didn't anyone ever teach you how to
tie a tie?

Johnny turns to see LUCIANA (Mid-20s) standing in the hallway. She steps closer and starts to tie it for him.

JOHNNY
No point. I hardly ever wear one.
Just never been my style, I guess.

Luciana finishes tying the tie and she steps back to check him out. She rests her hands on his chest.

LUCIANA
(flirtaciously)
You know what? You're right. These
clothes are not your style at all.
We should just take them all off.

Luciana gives Johnny a passionate and longing kiss which he returns for a few moments before unwillingly pulling away.

JOHNNY
I gotta go. The director is gonna
kill me if I'm late.

Johnny grabs his keys and his wallet that are resting on top of a nearby table covered in PAST DUE BILLS.

There's a catering APRON hung up on a coat rack by the door. He pauses.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
You're not working tonight, right?

LUCIANA
Nope. Not tonight. Just staying
home. Thinking of watching a movie.

JOHNNY
I'll try not to be back too late
but in case I am, don't wait up.

They share one last rushed kiss before Johnny heads out, slamming the door behind him.

Luciana is left alone in the hallway next to the crooked picture.

CUT TO:

EXT. VICTOR'S DRIVEWAY-EVENING

Johnny rushes up the driveway of a nice, suburban home.

He pauses at a fountain and reaches into his pocket for a QUARTER. Johnny stares at it for a few seconds before flipping it in.

MARNIE (mid-30s), a proper and professional woman, is impatiently waiting at the foot of the staircase. She looks relieved the moment she lays eyes on Johnny.

MARNIE

You're so late.

JOHNNY

Sorry, I took the wrong freeway and got lost. Come on, you ready?

MARNIE

Are you? Also your stupid tie isn't up all the way.

Marnie reaches over and aggressively pushes the tie up as high as it'll go.

JOHNNY

Of course. Go in, charm your boss, get out. Easy enough.

MARNIE

Tonight is just a big night, okay? We have to be perfect. Sell this whole stable relationship thing. My career might depend on it.

Marnie begins to feel anxious. She reaches into her purse and pulls out some XANEX that she pops into her mouth.

Johnny puts his arm around her and readjusts his tie so he can breathe.

JOHNNY

Relax. We got this. Now, come on. It's showtime.

INT/EXT. VICTOR'S DOORWAY-EVENING

The door is opened up by REBECCA (Mid-60s) to reveal Johnny and Marnie with their arms wrapped around one another. If you didn't know any better you'd think they were together.

REBECCA

Ah! Marnie and your handsome date.
Jonathan, right? Come in! Come in!
The party is right this way.

As soon as Rebecca turns around, Marnie and Johnny readjust, clearly uncomfortable.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-FOYER-CONTINUOUS

They enter a room with a handful of COUPLES ranging anywhere from their mid-20s to their 50s. There's a banner on the wall that reads "Happy Retirement!"

They pass by a couple of CATERERS emptying silverware from a china cabinet.

REBECCA

I'm letting the caterers use our good china. I just love having an excuse to bring them out. Thousand dollar wedding gifts and all they do is collect dust.

Rebecca leads Marnie and Johnny over to VICTOR (60s), Marnie's jolly boss. He's with several other WORKERS gathered around a PIANO.

FREDERICK (late 30s), an ambitious man, plays the instrument softly as he addresses the group.

FREDERICK

This is nice. I haven't played the piano since Samantha passed away. I honestly haven't done a lot of things I used to do when she was around. Like going to social events. I just can't stand the thought of showing up to these things without her. I almost didn't come tonight but in the back of my mind I heard her voice reminding me how much I'd regret missing this party.

VICTOR
 So you're telling me even in death
 my wife's gon'na be kvetching and
 kvetching?

Polite chuckles from the group. Victor's eyes land on Marnie's as she and Johnny settle in the circle.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 Ah, Marnie! So glad you could make it. And Jonathan, Nice seeing you again.

JOHNNY Always a pleasure, sir. Frederick rolls his eyes.	MARNIE I wouldn't have missed this for the world.
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VICTOR
 It seems like most of the office showed up tonight which is great. I have a few announcements to make and it looks like I don't have to wait until Monday to make them.

Frederick and Marnie both perk up. Frederick gets up from the piano bench.

FREDERICK
 Would this announcement happen to have anything to do with who's taking over after you leave?

VICTOR
 You'll all know soon enough.

LUCIANA (O.S.)
 Onion tartlets, anyone?

A few people turn around to acknowledge the caterer including Johnny. The second he sees Luciana, his eyes widen. *Fuck.*

Johnny watches Luciana's gaze as she looks down at Marnie's arm wrapped firmly around his.

