

I SHUDDER

by

Paul Rudnick

Pilot

May 5, 2015

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY

A doorway labelled 4C opens, and ELYOT VIONNET emerges.

He is a distinguished, elegant and almost terrifyingly correct gentleman. He strides down the hall to the elevator. The doors open, revealing that the elevator is packed to bursting, mostly with young MOMS, their NANNIES and their expensive strollers filled with wailing, spoiled BABIES. Elyot steps back gallantly, and with a gracious gesture indicates that he will wait for the next car, as the doors close.

INT. SUBWAY

Elyot is seated on a crowded subway car. On one side of him is a GUY eating a huge meal out of greasy aluminum foil and cardboard containers - the food is dripping, gross and obviously smells disgusting. On the other side of Elyot is an extremely unappealing teenage couple, making out and groping each other and taking up way too much space. Elyot remains cheerful and polite.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Elyot moves purposefully through the crowd. He's blocked by a family of TOURISTS using selfie sticks. He turns, and he's blocked by a batch of uniformed CHEERLEADERS using selfie sticks. He turns again and he's blocked by a group of NUNS using selfie sticks.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Elyot inspects the display in the window of a Barnes&Noble. The books include Selfish, which is Kim Kardashian's new volume of selfies; a self-help book called Sing Yourself Thin; the collected works of Donald Trump; and all of Bill O'Reilly's bestsellers, including Killing Jesus, Killing Lincoln, Killing Kennedy and Killing Bill O'Reilly.

INT. WHOLE FOODS

Elyot is at a register, buying a tiny jar of cashews and a small bag of cookies. The register screen reads \$128.95.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

As Elyot waits patiently for the light to change, someone from a passing car hurls a full cup of coffee at Elyot's head - he ducks. Then at least ten IDIOTS riding \$8000 racing bikes zoom past - Elyot jumps out of the way. Finally, a huge, brand-new SUV roars by, drenching Elyot with a typhoon of filthy water, from a puddle in the street.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

Elyot now wears a velvet smoking jacket with quilted satin lapels over a starched white shirt and a silk cravat, and perfectly pressed tweed trousers.

Everything about Elyot is considered, handsome and timeless. No matter where he's actually from, he looks and sounds English, and speaks with a mellifluous, mid-Atlantic accent. He's magnetic, majestic and impossibly strict, about everything. You can't take your eyes off him, and you'd never want to displease him.

Elyot is also, as we shall discover, a deeply kind and generous man, who only seeks to make the world a better place, for everyone.

Elyot is seated on a throne--like mahogany chair, carved to look like a human skeleton. Elyot speaks directly to the camera. And his name is pronounced Vee-Oh-Nay.

ELYOT

I am Elyot Vionnet. And for my entire adult life I have lived here, in my perfect studio apartment in a building which almost overlooks Gramercy Park. My home is furnished with a small French writing desk, a brass campaign bed which once belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte, and this classic Venetian chair, in the form of a human skeleton. I work as a substitute teacher in the Manhattan school system, I sleep in crisply starched, 100% cotton pajamas with the thinnest, palest blue stripe, I believe in kindness, compassion, and lightly buttered whole wheat toast, and I have had just about enough. For example...

EXT. MANHATTAN INTERSECTION - DAY

We see HALLIE TESLER, a typical, arrogant, self-obsessed and completely oblivious young career woman, moving along a Manhattan street. Hallie wears a tiny skirt, a spray tan, at least two skimpy tops, important shoes, and carries several upscale shopping bags, along with a big slouchy shoulderbag and a large designer purse slung over her forearm. She's busily texting on her new iPhone, as she approaches a busy intersection.

Without looking up from her phone, Hallie strides across the intersection, against the light. She completely ignores the cars and trucks which SLAM ON THEIR BRAKES, HONK THEIR HORNS and COLLIDE WITH EACH OTHER, all to avoid hitting Hallie. Cabdrivers and passersby SCREAM at Hallie, but Hallie ignores everyone, because she's tweeting.

Hallie glances up, briefly, at the chaos she's just caused, and offers a little, exasperated snort.

HALLIE

What?

ANGLE on Elyot, on a nearby corner, staring at Hallie in disbelief.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

ELYOT

I know. I know. I was beside myself. Wait.

INT. THEATER

ANGLE on a play, midway through the second act. It's a heavy duty August: Osage County-style drama. A careworn MOTHER is confronting her grown, unemployed SON. The set is a drab kitchen or living room.

MOTHER

Son, you just keep at it and keep at it and you have worn me to the bone! So if you want the truth, about your Daddy, your real Daddy, well here it is!

We hear a loud CELLPHONE go off - the ringtone is Katy Perry's "Roar." The actors look out, into the audience.

ANGLE on the audience. Hallie is seated dead center in the

third row, surrounded by audience members - the theater is full. Everyone is staring daggers at Hallie, as she answers her phone, completely nonchalant.

HALLIE

(into phone)

Kell? Yeah, not much, just hangin'...you watch Thrones last night? Oh my God, didn't Daenerys look amazing, like off the hook? I'm gonna try that with my hair, like the braids against sort of soft waves, only matted, I would look amazeballs...

(she becomes aware that everyone is staring at her)

Excuse me, I'm on the phone?

