

THE TRUTH ABOUT US

(the opening pages of a romcom screenplay)

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EXT. MANHATTAN - DAY - SUMMER

The city thrums with life. Streets packed, traffic crawling, pedestrians striding along.

The hum gives way to a small side street and a narrow brick building. A sign reads NOVAK WOODWORKING above a heavy, worn wooden door with chipped paint. The first floor of the studio is a solid brick facade, windowless and with faded graffiti.

INT. WOODWORKING STUDIO - DAY

The studio is cozy and cramped. Small pieces sit on shelves and larger ones fill the space in the back. EDDIE (60s) is in a wheelchair near the cash register, going over an accounts notebook. At a workbench, HANK (30s) carves finishing touches on a small dog sculpture, wood shavings gathering at his feet.

The phone rings. Eddie picks up.

EDDIE

Novak Woodworking... Yes, Mrs. Lombardi... For sure, I'll let him know... I promise, Hank'll be over with Biscotti in no time at all.

(hangs up, glances at Hank)

Mrs. Lombardi wants to unveil Biscotti's wood twin--at his birthday party. The other dogs are coming at two and she's getting anxious.

HANK

(without looking up)
It's almost done.

Hank chisels in a last detail, blows on the sculpture, and wipes it down with a cloth. The dog carries a quizzical expression, head cocked to one side.

Hank dusts his hands off and slides a watch and wedding band back on.

EDDIE

You still wear that thing? What's it been, three months? If your parents were here, I know what they'd say about Ashley running off with another man like that.

HANK

(evenly)

Ashley didn't run off. We had a discussion about it at the therapist's office and the three of us--the therapist, Ashley, and I--decided that Ashley had to follow her heart. What else could she do?

EDDIE

(shuffling receipts)

I know it's none of my business, Hank, but are you going to wear the wedding band until the day the divorce papers are finalized?

HANK

Look, I take it off, people notice and ask questions. It'll be easier in the winter, when there's no tan line... I better get going, Mrs. Lombardi is probably keeping an eye out through her window.

Hank sets the wooden dog into a cardboard box and takes it to where a bike leans against the back wall. He wedges the box into the bike basket.

EDDIE

If I hadn't seen the letter from the lawyer, would you have told me about the divorce?

HANK

(wheeling the bike through the studio to the door)

Sure I would have, at some point... Halloween maybe. Or Thanksgiving.

(pulls door open)

Don't bother ordering lunch for me, Eddie, I'll grab something on the way.

EDDIE

(raising his voice above the din of a Manhattan street)

If you want my opinion, I'd say you're in denial. Why not just pull off the bandaid and tell the family?

HANK
(over one shoulder)
My parents will be back when they
start getting claustrophobic in the
Winnebago... I'll tell everyone
then.

He hops on and pedals away.

EXT. MANHATTAN - SAME TIME

High-rise office building, glass, with office workers in suits spilling in and out of the revolving doors for the lunchtime rush.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

MINDY (30s) is standing with her boyfriend GREG (30s) by the revolving doors. Greg's suit and tie radiate uptightness. Mindy is in a nine-to-five outfit, an off-the-rack gray cardigan, skirt and heels, with a canvas tote slung across one shoulder.

MINDY
I'm leaving early... We're going
with Mom to a poetry reading at
four, then taking her out for a
birthday dinner.

GREG
Have fun with your mother and
sisters. Sure you don't want me
there?

MINDY
You know you hate poetry readings
and afterwards--

GREG
(interrupts)
Do I, yeah.

MINDY
Afterwards, Faith, Emily, and I are
taking Mom out to a vegetarian
restaurant, and you--

GREG
Hate vegetarian. What's the agenda
for tomorrow?

MINDY

We're having our hair and nails done, and then Dad's joining us for a drive to Vermont. We'll hit some antique stores.

GREG

(sounding more suspicious
than hurt)

Sounds like the whole weekend's not for me. Sure you didn't plan it that way?

MINDY

(lying in a practiced way)

Of course we didn't...

(then a bit of honesty)

I'm glad you have something of your own to do this weekend, even if it's work.

GREG

I'm a man on the hunt and that sales record is the prey in my sights. By this time next week, you'll be looking at the king of TriState Office Systems... Mindy, the place where your parents are house-sitting... Are we sure their friends won't mind that we're having the wedding there? What if they return from Europe early?

MINDY

Don't worry, they won't be back until after Christmas.

GREG

(checks watch)

I'd walk you to the subway, but I better go. Those fax machines and copiers won't sell themselves.

MINDY

(gives him a peck on the
cheek)

Go, go. The record awaits.

GREG

(turns)

Peter, hold the elevator!

Mindy watches him go into the elevator, then exits through the revolving doors.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mindy heads in the direction of the subway. She continues past and enters Central Park.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

Hank is buying a hotdog from a street vendor.

HANK
Extra mustard, yeah. Thanks,
Filipe.

Hank hops back on his bike and enters Central Park.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Mindy starts pulling accessories out of the canvas tote and expertly slips them on. Silk scarf. Gold earrings. A set of pearls. She exchanges the gray cardigan for a tailored linen jacket from the tote. A red leather handbag comes out and the cardigan and tote go into it. Mindy has transformed herself from corporate drone to upscale chic.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Hank bikes with the box in the basket, gulping down the hot dog. Mustard drips down his shirt, joining the sawdust there. He wipes it off, distracting him from seeing Mindy approaching on foot. Hank swerves at the last second but still knocks Mindy down.

Hank leans the bike against a tree, drops the hotdog into bin, and wipes hands on shirt.

HANK
Sorry, sorry. Are you all right?

He pulls Mindy up. She winces.