The rest of the group continues to talk but their chatter is incoherent to Johnny who's only focusing on Luciana.

LUCIANA (CONT'D)
 (To Johnny)
 Sir, would you like one? Or maybe two, perhaps?

Johnny just stands there, frozen. Luciana moves on, trying to stay professional.

JOHNNY

Um, excuse me. Marnie. Uh, dear. I just need to-

REBECCA

Bathroom is down the hall, sweetie.

Johnny doesn't hesitate to escape from Marnie's grasp and follow Luciana.

Marnie eyes Johnny suspiciously and Frederick notices this as he settles back on the piano bench.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-HALLWAY-CONTINUOUS

Johnny follows Luciana's trail past a few party-goers and down an empty hallway where she lets a MAN pick off her tray.

After the man leaves, Johnny makes sure no one is looking before grabbing her shoulder from behind.

JOHNNY

Luciana, wait-

Luciana turns around, startled, and accidentally spills her tray of appetizers.

Johnny drops to help pick up the mess but Luciana quickly scoops up the food and stands back up before he can attempt to do so. Her legs are inches from his face.

LUCIANA

You just love making a mess of things, don't you?

Luciana turns around to leave but Johnny gets up and grabs her arm to stop her. A GUEST walks by to go to the bathroom and Johnny immediately lets go.

Nervous, Johnny opens the door to a nearby room and he sneaks inside, yanking Luciana with him.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-OFFICE-CONTINUOUS

Johnny quietly shuts the door behind them.

JOHNNY

What are you doing here? I thought you weren't working tonight?

LUCIANA

Stacy got sick. And wait, I'm sorry, I'm the one being interrogated right now? This doesn't exactly look like the dress rehearsal for *Death of a Salesman*.

JOHNNY

Look, I can explain-

LUCIANA

Oh, I'm sure you can but right now I'm on the clock and I'm not letting your lying ass get me fired. We can fight later.

Luciana wipes away some rogue tears before turning around and heading out the door leaving Johnny alone.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-'BAR'-SAME TIME

The original group of colleagues have dispersed leaving Marnie and Frederick alone by the makeshift bar.

A group of FOUR WOMEN are in the background, gossiping.

FREDERICK

Still think you're going to get that promotion?

MARNIE

I don't think. I know.

FREDERICK

I wouldn't be too sure about that. I figured out Victor has a particularly sympathetic soft spot for single fathers.

MARNIE

You're pathetic if you're going to keep using your dead wife as a way to earn pity points.

FREDERICK

What's pathetic is the fact you think flaunting around a boyfriend is going to do you any better.

MARNIE

I work harder than anyone in this company. I don't need a boyfriend to get this job. I earned it.

Frederick gets really close to Marnie so he's practically whispering in her ear.

FREDERICK

The angle of the widowed, single father who owes his financial well being to the same life insurance company he works for is a far better promotion story than the career driven woman whose only personal accomplishment is being able to sleep with the same man more than once.

He leans back, taking another sip from his drink.

FREDERICK (CONT'D)

But who knows? Maybe I am wrong.
Guess we'll find out. Cheers.

He clinks his glass against Marnie's before walking away.

Marnie's breathing starts to speed up and she starts to fidget, anxious. She reaches into her purse and looks around to make sure no one is looking before popping another XANEX.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Marnie I need to talk to you.

MARNIE

Baby! There you are!

Marnie plants a very large, passionate kiss on Johnny's lips. He returns it with no real enthusiasm and pulls away quickly.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

JOHNNY

Listen. I have to go. Just say I'm feeling sick or something but I just gotta get out of here.

MARNIE

What the hell are you talking about? Are you forgetting how much money I'm paying you to just stand by my side and look pretty?

JOHNNY

I know I know. Believe me, I know but-

MARNIE
Do you even realize what's at stake
right now?

Marnie grabs Johnny by the arm and drags him up the stairs leading to the balcony.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-BALCONY-CONTINUOUS

Victor and a couple of coworkers are playing poker.

Very suddenly, Marnie bends down and starts feeling around on the ground as if she's dropped something.

JOHNNY
What are you doing?

Marnie doesn't respond. She keeps looking around on the floor, more panicked. A few people look in their general direction, curious.

After a few moments, Johnny joins her.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What does it matter if you have a boyfriend anyway? You've been dragging me around to all these social events but does your boss even really give a shit if you're dating someone?

Marnie continues to crawl around, patting the floor.

MARNIE
I overheard Victor telling his assistant a while back that I'm too cold and all I care about is work.

JOHNNY
I mean...is he wrong?

Marnie glares at him.