ANGLE on Elyot, seated directly behind Hallie, holding his Playbill, appalled.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

ELYOT

Her name is Hallie Tesler, and I've never met her, although she lives in my neighborhood. Just around the corner. In a lovely pre-war building. Can you imagine?

INT. STARBUCKS

There's a very long line to place orders. Hallie, in her idea of a fun, weekend workout/yoga outfit, stands at the front of the line, checking her phone, while the person behind the counter waits patiently to take her order. Everyone on the line behind Hallie is furious, because she's making them wait.

HALLIE

(into phone)

So tonight I'm gonna wear either this totally cute new top from Isabel Marant or this other totally cute new top from this totally exclusive new place in Williamsburg where you have to make an appointment and Jennifer Lawrence buys all of her tops, wait, I'll send you the link...

PERSON WAITING ON LINE
Place your order, jerk!

ANOTHER PERSON ON LINE
People are waiting!

THIRD PERSON ONLINE
Move it!

HALLIE
(to the people on line)
Excuse me, douche patrol! I'm
tweeting a top! Jesus!

ANGLE on Elyot, at the rear of the line, at his wit's end,
about to explode.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

ELYOT
There are people in this world
without manners, style, or a drop
of common decency. People who
refuse to acknowledge the existence
of others. People utterly lacking in
some basic moral ability. And
sometimes I want to kill those
people, but I don't. Not always.
Because, you see...
(He takes a deep,
cleansing breath. He
smiles.)
I'm here to help.

INT. HALLWAY

We're down the hall from Elyot, where a door is labelled 4G.

INT. MORELLE KITCHEN

We're in a much larger, four bedroom apartment The kitchen is
a glossy, ultra-expensive showplace, with restaurant-grade
brushed steel appliances, acres of white marble and dark wood
floors. SARA and DRAKE MORELLE are an attractive, arrogant,
overwhelmingly ambitious and competitive couple in their
thirties. Sara is seated at the marble island while Drake
stands at a nearby counter. They're both wearing the most
deluxe, up-to-the-minute professional cycling gear, including
black tights and spandex bodysuits covered with logos. Drake
wears an Italian team cap backwards, and Sara has white
goggles slung around her neck.

They are both completely absorbed in reading sections of The New York Times, and in sipping the fancy cups of coffee which their housekeeper has prepared for them.

DRAKE

(without looking up from
his paper)

Are you doing the 25K this weekend?
The thing for lupus?

SARA

(also without looking up)
Of course, and I am going to
destroy you. I am gonna make you
cry like a little baby girl.

DRAKE

(still not looking up)
And I am gonna rip your goddamn
balls off.

SARA

(not looking up)
I am gonna take your bike, your run
and your swim, and I am gonna shove
them up your ass, yank them out and
make you eat them. While I laugh
and tell everybody, yo, look at the
vagina I married.

DRAKE

(yelling, holding up his
coffee cup)
Tula! This coffee is cold! And it
needs nutmeg!

SARA

(holding up her cup, still
not looking up)
And coriander!

TULA, the Morelle's hardworking and underpaid housekeeper appears, with a vacuum.

TULA

Right away.

DRAKE

(finally looking up)
Jesus, Tula, why do I even have to
say it? Why does everything have to
be such a goddamn battle?

TULA

I'm so sorry, I'll fix it right now...

SARA

(also finally looking up)
It's not about being sorry. Tula, if you're a woman in the workplace, it's about getting the job done, on time and on budget. It's about performance. And that's what's gonna put a woman in the White House.

DRAKE

So Tula, you're fired.

SARA

(to Drake)
Thank you!

DRAKE

But before you leave, we'll need you to hire your replacement.

ANGLE on Tula, shocked but not surprised.

SARA

Stella, did you learn something?

ANGLE on STELLA MORELLE, the family's 11-year-old daughter, seated nearby, eating her breakfast. She's silent and watchful, and she's used to being completely ignored.

Stella is extremely smart, honest and no-nonsense, and she may be even stricter than Mr. Vionnet. Her prematurely silver hair is cut in a practical, chin-length bob. She wears a gray wool blazer and matching skirt, with thick socks and sturdy shoes. While this outfit may look like a prep school uniform, it's just the way Stella chooses to dress.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

Elyot is just finishing making his bed. The bed is ornate brass, and military-looking. It has been perfectly made up, with creaseless, monogrammed white sheets, a plaid cashmere blanket and a sable throw. The stacked pillows feature Elyot's embroidered profile. As Elyot gives the bed a final smoothing, there's a KNOCK at his door.

Elyot opens the door to find Stella, holding a newspaper. Behind Stella, we see Tula, in her coat and carrying a small suitcase, leaving.

ELYOT

Yes?

STELLA

I am Stella Morelle. My family has just moved in, at the end of the hall.

ELYOT

Welcome.

STELLA

This morning my father stole your newspaper, and I wanted to return it.

ELYOT

Oh, but perhaps it was an accident, please, tell your father he may keep the paper...

STELLA

No. It wasn't an accident. He's a hedge fund manager.

ELYOT

Well then, perhaps your mother might enjoy the paper...

STELLA

She works for Time-Warner. She told him to steal it.

Drake and Sara appear, from their own apartment, both either wheeling or carrying \$15,000 racing bikes. They both now wear helmets.

DRAKE

(to Sara)

We did the right thing. Ultimately, she'll thank us.

SARA

And it was important for Stella to see us, operating from strength.

DRAKE

Where is Stella?