HANK (CONT'D)
Is it your ankle?

MINDY
Worse... The heel of my shoe broke.
Who bikes and eats at the same
time?

HANK

I promised to make a delivery in time for a birthday party and I was hungry... Who crosses Central Park in heels?

MINDY

There's a car waiting for me.

HANK

It couldn't pick you up on THIS side of the park?

MINDY

I didn't want my fiancé...
(brushes dirt off her skirt, awkwardly balancing on one good heel and one bad)
...to see me getting into a limo.

HANK

(wheels bike over)
Get on.

MINDY

Excuse me?

HANK

You can't walk. If you want to reach your limo, you can either sit in my lap while I pedal, or have a seat and I'll push.

MINDY

Fine, push.
(gets on the bike)

HANK

(propelling the bike along the path)
So... Why can't your fiancé see you in a limo?

MINDY

Greg doesn't know my family's rich. Like, really rich.

HANK

I'm Hank, by the way... That's some secret.

MINDY

Mindy. It sounds bad, I know, but I'm just being practical. If Greg says *I do* before he finds out I have money, I'll know.

HANK

Know what?

MINDY

That he really loves me.

HANK

(glances at her outfit)
Didn't the poor sap notice the expensive shoes, handbag, earrings and whatnot?

MINDY

I told him they were knock-offs.

HANK

Sounds complicated.

MINDY

No, it's simple enough. Greg thinks I only have three hundred dollars in my checking account. I told him I'm barely making rent, though I actually own the apartment. And as far as he knows, the nice Victorian in Westchester and its two acres is just a place my parents are house-sitting for friends. That's where we're getting married, Greg and I. In three weeks.

HANK

Congratulations... You're lying to your fiancé to make him prove--
Watch it.

Mindy has almost slipped off. Hank steadies her on the bike with his right hand, which is on Mindy's hip.

HANK (CONT'D)

To make him prove he deserves you? I'm just stranger who knocked you down, but I think it all sounds silly.

MINDY

Don't you ever do anything silly,
other than ride a bike and eat at
the same time?

HANK

Well, I own a woodworking shop in
the middle of Manhattan, which is
probably a pretty silly thing to
do. But it's been in my family for
fifty years. My grandfather opened
it, then it went to my parents, and
after they retired, to me. Single
child.

MINDY

(in a practiced, almost
bored tone)
Don't do it.

HANK

What, wheel you over that bridge?

MINDY

Tell me a sob story about your shop
struggling, then ask me for money
so your shop can last another fifty
years.

HANK

I wasn't going to. Also, you have
some pretty ugly views of people,
you know that?

MINDY

You didn't have my childhood.

HANK

Must have been some childhood.
What, you had too many ponies and
dollhouses?

MINDY

You're very rude. Why don't we
stick to small talk? Feels very
humid, think we'll get a
thunderstorm later?

HANK

No idea. You know what I think?
That you don't love him, this Greg.
If you did, you'd trust him.

MINDY

No one trusts absolutely and
everyone has secrets.

She glances at his left hand on the bike's handlebars and
the wedding band on it.

MINDY (CONT'D)

Do you tell your wife everything?
Are you going to mention that you
had your hand on another woman's
backside today?

HANK

It's not your backside, it's your
hip, and if you'd rather fall off,
let me know.

MINDY

When I tell Greg once we're on our
honeymoon, he'll realize that he
must have known all along on some
level. That my family has money...
It's the good kind of secret.

HANK

No such thing as a good secret.

MINDY

You're very opinionated. What, you
keep nothing back, ever?

HANK

Sure I do. I just don't like myself
very much when I do.

MINDY

Well, maybe you should give
yourself a break. People might like
you better.

They're nearing a busy street bordering the park, where a
black limo waits. A uniformed chauffeur gets out to open the
door for Mindy, who hops off the bike and stands on one good
shoe.

MINDY

(to the chauffeur)

Hi Bruce, how're the allergies?

BRUCE

(blows nose)

I'm the only person in Manhattan who hates it when the trees are in bloom.

MINDY

(to Hank)

Well, thanks for the ride. Have a nice life.

HANK

Wait. You're right, I was rude. How about as an apology you let me make busts of you and this Greg as a wedding present. That's what I do, make...

(taps the box in the bike basket)

...wood sculptures. You have great cheekbones, has anyone ever told you that?

MINDY

Yes. Whose bust is in the box?

HANK

It's a Chihuahua. A full size sculpture for the owner's mantel. When I make the one of your head, you don't have to display it. I won't be offended if you use it for hats or wigs or throw darts at it.

MINDY

Thanks, but like I said, the wedding's in three weeks. I don't have time to sit in your studio.

HANK

I'll come to you. I prefer seeing my subjects in their habitat anyway. I spent eight days at the dog park watching Biscotti do his thing before settling on an expression for him. Westchester, you said?

MINDY
(gets in the car, writes
down address and phone
number)
Well, all right. But only if you
let me pay for your time and
effort.

HANK
How polite and practical.

MINDY
You're being rude again.

HANK
So I am. We can start tomorrow.
(rubs his wedding band
with his thumb)
One more thing--I'll lie about
something. Maybe I already have.

MINDY
Excuse me?

HANK
To prove to you that there's no
such thing as a good lie. Bruce
agrees with me, doesn't he?

BRUCE
I like my job.

MINDY
You don't even know me, what do you
care if I lie to other people or
not?

HANK
That bone structure--you're art.
Art should not walk around
deceiving.

MINDY
There's your problem. You expect
people to be perfect.

Hank watches the limo drive off.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

MINDY

Bruce, after we pick up Faith and
Emily, we're meeting Mother for a
late lunch at the Russian Tea Room.
