

Double Play
by
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Registered WGA

FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A finger points as MRI images flash across a screen.

DOCTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)
There's the first repair, eight
years ago. See the scarring? That's
from three years ago...

RICK LANIER watches, tense with dread. At thirty-five, he is athletic and boyishly handsome, but the skin of his shoulder is marred by a web of surgical scars.

The doctor speaks to the team's G.M., smart, slick, nattily dressed, and PITCHING COACH, a genial potbellied veteran. Rick sits on the examining table.

DOCTOR
...this bit was last year. As you
can see, it's detaching again...

He stops. Uneasy pause.

G.M.
So what's the bottom line here? How
soon can he pitch?

The doctor hesitates, doesn't answer. The G.M. frowns.

G.M. (CONT'D)
Mmm. What about next season?

After another pause, the doctor shakes his head. The G.M. looks put out, the coach sorrowful. Rick looks shell-shocked.

EXT. JOGGING PATH BESIDE THE CHARLES RIVER, BOSTON - DAY

Steady drizzle falls. GRETCHEN HAYES jogs with her dog Boris.

She is Rick's age, but his physical opposite. Her body is utilitarian, her clothing random. Her face is the sort that inspires compliments on her brains and sense of humor.

Boris is squat, massive, speckled and homely, with a slow stub-legged trot. The two are a match, sodden and dogged.

A male RUNNER overtakes them and nods in greeting.

GRETCHEN
Beautiful day, isn't it?

RUNNER
Yeah, definitely.

He looks at Boris, opens his mouth to say something nice, closes it again.

GRETCHEN
You're right. I never should have put him in the dryer.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Rick argues, with desperation.

RICK
You can cut me again! Whatever it takes. I don't care.

DOCTOR
It wouldn't do any good.

RICK
But it's worked the other times!

Fighting not to cry, he looks at the coach.

RICK (CONT'D)
What do you think, Coach? You've gotten guys through this...

COACH
I dunno, Rick. This isn't my...

He shrugs regretfully. The G.M. gestures toward the doctor.

G.M.
He's the best in the business, Rick.

EXT. STREET IN A MODEST NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Gretchen pauses for traffic. She does not jog in place.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Emerging from the clinic, the G.M. stops and pulls out a phone. Rick and the coach head down the hall. Rick rolls a Nerf baseball with his fingers, trying out grips.

RICK
He meant never, didn't he.

COACH

Yeah.

Behind them, the G.M. speaks on the phone.

G.M.

That Tino kid in Triple A, what's
it do to our option year if we
bring him up?

A MAN passing sees Rick and stops.

MAN

Aren't you Rick Lanier?

He holds out a Good Housekeeping magazine.

MAN (CONT'D)

Could you sign this for me?
(gestures down the hall)
For my wife...

Rick collects himself enough to smile and signs the magazine.
The man leaves.

COACH

You keep doing that for free, how's
Jerry gonna get his cut?

RICK

(joking)
He can take his cut.

COACH

I bet guys like you drive him nuts.

Rick shrugs.

RICK

You know, I've still got a Little
League cap that Fisk signed. I
always liked catchers best.

COACH

The brain guys.

RICK

Yeah.

He holds up the baseball, hopefully, showing off a grip.

RICK (CONT'D)

You think maybe I could try working
on a knuckle ball?

The coach makes an awkward gesture, avoiding the outright No.

RICK (CONT'D)

Yeah. Didn't think so.

He lifts his arm and tosses the ball toward a trash can. He winces and the ball makes a weak, dying-quail arc and misses.

EXT. A DIFFERENT STREET - DAY

Gretchen sees a punk in baggy shorts racing towards her.

An OLD LADY chases at a trot.

OLD LADY

Stop that kid! He's got my purse!

Gretchen looks for help, sees no one. She plants herself to block the sidewalk. The punk pulls out a gun.

Gretchen tries to dodge, trips over a recycling box and staggers against a lamppost. Boris does not move.

The punk trips over the leash and sprawls headlong. The gun flies out of his hand, bounces, spins and comes to a stop under Boris's belly.

GRETCHEN

BORIS! DOWN!

Boris flops to the ground, immoveable, on top of the gun.

The kid starts to scramble to his feet. Gretchen grabs the hem of his oversize shorts and yanks them down around his legs. He sprawls again, thrashing.

