

CUPCAKES AND ESCARGOT

Written by

Gina Reitenauer

EXT. PHILADELPHIA CITY STREET - EVENING

We open to a decently crowded, average looking city street. It's an ordinary street, one you wouldn't be able to distinguish from any other save for the people that walk it daily. BRYN (23), tall and thin, is walking with her friend PHOEBE (22). Despite the personal nature of the conversation, their loud voices suggest they are more caught up in the conversation at hand than the fact that there are people around them.

PHOEBE

Are you sure you want to do this Bryn? You have a history of being slightly rash...

BRYN

Why are you trying to talk me out of this?

(exasperated)

I've settled. I've accepted it. I've been waiting three years!

PHOEBE

I know I know, but guys aren't good at taking hints. Maybe YOU have to propose!

BRYN

It's not just about a proposal Phoebe.

Bryn shakes her head.

BRYN (CONT'D)

We don't even live together. He just... I don't know, looking back I sometimes feel he has no regard for my feelings. It's always about his.

PHOEBE

I know but don't you think you should try to talk to him about it before breaking up with him?

BRYN

(insistent)

I've tried Phoebe. It's no use. He's always harping on me for not being assertive enough and yet every time I try to be, telling him I want more, need more, he tells me to calm down or be patient.

Phoebe sighs. The two slow their pace as they approach Bryn's apartment.

PHOEBE

Okay, okay. As long as you've thought it through.

Bryn heads into the door of her apartment building after exchanging goodbyes with Phoebe.

INT. BRYN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Bryn walks through the door of her cramped little apartment and drops her over-the-shoulder bag on a chair. The space is cluttered but not in a messy way. In fact, the decor gives off the vibe of an eccentric collector- maps on the walls, a bowling pin lamp, a side table held up by a flamingo statue- but nothing looks out of place and there's actually something charming about it. Small succulents line the window sill.

In her bedroom, Bryn slips on a pair of jeans. She's hurrying, so with her Beatles T-shirt only halfway on, she turns on the light above her vanity and applies a light coating of red lipstick to keep it snazzy. She purses her lips and twirls a blonde curl through her fingers. But already she's looking at the pile of sandals in her closet. Her phone rings. She glances around the room, searching for it, grabs a pair of shoes, and runs out to where the bag sits right where she left it. She pulls out her phone.

BRYN

Hello?

She's slipping on her sandals as she speaks. The phone is held up to her ear by her shoulder.

BRYN (CONT'D)

Wait what? I thought I was just coming to your place?

Now with both shoes on, Bryn flattens out her T-shirt.

BRYN (CONT'D)

Okay, sure Marc. Dinner's fine.
(a pause)

What? Jacques? That's the place in the old bank right? It's fancy?

Bryn looks down at her attire. She's already taking off the sandals.

BRYN (CONT'D)
 (distracted)
 No that's fine. I was dressed up
 anyway, you know me.

Bryn walks back into the bedroom and starts changing into a black sequined-dress while she talks.

BRYN (CONT'D)
 It's fine Marc. Where did you say I
 should meet you?
 (a pause)
 Okay. No that's fine.
 (another pause)
 Yeah. I'll see you soon.

Bryn hangs up. She looks frustrated as she straps on her heels. She addresses a text to Phoebe: 'Great, he's planned a fancy dinner...' She sends the text and heads out of her apartment, grabbing her bag and zipping up her dress on the way out.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET IN PHILADELPHIA - CONTINUOUS

Bryn is walking down the street. We see that she is approaching a man, MARC (24), dressed in a dark grey suit. He sports a baby blue tie and a smile that stretches from ear to ear. Bryn's hands are clenched as she approaches. She unclenches them and takes a deep breath.

MARC
 Well, don't you look absolutely
 stunning!

Marc puts his arm around her and dips her back to give her a kiss. Bryn responds with a polite laugh.

BRYN
 (soft but curt)
 Thanks.

She smooths down her dress again, fixing herself after Marc's little dip.

BRYN (CONT'D)
 So where are we headed?

MARC
 (cheerfully)
 Follow me.

He turns around and heads in the same direction Bryn had been going. He looks her up and down with another smile.

MARC (CONT'D)

Is that what you were going to wear
to my place?

BRYN

Hey I like to keep it snazzy.

MARC

(amused)

Oh I know you do.

Marc laughs and takes Bryn's hand, giving it a squeeze, and she glances at her feet. CU of her silver heels, Bryn lifting one foot up briefly as she speaks.