ANGLE on Stella, holding a finger to her lips, to shush Mr. Vionnet.

SARA

Who knows. And she put sugar on her raw flax pellets. Again.

DRAKE

White sugar?

SARA

You're her father.

DRAKE

Boarding school?

SARA

Maybe.

DRAKE

And she needs to start spinning.

SARA

You talk to her. I can't get through.

Drake and Sara have now exited, into the elevator. Stella holds out the paper, and Mr. Vionnet takes it.

ELYOT

Spinning?

STELLA

I'm fine.

Stella turns and walks back down the hall, as Mr. Vionnet watches her, intrigued.

ELYOT (V.O.)

There is darkness everywhere...

INT. ELYOT'S BATHROOM

Elyot's bathroom is unchanged since the 1930's, but it's been kept in gleaming, immaculate condition. As Elyot continues to speak, we see a clawfoot tub, black-and-white art deco tilework, and then, in a mirror, Elyot's face.

ELYOT

But there is also pleasure and
friendship and a splash of my
custom fragrance, created solely
for me by a convent of elderly
Belgian nuns, from a blend of
citrus, lilac and their own joyful
tears. It's called Eau de
Vionnet...

Elyot applies this cologne with two brisk, almost violent
slaps; then he shuts his eyes and inhales, intoxicated by the
fragrance.

EXT. GRAMERCY PARK APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Elyot emerges from the building, wearing a houndstooth-check
three-piece suit. He inhales, enjoying the beautiful morning
and the fresh air.

ELYOT (V.O.)

I have known a goodness so
radiantly pure that it has
literally transported me...

Elyot raises his hand to hail a cab.

ELYOT (V.O.)

And I have known an evil so
malignant that it can only be
called Susan Marie Henkleman. My
neighbor.

SUSAN MARIE HENKLEMAN comes flying out of the building. She's
in her thirties or early forties, and extremely unpleasant.
She's very self-righteous and thinks very highly of herself.
She's carrying a baby on her chest in a Snugli. As a cab
pulls up, she waves her hand frantically, shoving herself in
front of Mr. Vionnet:

SUSAN

Excuse me! That's my cab! I have a
sick baby! I'm taking her to the
doctor!

ELYOT

That's not a baby. That's a loaf of
French bread.

ANGLE on the Snugli: we see that it does hold not a baby, but
a loaf of bread.

SUSAN

I'm bringing it to my sick baby! My sick French baby!

ELYOT

And what is this baby's name?

SUSAN

Jean-Pierre!

ELYOT

I thought it was a girl.

SUSAN

I hate labels!

ELYOT

You are Satan's mistress.

SUSAN

With a taxi!

Susan jumps into the cab, which roars off. Mr. Vionnet takes a deep breath, composing himself.

ELYOT (V.O.)

But happily...

We hear a siren, and an AMBULANCE pulls up.

ELYOT

(delighted)

Lucy!

LUCY WAINSCOTT, a completely delightful, fresh-faced woman, is driving the ambulance. Lucy is great at her job, and up for anything. She's from a rich, well-bred family, but she's much happier driving her ambulance, and meeting all sorts of people, and lending a hand.

LUCY

Darling, do you need a lift?

ELYOT

Are you stalking me?

LUCY

Do you mind?

ELYOT

In my entire life, I have only pursued two romantic dreams. First, stalked by a beautiful woman.

(MORE)

ELYOT (CONT'D)

And then, to have our relationship
end on an episode of Dateline.

LUCY

Hop in!

ELYOT

Are you sure?

LUCY

(turning towards the rear
of the ambulance)

Mrs. Patterson? Carlos?

ANGLE on MRS. PATTERSON, an elderly, bandaged woman in a housecoat, on a gurney, wearing an oxygen mask. The oxygen is being administered by CARLOS QUINTANA, a helpful, outgoing young paramedic. Mrs. Patterson waves Mr. Vionnet into the ambulance - it's no problem.

CARLOS

We're good. Bar fight.

MRS. PATTERSON

I started it.

ELYOT

Thank you! Thank you all!

As Elyot climbs into the front of the ambulance beside Lucy:

ELYOT (V.O.)

I once enjoyed the privilege of
being married to the beautiful and
charming Lucy Wainscott. For an
exquisite 24 hours.

LUCY

(completely cheerful, as
she drives)

Elyot, do you ever wish that we
were still married?

ELYOT

Constantly. Do you?

LUCY

All the time.

ELYOT

I still love you madly...

LUCY

You will always be mine...

ELYOT
But do you remember what happened?

LUCY
Don't say it...

ELYOT
It was tragic...

LUCY
It was painful...

ELYOT
I shudder...

LUCY
I know.

They exchange a devoted, if regretful air-kiss.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

Lucy's ambulance pulls up in front of a local elementary school. We see hordes of shrieking children running into the school.

ELYOT (V.O.)
As a substitute, I work everywhere,
uptown and down, public and
private, in every possible borough.
Because, frankly, the children need
me.

INT. CLASSROOM

Mr. Vionnet perches on a small, child-sized chair, holding a children's picture book. A group of five-year-olds sits on the floor in a half-circle, surrounding him.

ELYOT
(reading from the book)
"...and then the happy little bunny
returned home to his happy bunny
family and all was well."
(he closes the book)
Although, for the remainder of his
short life, the happy little bunny
never continued his education,
created anything of value, or fell
in love.