The old lady trots up, carrying an umbrella with a sharp metal point. Gretchen grabs the umbrella and plants the point against the kid's navel.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Don't move, or you'll get another
look at your lunch!

Despite her bravado, she is shaking.

A florist's van screeches to a halt at the curb. Two men jump out and pin the punk down. Gretchen picks up the purse. With a bow, she offers purse and umbrella to the old lady.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NEAR ELEVATOR - DAY

The G.M. is still on the phone. Rick holds the elevator door open for other people to enter. A young woman smiles at him flirtatiously. He smiles back.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Rick and the coach watch the G.M. drive away.

RICK
Come have a beer with me.

COACH
I can't. I gotta get to the park.

RICK
The game's gonna be rained out.

COACH
You know I have to be there.

The coach drives away. Rick gets into his car, a Porsche. He stares, numbly, then pulls out a phone and punches a number.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A squad car is parked by the curb, blue lights flashing. The punk is in the back. A POLICEMAN questions the witnesses.

Gretchen's phone rings. She is about to answer when the conversation distracts her.

OLD LADY
No, I don't think he had a
weapon...

INT. RICK'S CAR - DAY

Rick listens to ring signal, impatiently.

RICK
Come on, pick up...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gretchen's phone keeps ringing.

MAN FROM VAN
I didn't see one either--

GRETCHEN
No, they're wrong, he did have a
weapon.

POLICEMAN
Where is it, then?

Gretchen points at Boris and starts to answer her phone.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
You call that lump of lard a
weapon?

She shoves the phone in her pocket.

GRETCHEN
BORIS! SIT UP!

With the dog's equivalent of an eye-roll, Boris drags himself into a sitting position and the gun can be seen.

INT. RICK'S CAR - DAY

Rick listens to a computer voice on the phone.

COMPUTER VOICE
If you would like to leave a voice
mail for Gretchen Hayes...

He punches the phone off.

EXT. OUTSIDE GRETCHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretchen and Boris approach the door. Suddenly she stops, looks at him, and in a rush of emotion, squats to hug him.

INT. GRETCHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bookshelves line the living room walls. New Age mood music is playing. Gretchen comes in with Boris and unhooks his leash.

GRETCHEN
Amber, are you home? You won't
believe what just happened. This
little punk...

At the bedroom door, she stops abruptly. AMBER FOLEY is packing two suitcases. She is tall, blonde and extremely thin, with New Age clothes that match the music.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

AMBER
I'm not going. You are.

INT. DARK WOOD-PANELED BAR - DAY

Business is slow. Rick sits alone at the bar, his beer barely touched. He plays with a salt shaker, balancing it on edge.

The pudgy, balding BARTENDER pauses to chat.

BARTENDER
Expecting someone?

Rick shakes his head.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Where's hope for the rest of us, if
that body and a few million bucks
won't buy a date?

INT. BEDROOM OF GRETCHEN AND AMBER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretchen watches Amber pack.

AMBER
...it isn't working. You've said
yourself, we don't meet each
other's needs.

GRETCHEN
No, you said that. I might have
said, "Begone, thou weary mewling
fretful hag!" I might have said,
"Take a hike, sweethaht, yuh's
making me tiyed." But "You don't
meet my needs?" I'd cut out my
tongue first.

AMBER
Whatever. It still isn't working.

GRETCHEN
It wasn't working yesterday either.
What's the crisis?

AMBER
It's time for us to move on. This
relationship is a drain on our
energy.

GRETCHEN

Sleeping in the street will be a drain on my energy.

Amber looks at her watch. Her studied calm turns to panic.

AMBER

Gretchen, please! She'll be here in an hour. I tried to stop her, but she was, like, what's going on? I've been meaning to-

GRETCHEN

Ah. So it's a "she" not an "it." Do I know her?

AMBER

No, you don't. Her name's Carlene. We met at yoga class. What does it matter?

GRETCHEN

Of course it doesn't. Silly me. Why would it?

In a daze, Gretchen backs up until she bumps into a chair, which she sits on.

INT. BAR - DAY

Carrying a double mixed drink, TIFFANY approaches Rick. Her voluptuous prettiness looks surgically enhanced.

TIFFANY

Mind if I sit here?

Still focused on the salt shaker, Rick gestures for her to sit. He looks at her and does a double-take.

She takes a large swallow of her drink and studies his face.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Aren't you somebody...? I know. You're that football player.