Rebecca joins her husband at the poker table. Frederick also strolls outside, lighting a cigarette.

MARNIE
Look. Just finish the night with me and...I'll pay you double what I owe you.

Johnny hesitates only briefly.

JOHNNY

I mean...my girlfriend will
understand once I come home with 20
grand right?

MARNIE

Sure. As I'm sure you'll understand
what I'm about to do.

Marnie reaches into her purse and pulls out a gorgeous
ENGAGEMENT RING. She discreetly throws it on the ground and
then immediately goes to pick it up, shoving it on her ring
finger.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, Thank God! I found it!

Marnie stands back up and makes a big deal about holding her
left hand out. Her voice is loud and boisterous.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

I'm so relieved. Thought I had lost
your grandmother's wedding ring. We
need to get this re-sized
immediately.

A couple of Marnie's coworkers glance in hers and Johnny's
direction. They begin to murmur.

JOHNNY

(Hushed Whisper)

A little heads up would've been
nice. Where the hell did you get
that?

MARNIE

It's just a stupid ring from my
grandmother I was gonna pawn off to
help pay you. Just shut up and play
along.

Rebecca begins to walk up to them with Victor swiftly behind
her. Some coworkers begin to crowd around as well leaving
Frederick in the background, staring at the commotion.

REBECCA

Marnie! Had no idea you were
engaged!

MARNIE

Oh you know, it happened just last
night. I haven't really had time to
formally announce it yet.

VICTOR

You two make such a wonderful couple. This is exactly the kind of loving relationship I'd hope Marnie would find one day.

Luciana is in the background, watching. She rolls her eyes and sets down her tray. She starts to head down the stairs.

MARNIE

Thank you. I'm a little nervous about the finances that come with being married but I'm sure we'll figure it out. Right sweetie?

Johnny just nods, distracted yet trying to play along. He notices Luciana climbing down the stairs to the backyard.

VICTOR

Well I'm sure you won't have to worry about money too much. These things have a way of working themselves out.

A couple of FEMALE WORKERS rush to Marnie's side to admire the ring. While she's distracted, Johnny takes this opportunity to leave her side.

Frederick notices Johnny heading downstairs, chasing after Luciana.

EXT. PATIO-CONTINUOUS

Johnny catches up to Luciana and finds her staring up at the sky. He leans against the railing a little ways away.

LUCIANA

Engaged, huh? Must be thrilled.

JOHNNY

I will be. Once it's to the right woman.

Luciana finally dares to look at Johnny.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Luciana, look. I'm being paid a lot of money to be here. This is all just pretend. Please tell me you get that.

LUCIANA

I mean yeah, now I do. Eventually I was able to piece together that you're clearly not with this woman but that's not exactly why I'm mad at you right now.

JOHNNY

Babe how can you be mad? Did you not hear the part when I said I'm being paid a *LOT* of money? I mean as far as acting gigs go this isn't half bad.

LUCIANA

Are you serious right now? You actually have no idea why I'm upset?

JOHNNY

I'm doing this for you! After I get paid for this we'll have enough money to buy an actual bed frame and eat something other than Chinese take out. We can be happy.

LUCIANA

I was already happy.

JOHNNY

Don't you want more, though?

LUCIANA

Yeah, I do actually. I want an honest boyfriend. You've been sneaking around all hours of the night and lying to me about it. All for money. And you think that makes you a hero? Why didn't you just tell me about any of this to begin with, Johnny?

Johnny hangs his head, speechless.

LUCIANA (CONT'D)

Has this really been for us? Or for you?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-BALCONY-SAME TIME

Marnie is looking around for Johnny and finally sees him talking to Luciana,

A couple of FEMALE COWORKERS have also noticed this and begin to whisper, looking over at Marnie as they do.

Marnie breath quickens as she panics. She looks around for a solution and her eyes land on a pile of FANCY SILVERWARE on top of a catering cart.

EXT. PATIO-SAME TIME

FREDERICK

You two seem well acquainted.

Johnny jumps back from Luciana.

JOHNNY

No. No, we've never met before. I was just asking...about a recipe.

Johnny looks to Luciana with apologetic eyes. She looks away.

LUCIANA

I should go back inside.

Luciana tries to push past Frederick but he stops her.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-BALCONY-SAME TIME

Marnie slyly steals some silverware from the cart and shoves it into her PURSE when she's sure no one is looking.

EXT. PATIO-SAME TIME

FREDERICK

Not so fast. I gotta question. You look like someone who has a lot more than appetizers to offer. Is that right?

JOHNNY

Hey dude, back off.

FREDERICK

What, you give a shit about what I say to a caterer? That's all she is after all, isn't she? Just a caterer?