(MORE)

ELYOT (CONT'D)

On his deathbed, he turned to his raccoon oncologist and said, "I have led a sad and a wasted existence. I haven't been a happy little bunny at all. I should have been trapped, skinned and used as the lining of a prostitute's jacket."

ANGLE on the children, all nodding in agreement.

ELYOT (V.O.)

And at that precise moment I realized - Hallie Tesler was that bunny.

INT. DRYCLEANER

Elyot is standing at the front counter, waiting patiently for his drycleaning. Hallie Tesler barrels in and shoves her way in front of him.

HALLIE

(yelling)

Hey! Hey! I have a very important party tonight, in Tribeca, and I need my silver Stella McCartney skirt! It's an emergency!

ELYOT

Aha.

HALLIE

(ignoring Elyot)

Jesus, where are these people? We let them clean our stuff, they lose half of it, and now they've disappeared! What, did someone call Immigration? Hey! Chop chop! I need my stuff!

MRS. CHEN, an older, polite, neatly dressed woman appears from the rear of the shop, carrying a box of Mr. Vionnet's shirts.

MRS. CHEN

Here are your shirts, beautiful as always. I'll be right back with your trousers.

ELYOT

Thank you so much.

HALLIE

(to Mrs. Chen)

No you won't. Look at him - he's not going to any parties, he can wait. I need my skirt, and I hope you didn't shrink it, like last time, because I am a size triple zero, if I turn sideways, I will totally disappear...

ELYOT

(stepping aside politely)

Then by all means.

MRS. CHEN

(to Hallie)

Do you have your ticket?

HALLIE

My what? No I don't have any goddamn ticket, it's a silver Stella McCartney skirt, how many of them do you have, just look for the only decent thing here, right now, go, I have a call...

(into her phone)

Mandy, you won't believe this, I'm standing here waiting for my McCartney and this woman is staring at me like she doesn't speak English, like they didn't teach her that in East Vietnamistan, yeah, my silver skirt, the one that makes my ass look like a 12-year-old boy, a really hot 12-year-old boy, I kill in that skirt, hold on, I'm getting something from Courtney, oh my God, she's in Aspen, she looks amazing, I'm sending you her new boobs...

(to Mrs. Chen)

Why are you just standing there? This is why you're not in Aspen, in a hot tub, with a billionaire start up guy with his own Airbus Elite, which is only the plane with a dance floor and a crafting nook, just get me my goddamn skirt!

ANGLE on Elyot, studying Hallie.

ELYOT (V.O.)

She was adrift. She was appalling. I took action.

ACT II

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Elyot is now wearing an argyle sweater, a corduroy hacking jacket and tweed knickers with striped socks and wingtip shoes. He's seated on his skeleton chair. He's on the phone.

ELYOT (V.O.)

Mrs. Chen kindly gave me Hallie's number.

ELYOT

(into phone)

You don't know me, but please don't hang up, just keep your friend, Mandy or Courtney or Colostomy, on hold. Here's my guess: right now you're sitting in the back seat of a cab, where your incessant, mindless chatter has made you ignore not merely the glorious city just aside your window, but also the fact that you're about to arrive at your destination. And because you've been so relentlessly attached to your phone, only once the cab has stopped will it occur to you that it just might be time to begin rummaging through your immense designer shoulder bag, a shoulder bag which you purchased for more than 50% off at a sample sale, and which resembles nothing so much as the fossilized turd of some ancient dinosaur, if that dinosaur had swallowed 300 useless grommets, 58 zippers, a decorative tassel and, God help us, the air-brushed image of a rainbow butterfly.

INT. CAB - SAME TIME

Mr. Vionnet was right: Hallie is sitting in the back seat of a cab. She's on her phone and she's got a huge, hideous shoulder bag in her lap, a shoulder bag which looks exactly as Mr. Vionnet described.

HALLIE

(furious, into phone)

Who is this? Hello? Hello?

INT. MORELLE KITCHEN

Sara and Drake are now dressed in their expensive work outfits. They're consulting their laptops or iPads. They're both very upset.

SARA

I just got an email from the head of the school.

DRAKE

And her Advanced Oboe teacher just texted me. And her Somali Outreach advisor.

SARA

I don't know what to do.

Stella enters, carrying a serious leather briefcase.

DRAKE

Well, young lady. I hope that you're proud of yourself.

SARA

Don't say "young lady", it's ageist and it's sexist.

DRAKE

(to Sara)
Bitch.

SARA

(to Drake)
Dick.

DRAKE

Stella?

SARA

(to Stella)
We've been worried sick.

STELLA

About what?

DRAKE

You know very well about what. We have enrolled you at Saint Mallory's, the most exclusive prep school in New York.

(MORE)

DRAKE (CONT'D)

I had to underwrite the school's new meditation center, and three non gender-specific restrooms for transgendered students with lawyers.

SARA

And I had to sleep with the Head of the Admissions Committee, which I certainly enjoyed more than sex with your father, but that's beside the point.

DRAKE

And now we've just found out that you never showed up for classes, and that you're enrolled at some sort of public school! P.S. 84!

SARA

No one in this family has ever gone to public school! Why don't you just enroll at Burger King? Why don't you just tell Harvard, I'm really sorry, but I'd rather greet overweight people at Wal-Mart?

DRAKE

What were you thinking?