BRYN

I changed the shoes after you
called though.

MARC

(energetically)

Damn! I thought you'd be in the
blue ones. It's why I wore the blue
tie.

CU of Marc's blue tie as he gestures to it with his other hand.

BRYN

Sorry.

Bryn keeps her focus in front of her.

MARC

How's your sister doing? Is she
settled in yet?

BRYN

Not really. I'm sure she'll avoid
completely unpacking for a few
weeks.

MARC

I mean, but emotionally, is she
doing okay? Or is she still
hesitant on the whole moving thing?

BRYN

(slightly irritated)

I don't really know Marc. We didn't
really talk about it much.

MARC

You alright?

BRYN
Yeah, just kinda distracted I
guess.

MARC
Everything okay?

BRYN
Yeah, everything's fine...

MARC
Look Bryn, if it's about the
promotion...

BRYN
It's not about the promotion Marc.

Marc fiddles with something in his pocket.

MARC
It has to be... I just don't see
how it couldn't be.

He waits, as if expecting Bryn to react to what he said. But her focus is still on the crowd and city street in front of her.

MARC (CONT'D)
That promotion was yours and you
know it.

But Bryn still doesn't respond.

MARC (CONT'D)
You got jipped Bryn. How does that
not bother you?

BRYN
(frustrated)
What do you want me to do? Go cry
to my boss? These things happen
Marc.

MARC
Well they shouldn't. I just think
you could fight a little more, ya
know, be assertive. Stand up for
yourself.

Bryn laughs sarcastically.

BRYN
Wow that's a new record.

MARC

What is?

BRYN

We're not even five minutes into the date and you're already harping on me about being more assertive.

MARC

I'm just saying. It's unfair and you know it.

(apologetic)

I'm sorry. I just think you deserve better.

Bryn lets out another laugh.

BRYN

How ironic.

MARC

(confused)

What do you mean?

BRYN

(slightly defeated)

Never mind, forget it.

As if having no choice but to shrug it off, Marc sees the flower stand just a short distance ahead. The city street breaks off into a small square lined with stands full of mostly produce, but some with drinks such as fresh lemonade, a few clustered ones containing bouquets and flowers.

MARC

Ah, here we are!

BRYN

(sarcastic)

Are we buying produce?

Marc laughs.

MARC

Not quite.

Marc, still holding Bryn's hand, leads her to the flower cart. There are roses and tulips and other flowers of nearly every color bursting out of their plastic wrappings. Bryn admires them briefly before turning towards Marc. He gestures with his hand as if revealing the huge display to an audience.

MARC (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Go ahead, pick whatever you want!
It's on me.

BRYN
You're buying me flowers?

Marc nods happily. Bryn looks back at the stand in front of her. She nearly reaches out and touches one of the sets of light pink daffodils.

BRYN (CONT'D)
Why?

MARC
Because I love you.

Bryn studies the flowers. At first, she seems completely absorbed, even pleased. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees another woman buying flowers.

BRYN
(hesitant)
You don't even buy me flowers on
the holidays...

Marc scrunches up his face. He fiddles with whatever is in his pocket again.

MARC
I thought you've always said
they're cliché for stuff like that?

BRYN
(softly)
Well maybe that's my way of hiding
my disappointment...

Marc, previously running his hand along one of the bouquets on display, looks up at Bryn.

MARC
(surprised)
I'm sorry, I guess I never
realized... Well today's a special
occasion!

Marc is smiling, energetic, as if trying to keep the mood light.

MARC (CONT'D)

I just thought you'd enjoy it, ya know, Something happy to lift up your day.

BRYN

Thanks Marc, but I thought you were supposed to be enough to lift up my day...

MARC

Wha-

Bryn picks out the pink daffodils and thrusts them out to Marc as he attempts to respond. Rather than seeming rude, the gesture is more awkward than anything.

BRYN

I'll take these.

Marc nods, takes the small bouquet, and heads over to the register. Bryn pulls out her phone to see a text from Phoebe: 'Oh no! Dinner?! Why?' Bryn responds: 'No idea. He's buying me flowers too.' Bryn looks up and spots Marc by the register. He looks happy, serene almost, with the flowers in his hand. A genuine smile crawls its way onto Bryn's previously stoic face. Perhaps it was all in her head... She immediately looks down at her phone again, frozen as if contemplating something. After a moment, she sends another text: 'It's actually kind of sweet.'

MARC

All for you.