She leans closer.

RICK

Baseball, actually...

They gaze at one another with unmistakably lustful intentions.

INT. GRETCHEN AND AMBER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gretchen paces, furious. Amber scoops up photographs and other personal items and dumps them into the suitcases.

GRETCHEN

Thirty seconds notice! What's your guru call that? Living in the present?

AMBER

It is my apartment--

GRETCHEN

So it is. I almost forgot. I'm sure it's in the lease somewhere. "Ms. Hayes will keep a suitcase near the door, in case Ms. Foley meets someone she likes better."

(gestures at the shelves)

And what about my books?

AMBER

(distractedly)

I don't know. I haven't--You can get them later--

Gretchen switches off the mood music.

GRETCHEN

Damned massage music...

AMBER

What's wrong with the music?

GRETCHEN

It's just like us, that's what. Nothing to it. Saltines in a damp climate.

AMBER

What?

GRETCHEN

Isn't that what we've been?

AMBER

Saltines...?

GRETCHEN

Stale. Limp. Bland. But harmless. I'm sure Carlene is fresh, if nothing else.

AMBER

Carlene and I connect on a deeper level. We don't get hung up on trivia, like whether ice cream is bad for the dog--

GRETCHEN

Boris is mine now! I'm getting dumped, so he goes with me. That was the agreement--

AMBER

Take him! He's all yours! Give him ice cream five times a day for all I care. I can't believe I've lived with that ugly, smelly thing for two whole years.

Gretchen looks totally stunned. Abruptly, she starts helping Amber pack the suitcases.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GRETCHEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dusk and drizzle. Gretchen stomps out of the building in a state of fury and disarray. She lugs two suitcases and a laptop, with other possessions clamped under her arms and Boris at her heels. She tosses the luggage into the back of a small not-very-new car, then lets Boris into the front seat.

EXT. STREET NEAR RICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Brief view of high-rent Boston neighborhood.

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Expensive designer decor is overlaid with a clutter of sports gear, memorabilia and clothing scattered about.

The phone rings. A key scrapes on the door. The answering machine clicks on.

JERRY'S VOICE

(through the machine)

Rick, it's Jerry. I just heard the news. Man, I'm really sorry...

The door opens and Rick and Tiffany come in.

JERRY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

(through the machine)

If I can do anything, say the word.

Tiffany stumbles and leans against Rick, kissing him.

JERRY'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 (through the machine)
 I'm gonna start putting out some
 feelers on a broadcast deal. That
 boy scout mug of yours is made for
 TV. And don't worry, I know you're
 not Hall of Fame material, but they
 won't care...

INT. GRETCHEN'S CAR - NIGHT

At a stoplight, Gretchen stares at the wipers and listens to her phone, which gives off a busy signal.

GRETCHEN
 At least he's home, for once...

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tiffany sits on the couch. Rick pours wine and they drink.

EXT. RICK'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Gretchen searches for a parking space. She spots a car pulling out. Another car zooms around her and takes the space. She continues searching, exasperated.

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rick and Tiffany are on the couch, kissing. The bottle of wine is almost empty.

The doorbell rings. Rick ignores it. It rings again.

RICK
 Can we pause for ten seconds?
 Whoever it is, I'll get rid of
 them.

Tiffany nods, only half conscious. Rick opens the door and finds Gretchen, with suitcases.

RICK (CONT'D)
 Gretzky! How did you--?
 (notices her suitcases)
 What's happened?

GRETCHEN

Hi, Rick. Can we crash with you for a few days? We've been evicted.

RICK

"We?" Where's Amber?

GRETCHEN

She did the evicting.

RICK

Oh.

(glances at Tiffany)

This isn't a very good time. You're kind of interfering with my social life.

Gretchen watches Tiffany empty the bottle into her glass.

GRETCHEN

Is she somebody meaningful?

RICK

Not meaningful, no. We only met an hour ago. But we've been, you might say, developing expectations. It wouldn't be polite, not to follow through.

His eye is caught by Boris, down the hall.

RICK (CONT'D)

Bratwurst! Hey, bud, how ya doing?

The dog waddles over and Rick squats to rub his ears, affectionately. Then he remembers Tiffany.

RICK (CONT'D)

I don't know, though...

He and Gretchen turn to look at Tiffany again, just as she sags sideways into unconsciousness.