STELLA

That I want to go to public school. Like a human being. On the subway.

DRAKE AND SARA

(exploding with outrage)

OH MY GOD! Who are you? You disgust me!, etc.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Elyot is now seated behind a desk at the front of a high school classroom.

ELYOT

Children? Mr. Nackelheimer is out today. And while he claims to have the flu, I suspect that he is actually meeting with his parole officer.

ANGLE on the classroom, which is filled with bored, restless teenagers, most of whom have been checking their phones.

They're all now looking up, interested in what Elyot has just said.

ELYOT (CONT'D)

So your assignment for today shall be as follows: I would like each of you to please write a brief personal essay, concerning an explicit sexual activity which you might enjoy with a specific celebrity.

A GIRL is urgently raising her hand.

ELYOT (CONT'D)

Yes, Ms. Benzinger, the Lucky Charms leprachaun is indeed considered a celebrity.

The girl is delighted and immediately starts working on her assignment. All of her classmates have begun working, and are really into it.

ELYOT (CONT'D)

If you will excuse me for just a moment.

MALE STUDENT #1

How do you spell Beiber?

ELYOT

E-I.

MALE STUDENT #1

Okay, and how do you spell "suffocate"?

ELYOT

Google it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A MINUTE LATER

Elyot is now on his phone, in the deserted hallway. Elyot's phone is a custom creation of tortoiseshell, silver and black enamel.

ELYOT

(into phone)

It's me. And I know that right now you're at work, in your cubicle, scrolling through a catalogue of especially sad little shrunken crop tops which will flatter no one.

INT. HALLIE'S OFFICE

Hallie is in her cubicle, which she's decorated with stuffed animals, strands of mardi gras beads, bachelorette party tiaras and drunken photos of herself and her friends. On her PC are catalogue images of slutty-looking models wearing crop tops. Hallie has just answered her phone.

HALLIE
(into phone)
Who is this?

INT. HALLWAY

ELYOT
(into phone)
It's Mr. Vionnet. And here's what I would like you to do. First, find your Facebook page, the one with the photos of you and your inebriated posse in Cancun. From five years ago. Then I want you to click on the section entitled "Interests", where you've listed "BFFs, tunes, just hangin'", and I would like you to change this to "lying to myself about everything."

INT. HALLIE'S OFFICE

HALLIE
(into phone)
Shut up! I'm calling the police!
The phone police!

INT. HALLWAY

ELYOT
(into phone)
No you won't, because you're already intrigued. So after I hang up, you'll stop selecting inappropriate outfits and actually get some work done. And then, at 6 PM, instead of sucking on your cell, or popping in your buds, you will walk home without an artificial soundtrack. You will look at other people, at animals, at New York City, at the world.
(MORE)

ELYOT (CONT'D)
You will fully experience the dusk,
in all of its everyday wonder,
rather than merely chattering to
your friends, while lost in the
genius of Katy Perry.

INT. HALLIE'S OFFICE

HALLIE
(into phone)
I don't do that!

INT. HALLWAY

ELYOT
(into phone)
Not any more.
(he hangs up)

ACT III

ANGLE on Stella Morelle, standing a few feet away from Elyot.
She wears her gray uniform and carries her leather briefcase.

STELLA
Mr. Vionnet?

ELYOT
Stella.

STELLA
Who were you talking to?

ELYOT
A friend, I hope.

STELLA
Are you helping her?

ELYOT
I'm doing my very best.

STELLA
Is she unspeakable?

ELYOT
Beyond.

STELLA
Then she needs you the most.

ELYOT

You are truly wise. And are you enrolled here?

STELLA

Yes.

ELYOT

But from your uniform, I assumed that you attended a private school.

STELLA

No. I just like to be practical. In case of a tornado or a terrorist attack.

Two LITTLE GIRLS, Stella's age, walk by. They're wearing much more colorful, trendy clothes and have expensive backpacks. They're clearly mean girls.

LITTLE GIRL #1

Hey, Stella Umbrella.

LITTLE GIRL #2

Why are you dressed like a German lesbian?

STELLA

Why are you dressed like Barbie's abortion?

As the girls huff off:

ELYOT

(to Stella)

An excellent point.

EXT. HALLIE'S OFFICE BUILDING - 6PM, THAT NIGHT

Workers exit from the front door of this busy office building in midtown. Hallie exits, looking very mistrustful. She has her earbuds in, and she's holding her phone. She pauses. She takes a deep breath. She jerks out her earbuds. She puts her phone away. She starts to walk, still very unsure and suspicious.

ANGLE on a wonderfully eccentric, older woman, dressed in a unique, entertaining manner. She smiles at Hallie.

ANGLE on some wonderful architectural detail of a building or a cathedral, maybe a gargoyle or a statue.

ANGLE on Central Park, looking especially glorious.

ANGLE on a group of terrific street performers, either musicians or dancers or both, entertaining a small, appreciative crowd.

ANGLE on Hallie, who's seeing all of these wonderful things for the first time. She still looks wary, but interested.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT - HOURS LATER

Elyot is in bed, sitting up, leaning against his pillows. The covers lie perfectly across his legs. He's wearing a crisply starched cotton nightshirt with a pale blue stripe and a matching cap. Beside the bed is an elaborate metal device, resembling some antique piece of medical equipment. It includes a set of bronze bowls on mechanical arms, and each bowl holds a different treat, including jumbo cashews, chocolate-covered raisins, and Gummi worms. Elyot looks like a happy emperor, as he sips a martini, and gets on his phone.