Marc is back in front of Bryn and handing her the flowers. Bryn drops her phone back into her bag and takes the daffodils with a genuine smile.

BRYN

Thank you.
(genuine)
I, uh, I appreciate it.

Marc smiles.

MARC

Of course. Now, just one more stop before dinner.

He begins to lead Bryn down the street, his hand pulling her's again.

Her other hand holds the flowers nonchalantly in a way that almost suggests she wouldn't care if she dropped them- she's softened, but she's not smitten yet.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE'S CUPCAKES - A FEW MINUTES DOWN THE ROAD

CU of pink icing being squeezed out onto a vanilla cupcake. The pouch of icing is held by white gloves, and the cupcake shop looks as though it's stuck in the 50's. A few customers mill about debating cake batter flavors. In walk Bryn and Marc. Marc has his hand over Bryn's eyes as he leads her in through the door. Some people, the plump man in the white gloves included, watch them. Marc moves his hand away.

BRYN

(laughing)

Ha! I knew you were bringing me to George's!

MARC

How'd you know?

Bryn jabs him on the shoulder, but her voice still sounds hesitant despite her attempts to 'get out of her head.'

BRYN

I could walk these streets with my eyes closed, punk.

Bryn looks about, taking in her surroundings. Just being in this space has her in decently better spirits.

BRYN (CONT'D)

(more naturally)

Besides, this is where I met you. I can picture these streets perfectly, shop by shop.

MARC

You mean you remember sitting outside against a cold concrete wall for two hours in the middle of a freak snow storm in mid-April?

Before Bryn can respond, the baker in the white gloves pipes in.

BAKER

Ah, you met the day of the grand re-opening!

MARC

We did! God I'd been looking forward to that for weeks.

BRYN

Me too but I still can't believe the line was so long. In the middle of a blizzard for God's sake!

BAKER

Ah, yes, the infamous Spring blizzard!

MARC

Come on, it was a light snow!

BRYN

It was pretty bad. I didn't even have gloves so you let me stick my hands in your coat pockets remember?

BAKER

Listen to your lady, my friend. It was a blizzard!

The baker sets the pouch of icing on the counter and takes off his gloves.

BAKER (CONT'D)

What can I get for ya?

MARC

What's that one you just made?

BAKER

(smiling)

A delicate raspberry icing atop of scrumptious vanilla cake batter.

The baker does that motion typical of some chefs, where they put their thumb and pointer finger together in front of them as they talk. He's clearly proud of his desserts.

BAKER (CONT'D)

A plain jane for a not so plain dame.

Marc and Bryn laugh, clearly amused by the baker's character.

MARC

What do you want Bryn?

She seems to be softening even more at Marc's attempts to win her over.

BRYN

I think the plain jane for the not
so plain dame sounds pretty good.

BAKER

Very well, my lady.

Marc and the baker both smile as the baker encloses the cupcake in a little takeout box. He hands it to Bryn and Marc pays. Marc and Bryn both say thanks to the baker before heading out.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF GEORGE'S CUPCAKES - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Bryn is visibly happier than she was at the flower stand.

MARC

Happy?

BRYN

I am. That was very sweet of you.
It's always fun to reminisce.

MARC

Agreed. And also voilà!

Marc gestures with his arm again just like he did at the flower stand.

MARC (CONT'D)

Just a few shops away from Jacques!

BRYN

Ya know, that's another reason I
thought you might be bringing me
here to George's.

MARC

Hey it just so happens that I can
buy you your two favorite things-
cupcakes and escargot- within
nearly the same block. Who am I to
complain?

Bryn laughs.

BRYN

(nodding)
I'll accept.

She puts her arm around his, as if holding onto him, as they cross the street and head to Jacques. In her other hand, she holds the flowers more gingerly now. She even stops to smell them as they reach the other side.

INT. THE LOBBY IN JACQUES - CONTINUOUS

The restaurant is a dimly lit, café style affair amped up a few notches. There are small tables with white table cloths, and waiters and waitresses in suits.

MARC

Go ahead and take a seat, I'm gonna use the men's room.

Bryn nods and a hostess leads her away. To another host, Marc reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small black box, and hands it to her. She nods, as if she was expecting for this to happen.

MARC (CONT'D)

Remember, the escargot.

INT. A SMALL TABLE IN JACQUES - CONTINUOUS

While Marc is away, Bryn checks her phone. From Phoebe: 'I agree, it is sweet. What are you going to do?' Bryn hesitates and puts her phone away without responding.