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHT

Gretchen and Rick sit at the table eating takeout. Tiffany is asleep on the couch, with a blanket over her.

GRETCHEN

It was this perfect high, you know? Boris and I had nailed that punk and we're feeling like the coolest thing on six legs.

(MORE)

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

And then I walk in the door and Amber's packing my stuff. She's packing, I'm getting chucked out, and the whole time, she's making sure she breathes from her center.

RICK

She's too thin to have a center.

GRETCHEN

Not if it's a small one.

Irritably, she impales a chunk of stir-fry on her chopstick.

RICK

The thing I don't get is why you two ever... you know...

GRETCHEN

Maybe the moon was full. You know the joke. "What does a lesbian bring on a second date? A U-Haul." That was us. We liked the same brand of toothpaste, so we moved in together.

RICK

That bad, huh?

GRETCHEN

It wasn't bad. It just wasn't anything.

RICK

You don't seem all that upset.

GRETCHEN

That's just it! That's what upsets me! I don't want to-what, mark time? I want to meet someone who could make me miserable. Otherwise, why bother?

She shoves the takeout container away.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

This is really depressing to talk about. Let's talk about something else, like what's new with you?

RICK

That should cheer us up.

Gretchen looks at him with sudden attention.

GRETCHEN

What?

Rick doesn't answer right away. His jaw is clenched.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Rick, what?

RICK

My shoulder's gone in the tank. For good. My grandmother throws harder than I can.

GRETCHEN

(aghast)

You can't ever pitch again?

Rick shakes his head. In spite of himself, the tears well up.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Shit! Goddamn it to pissing bloody hell! That totally fucking cosmically sucks.

RICK

You have such a way with words.

GRETCHEN

I'm a professional.

RICK

And I suppose that was a quote from Shakespeare.

GRETCHEN

Paraphrased.

Silence. They fiddle with objects, not eating.

RICK

You ever miss it? The paper, I mean?

GRETCHEN

(joking)

I miss the money.

(more seriously)

Yeah, sometimes. But that job was making me crazy. I was living like a monk and mainlining caffeine. I needed a break.

RICK

You call free-lancing a break?

GRETCHEN

It is a break. I may starve to death, but at least I won't get ulcers.

Another silence.

RICK

I thought it was your dream, to be a reporter. You talked about it all the time, back in high school.

GRETCHEN

And I did it, too, for ten years. But maybe sometimes a person has to move on from a dream.

They look at each other, both very emotional.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

You were really something, even then. The whole school thought you were our very own Greek god. Apollo with a ninety-mile-an-hour fastball. All the girls made shrines and burned incense.

RICK

(smiles)
Except you.

GRETCHEN

Yeah, well...

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sun streams in. Tiffany is asleep on the couch. Rick, in shorts and undershirt, emerges from a bedroom, glances at Tiffany, fetches his newspaper, starts making breakfast.

Gretchen emerges from a different bedroom, glances at Tiffany, joins Rick at the breakfast table. They each pick up a section of newspaper. Both are in morning stupor and neither says anything. They are completely comfortable together.

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - LATER - DAY

Rick and Gretchen read the paper. The coffee pot is half full.

Tiffany gets up from the couch. She is very hung over.

RICK
Want some coffee?

TIFFANY
(confused)
Is this your wife?

Rick is about to explain, then he and Gretchen exchange a look "What the heck?" He shrugs, offhand.

RICK
Yeah.

TIFFANY
(to Gretchen)
You're not upset?

GRETCHEN
Upset? About what?

Tiffany stares at Gretchen and Rick.

TIFFANY
Could somebody call me a cab?

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - LATER - DAY

Gretchen still reads the paper. Tiffany is gone. The coffee pot is nearly empty. Rick moves about, restlessly. He hits "playback" on his answering machine.

JERRY'S VOICE
(through the machine)
Rick, it's Jerry. I just heard-

Rick hits "erase" and picks up his phone. He punches a number, listens, grimaces.

RICK
The man makes his living on the phone so why's he never answer--
(into phone)
Hi, Jerry, it's Rick. Thanks for the kind words. Could you maybe hold off on the press releases? I need to think.

He hangs up and comes back to the table. Still restless, he offers a rope toy to Boris for tug-of-war.

Boris bites it, but instead of tugging, he sits down, a dead weight clamped on the rope. Rick tugs enticingly. Boris stays planted. Rick gives up and starts scratching his ears.