ELYOT

(into phone)

It's Elyot. And right now you're slouched on a banquette at a club which has lost just enough of its exclusive, first-three-months trendiness, so that it's now been forced to admit people like you. You're wearing a desperately short, plunging black dress, revealing your spray tan, a light dusting of body glitter, and your tiny, heartbreaking tattoo.

INT. CLUB - SAME TIME

We're in a trendy club in the meatpacking district. The place is jammed, with an assortment of models, girls desperately hoping to be mistaken for models, investment bankers, real estate brokers and girls like Hallie. Hallie, as Mr. Vionnet has predicted, is slouched on a banquette in her skimpy black dress, which does reveal her fake tan, her body glitter and her collarbone tattoo of Spongebob. She's on her phone. The pulsating music is so loud that she has to scream to be heard.

HALLIE

(into phone)

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

ELYOT

(into phone)

You are surrounded by young women who look exactly like you. In a police lineup, everyone would be guilty.

INT. CLUB

Hallie, on her phone, looks around. ANGLE on girl after girl, all in skimpy black dresses, spray tans and body glitter. We see small tattoos of Dora the Explorer, My Little Pony and two Smurfs having sex.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

ELYOT

(on speaker)

Ordinarily, you would spend the entire evening checking your phone, seeking better offers, more exclusive clubs, more desirable friends, and after-after parties where someone just might know someone who just might get them on the list. Which means that you will completely ignore that fellow across the room, who really does have a great crooked smile, a terrific sense of humor, and whose jeans are the most basic, elegantly careworn Levis, and they work.

INT. CLUB

Hallie, still on her phone, looks around the club. ANGLE on a GREAT-LOOKING GUY, standing by the bar across the room. He looks smarter, better-dressed and more appealing than all of the other clubgoers; he's handsome and modest and not a jerk. He's listening to the music and watching the room.

INT. ELYOT'S APARTMENT

Elyot leans back against the pillows. He's still on speaker.

ELYOT

So put away your phone, and your I'm-such-a-hot-girl- I-bet-everyone thinks-I-work-in-a-gallery attitude. Inspect the room, not with judgement, but curiosity. Do not play with, chew on, or flip your hair, or your hair extensions. Put down that bottle of eight dollar water. And when that fellow, who's really the only interesting, and not painfully self-conscious person in the club, when he smiles at you, here's what you will do: you will not quickly look away, as a strategy. You will not instantly begin naming your imaginary children. You will exist entirely in the moment, which is the intoxicating quintessence of urban romance. You will smile back.

He pauses, smiles and then turns off his phone.

INT. CLUB

Hallie puts her phone down. She almost takes a sip from her bottle of Evian, then puts the bottle on the floor. She's about to flip her hair, but she stops herself. She sits up straighter. She looks at the room, with a calm, genuine interest. She turns her head just a bit, towards the great looking guy.

ANGLE on the guy. He's looking at Hallie, intently. He isn't arrogant or skeevey or a stud. He's the guy you want. Slowly, he smiles.

ANGLE on Hallie. For a moment, she's confused; she's never felt like this. ANGLE on the guy, still smiling at Hallie.

ANGLE on Hallie. Slowly, almost shyly, but without any phoniness, she smiles back. She's unguarded, and almost innocent. She deserves a great guy.

INT. BROOKS BROTHERS - A FEW DAYS LATER

Elyot is browsing, carefully examining neckties. He wears a beautifully tailored linen suit.

DRAKE (O.S.)

Babe? Good? For Easthampton?

Mr. Vionnet turns, towards the voice. Drake is trying on a blazer. Sara inspects him.

SARA

It's a little formal. You look like Stella.

DRAKE

Stella needs Easthampton. Once she's out there, I'm gonna lay down the law. If she insists on going to public school, then we're going to put her on anti-depressants.

SARA

There's a new one, it's extra strength. And the only side effects are hair loss, dry mouth and suicidal thoughts.

DRAKE

No weight gain?

SARA

Thank God.

Elyot feels his phone vibrate, and he looks at it.

ANGLE on the phone, with a text reading MUST SEE U!!! HALF HOUR!!! WASHINGTON SQUARE!!! BIG NEWS!!! HALLIE!!!

Elyot smiles, assuming that Hallie's in love.

EXT. BROOKS BROTHERS - DAY

As Elyot raises his hand to hail a cab, we hear a siren, and Lucy Wainscott's ambulance pulls up to the curb. Lucy leans out the window.

LUCY

Elyot?

ELYOT

Downtown?

LUCY

(turning towards the rear
of the ambulance)

Carlos?

ANGLE on the rear of the ambulance, where Carlos, the paramedic, is seated beside the body of an overweight, older man, on the gurney.

Carlos is using electrical paddles to try and resuscitate the patient, who isn't responding. Carlos checks the pulse on the patient's neck.

CARLOS
(to Lucy and Elyot)
We're good. He's gone.

ANGLE on the ambulance, heading downtown.

INT. AMBULANCE

As Lucy drives:

ELYOT
I'm so excited, because I believe I've had a breakthrough. I've been counseling this young woman, and I suspect that she's fallen in love.

LUCY
Oh, Elyot, isn't that wonderful!
Carlos, Elyot has helped someone in need!