Johnny's hands clench up into a fist.

Luciana angrily pushes past the two men and Johnny just stands there, watching her head into the living room.

INT. VICTOR'S LIVING ROOM-CONTINUOUS

Luciana storms into the living room and a couple of caterers look at her expectantly.

Luciana walks past Marnie to reach for a tray on the other side of a table.

Marnie very slips a bundle of silverware into the pocket of Luciana's apron.

EXT. PATIO-SAME TIME

Frederick can't hide the grin forming on his face.

FREDERICK

Wow. If I were you I'd start ordering some flowers.

Johnny looks at Frederick, incredulous.

FREDERICK (CONT'D)

You can drop the act Di Caprio. I overheard you two talking. I just wanted to see how far you'd go with that charade.

JOHNNY

Hey, look, it's really not what you-

FREDERICK

I gotta expose you two, you know. I can't let Marnie get that promotion. It's just good business. You know what that's like though, right?

Johnny swiftly punches Frederick in the jaw causing him to stumble backwards and smash his glass onto a wall, cutting his hand.

Frederick and Johnny tussle until Frederick's head hits the ground, knocking him out. Johnny exits in a rush.

INT. VICTOR'S HOME-FOYER-CONTINUOUS

Johnny walks back into the house. Marnie races to his side.

MARNIE

I've been looking for you. Crazy
thing just happened.

Johnny looks to where the commotion is to find Luciana being sternly escorted outside of the house by Rebecca and a couple of other caterers.

Johnny lunges to go help her but Marnie holds him back.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

(stern whisper)

There's nothing you can do now.
Blow our cover and everything would
have all been in vain.

JOHNNY

Don't fucking touch me.

Johnny attempts once again to leave but is interrupted by the sound of clinking against a glass.

He looks over at Victor who stands on the top of the stairs.

VICTOR

Well I'm glad to see everyone is so concerned about our china cabinet. However, now that all this theft nonsense has been dealt with, I guess now is as good a time as any for the big news I have.

Johnny looks over at Marnie who is pleading with her eyes for him to stick around.

She flashes her left hand, the ring beckoning him to stay.

Johnny clenches his fists before once again joining her side.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

I know many of you have been gossiping behind my back, speculating on who will be taking over the Infinity Insurance empire after my retirement. There are many great candidates, all of whom have been given an extreme vetting.

Marnie grips onto Johnny's arm tightly.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
However, I have felt it best that
the company be turned over to
entirely new management altogether.

Surprised gasps and murmurs erupt among the crowd.

MAN WOMAN
Wait, you sold the company? Are we keeping our jobs!?

VICTOR
I know it's going to be a lot of
changes but I can assure you all
that this was the best option for
the company. It does allow all of
you to keep your current jobs which
was a priority of mine when drawing
up the contracts...

Victor continues to speak but his voice becomes drowned out.
Marnie and Johnny have heard all they needed to hear.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(Drowned Out)
...This was not an easy decision to
make. I worked my heart out for
over 35 years...

MARNIE
I-I didn't get the promotion. 10
years I've dedicated to this
company and I didn't get the
promotion.

Marnie reaches for her purse and her hands are shaking so
much she accidentally drops the BOTTLE OF XANEX on the
ground. She desperately starts to crawl on the floor, trying
to grasp at any one of them.

Johnny just stares at her as she continues making a scene.
People around her begin to notice and pretty soon the entire
party is watching as Marnie hyperventilates on the ground.

It takes Johnny a while to process that all of these people
begin looking at him expectantly.

Their voices are all talking over one another, indecipherable
to Johnny who's focusing only on Marnie's ring.

Johnny bends down and holds Marnie as she shakes but only so
he can slip the ring off of Marnie's finger.

Frederick re-enters the living room, his hand wrapped with a paper towel. He makes eye contact with Johnny who takes this as his cue to leave.

Johnny stands up leaving Marnie on the ground. He doesn't make eye contact with anyone as he leaves the party, shutting the door behind him.

A humiliated Marnie stays on the ground, sobbing. She looks up to find Frederick reaching down to help her up.

INT. JOHNNY & LUCIANA'S APARTMENT-LATE NIGHT

Johnny rushes into the apartment, flipping on the lights.

He throws his keys and wallet down on the table next to the stack of overdue bills.

JOHNNY
LUCIANA!

He goes deeper into the apartment, hopeful.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
LUCY!

Johnny finally gives up and slumps over on his couch. He pulls the ring out from his pocket and just holds it up, staring at it.

Over by the doorway, the picture of Johnny and Luciana is still crooked.

CUT TO BLACK