ANGLE on Carlos, still seated beside his patient's body.

CARLOS
That's what we do!

The PATIENT unexpectedly tries to SIT UP.

PATIENT
Where am I? Where's my wife?

CARLOS
Oh my God! Elyot, you inspired him!
(to the patient)
Sir, you were in a car accident.
But your wife is fine, she's waiting for you at the emergency room.

PATIENT
She tried to kill me.

CARLOS
Well, I guess you showed her!

EVERYONE IN THE AMBULANCE
YAY!!!

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY

Elyot is now seated on a bench, thoroughly enjoying himself and the sunshine. A live band is playing nearby. Elyot moves a bit, to the music.

ANGLE on Hallie, striding towards Elyot. She's wearing tight designer jeans, heels, a draped top and a shoulderbag.

ANGLE on Elyot. He smiles. He holds up a lovingly hand lettered sign reading "You're welcome!"

Hallie confronts Elyot. She's very emotional, almost wild.

HALLIE

Are you him? Are you Elyot Vionnet?
(she pronounces it
"Vionette")

ELYOT

(correcting her - it's
pronounced Vee-oh-nay.)
Vionnet.

HALLIE

Okay. Okay. I did everything you
told me.

ELYOT

I know. And I'm so very proud of
you. Of both of us.

HALLIE

Screw you.

ELYOT

(as if he hasn't heard her
correctly)
Again?

HALLIE

SCREW YOU!

ACT IV

ELYOT

(meaning "Go on")
Yes?

HALLIE

(barely holding it
together)
Okay. Okay.
(MORE)

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Three days ago, I stopped using my phone and Twitter and Instagram and everything else. And it felt really good. I could breathe. And I had so much more free time. Until my friends posted this video on Youtube...

INT. YOUTUBE VIDEO

Three girls, Hallie's BEST FRIENDS, have made a video.

MANDY

Hi, we're looking for our best friend Hallie. She's closed all her accounts. Have you seen her?

A photo of a smiling Hallie.

COURTNEY

This is Hallie before she lost the weight.

A photo of Hallie weighing at least 100 pounds more.

KELLI

And this is Hallie before she lost the weight - at the beach.

A photo of an even more overweight Hallie, bulging out of a bathing suit and gobbling two ice cream cones.

MANDY

If you see her, please call 911. But please, whatever you do...

MANDY, COURTNEY, AND KELLI
DON'T FEED HER!!!!

They all laugh hysterically.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY

ELYOT

They're not your friends.

HALLIE

And two days ago, I decided to appreciate the glory of New York. And it was fantastic. It was overwhelming. Central Park. The Chrysler Building.

ELYOT
The Cloisters!

HALLIE
The Highline.

EXT. HIGHLINE - TWO DAYS EARLIER

Hallie is standing on the Highline, admiring the beautiful landscaping, the nearby buildings and the attractive, strolling passersby, who smile and nod at her. Hallie touches her head and glances up - is it raining?

ANGLE on a man on the fire escape of a building which overlooks the Highline. His pants are unzipped and he's merrily PEEING ON HALLIE'S HEAD. He waves.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY

ELYOT
One bad apple...

HALLIE
But that's not all. Remember that guy you told me to smile at? At the club? Well, he was wonderful. He wasn't like any of the jerks I usually go out with. He's kind and sensitive and he was really into me. And he's a novelist.

ELYOT
Congratulations!

HALLIE
Not just yet...

INT. HALLIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Hallie's in bed with the handsome guy from the club. They've just spent a magical night together.

HANDSOME GUY
Hallie, I know we've only known each other a few days, but I feel so connected to you. I feel like there's some wonderful romantic force that brought us together. And maybe this is gonna sound crazy, but Hallie - will you marry me?

HALLIE
(so thrilled, tearful)
Marry you?

HANDSOME GUY
I don't have any money, but I just got a job as a part-time teaching assistant in Alaska. We can live in this little shack and you can work as a waitress while I write my novel. We won't have a car or heat or indoor plumbing, but we'll have each other. So what do you say?

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY

ELYOT
(enraptured)
Did you say yes?

HALLIE
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? ALASKA? With an OUTHOUSE? And I get to be a WAITRESS? All of your ideas, they sounded so great, but I ended up with no friends, some loser who wants me to support him, and PEE IN MY HAIR!

ELYOT
(still hopeful)
It's a beginning...

HALLIE
Just because I use my phone, that doesn't mean that I'm shallow or useless or stupid! It means I have friends! It means I'm alive! I love my phone, my phone is my friend, and I think that you're just some nasty, bitter, backwards old fart who can't even download an app! So if you ever call me again, I will use my phone to call the FBI and the CIA and Homeland Security, and I will have you arrested for trying to ruin my life! You asshole
asswipe buttmunch pig!

ANGLE on Mr. Vionnet, taking this all in, a bit perplexed.
Hallie gets on her phone and starts making calls.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Mandy? It's Hal and you won't believe what's happened to me, there was this disgusting skank who somehow got my number! But it's all good because five minutes ago I bought this totally cute Balenciaga halter thing and this bag from the Row that's the exact same shade of washed periwinkle and can we have brunch and talk about like, that new yoga place that was started by Shailene Woodley's trainer who totally helped Shailene lose three pounds by just envisioning the three pounds and then giving them a flower and asking them to leave...

Hallie keeps chattering as she marches away from Mr. Vionnet. As she crosses the street, without looking up from her phone, a DOUBLEDECKER TOURIST BUS MOWS HER DOWN, KILLING HER INSTANTLY.

ANGLE on a TOURIST COUPLE on the upper deck of the bus, happily using their phones to snap photos of Hallie's dead body.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Elyot and Stella are in the elevator of their building.

STELLA

You look sad.

ELYOT

I am. I tried to help the sweetest young woman, but it didn't go well.

STELLA

Is she dead?

ELYOT

Of course.

INT. HALLWAY

The elevator doors open, and Stella and Elyot step out, into their shared hallway. Stella looks both ways.

ELYOT

Is everything all right?

STELLA

I just have to be careful, if I see my parents. They think I'm on anti-depressants, but I sold them.

ELYOT

To whom?

STELLA

One of the teachers.

ELYOT

Bless you.

Susan Marie Henkleman appears, from her nearby apartment, pushing a stroller.

SUSAN

Stella! Why are you talking to that man?

STELLA

Because he's my neighbor.

SUSAN

But he's a very strange person, a danger to our community, and a menace to this building.

(leaning down, to speak to her baby)

And we don't speak to people like that, do we, Jasper?

ELYOT

That's not a baby.

SUSAN

Jasper is a beautiful, innocent child!

ELYOT

He's a box of cheap, department store wine, which you're going to drink all by yourself, through a plastic straw.

SUSAN

How dare you!

STELLA

May I hold him?

SUSAN

You may not!

By now Susan has pushed the stroller into the elevator. As the doors close:

SUSAN (CONT'D)
(very haughty)
He's a Chablis!

The elevator doors close, and Susan is gone.

STELLA
Mr. Vionnet?

ELYOT
Stella?

STELLA
You have to keep trying, to help people, because it's really important. It's the most important thing of all. It's the most important thing that anyone can do.

ELYOT
I know. And over the past few hours, as I've been walking all over this magnificent city, I've come to realize something. Something extraordinary.

STELLA
Yes?

ELYOT
I have a mission. A calling. I musn't be selfish. So starting right now, in Hallie's honor, I'm not only going to help a chosen few. I'm going to help everyone. All over the world.

STELLA
You can do it! I know you can!

ELYOT
Do you really think so?

STELLA
We need you!

ELYOT
Oh Stella, I know that we've only just met, but - will you help me? On my mission?

STELLA
I'd be honored.

ELYOT
Because you know, in a way, I think
that I can become - a sort of
living saint. A role model. A hero.

STELLA
Yes you can.

Drake and Sara have appeared, from their apartment.

DRAKE
Stell?

SARA
How do you feel?

STELLA
(putting on a big phony
grin and an upbeat
attitude, as if her anti-
depressants are really
working)
I feel great! I feel like working
hard, doing lots of activities, and
practicing my college application
essay! All about how I learned so
much, just by watching you fire our
housekeeper! Who has five children,
and they're all being deported!

Drake puts his arm around Sara. They're both very proud; Sara
is almost crying.

DRAKE
(to Stella)
Now you're talkin'!

SARA
Get in here!

As Drake and Sara head into their apartment, Stella turns to
Elyot, as her usual self.

STELLA
And while we're helping people, all
over the world, can we even try to
help Susan Marie Henkleman? And my
parents? And the other kids at
school? And Bill O'Reilly?

Elyot considers this.

ELYOT

Yes. Someday. Someday very soon.

Elyot and Stella smile at each other. They're completely devoted, and they're also a happy, and slightly ominous, conspiracy.

DRAKE (O.S.)

STELL! RIGHT NOW!

EXT. CEMETERY - AFTERNOON, A FEW DAYS LATER

Mr. Vionnet is standing beside Hallie's fresh grave in a suburban cemetery. He wears all black, including a cape. He holds a single perfect lily.

As Mr. Vionnet places the lily on Hallie's grave, he has an idea. He uses his phone to call a number.

From beneath the dirt, we hear Hallie's RINGTONE - it's Katy Perry's "Roar." Hallie has been buried with her beloved phone. We hear Hallie's muffled, recorded voice:

HALLIE'S VOICE

(from her buried phone)

Hey, this is Hallie, be a pallie
and leave a message on my
voicemail! Luvya lots!

After the BEEP:

ELYOT

(into his phone)

Darling, this is Mr. Vionnet. Call
me.

The camera PULLS BACK, as Mr. Vionnet looks around, appreciating the lovely day.

GUY ON BIKE (O.S.)

Dude. So wasteful.

ELYOT

Excuse me?

A GUY ON A BIKE has appeared. He's wearing either too much spandex or something hipster-y. He's very self-righteous.

GUY ON BIKE

Burial, man - it destroys the
environment. People should be
composted. And why are you wearing
wool?

(MORE)

GUY ON BIKE (CONT'D)

Sheep have feelings, you know, and families. And are those leather shoes? Are you really comfortable, shoving your feet inside an innocent baby calf's dead mother? Can't you hear her screaming? And those cow-coffins were probably made by child laborers in a Third World country, not that you care, why don't you just fly one of your death drones over a Syrian nursery school, people like you make me literally sick! Like, literally!

Elyot stares at this guy, fascinated and appalled. He remembers his mission. He smiles.

ELYOT

May I help you?

FADE OUT.

THE END