Marc comes up to the table and sits down. A vase of roses and a small candle sit in the middle.

MARC

This place is great isn't it?

BRYN

Always.

She looks a bit down, not frustrated like when she'd first met up with Marc, but sad.

MARC

What's wrong?

Bryn forces a smile.

BRYN

(somewhat cheerfully)
Nothing.

A WAITRESS comes up to their table and lays out menus before them. She's very peppy.

WAITRESS

(energetic)

Good evening, welcome to Jacques.
Anything I can start you two off
with? Wine?

Marc and Bryn look at each other, as if waiting for the other to say something- the typical thing we all do at restaurants when no one wants to speak for everyone.

MARC

Um, what's the amuse-bouche today?

WAITRESS

Today it's a petite smoked salmon
and cheese plate.

Marc considers this briefly and then says what he planned to say all along. But he says it in such a way that it seems as though he's trying too hard not to sound strange.

MARC

Hm, that sounds delicious. But, ya
know, I think we'll take an order
of the escargot.

WAITRESS

You got it!

He and Bryn hand the waitress their menus.

MARC

Remember when we tried to get Ricky
to try it?

BRYN

(laughing)

Oh god, he was not having it.

MARC

Nope, your little cousin is
certainly not a fan of escargot.

Bryn shakes her head.

BRYN

He did eat it though.

MARC

I still remember the story you told
him. Something about the snail
being an actor right?

BRYN
(nodding)
Yep. He had to eat it otherwise the snail would be disappointed and think it wasn't good enough for the role.

Mar chuckles softly.

MARC
How ridiculous. That was when I knew I loved you though.

As if on queue to interrupt any romance the moment had to offer, a couple sits down at the table next to them.

MARC (CONT'D)
Sooo...

Bryn gives him a funny look.

MARC (CONT'D)
Sure you're alright?

BRYN
I'm fine.

MARC
It's okay if you're-

Bryn puts her head in her hands and interrupts him.

BRYN
Marc please don't bring up the promotion again.

MARC
I just can see how much it's bothering you. Unless that's not it...

Bryn and Marc are briefly distracted as the couple next to them orders the escargot also.

BRYN
Why do you even care so much? It seems like it's bothering you more than me.

MARC
I just wanted you to get it, that's all. I know how much it meant to you, how excited you were.

Bryn sighs.

BRYN

I was but-

MARC

I just don't get why you won't talk to someone. People like assertiveness.

BRYN

Jesus Marc just drop it okay?

Marc takes a breath. There's an awkward silence for a minute. It's broken when a plate of escargot is sat on their table. They order their meals.

MARC

I'm sorry Bryn. I just... I don't know. I'm sorry.

BRYN

(coldly)
It's fine Marc.

MARC

Now I kinda wish I could go back a few minutes to when we were reminiscing about the escargot.

BRYN

Me too.

There's another pause as Marc nervously picks at the escargot.

BRYN (CONT'D)

Marc?

He looks up.

BRYN (CONT'D)

Why did you bring me here?

Marc reaches across the table and takes Bryn's hand in his.

MARC

You love it here. I wanted to treat you.

She nods and Marc goes back to the escargot. He's picking at the food rather than eating it, and Bryn might have noticed this odd behavior were she not so preoccupied with her own thoughts.

BRYN

Marc?

He looks up again.

BRYN (CONT'D)

Are we ever going to move in together?

MARC

Um, well ye-

BRYN

I need more. I can't keep waiting like this.

MARC

(taken aback)

O-okay.

BRYN

(shaking her head)

I've wanted more from you for years now and I can never seem to get it.

(a pause)

I convince myself over and over again that it doesn't mean anything. But it must. Why-

MARC

Bryn, I-

BRYN

No, please hear me out.

(another pause)

You know my dad never treated my mom well. You also know how it was for me when they separated. Sometimes I just fear I'm holding on to people too long even when I know I deserve better, just like my mom did. Because I want to prove that real love exists... and that it can last.

Bryn pauses here, and despite having been making eye contact with Marc the whole time, she looks as though she's waiting for a reaction.

BRYN (CONT'D)

I'm not saying I don't love you or that you're like my father. You're not at all like him...

(MORE)

BRYN (CONT'D)

But that doesn't mean, well, what if your constant harping on me for my lack of assertiveness is only the beginning?

MARC

(stern)

Bryn. I would never treat you the way your father did your mom. I, I can't believe you'd even compare that. All because of a small nit-pick.

BRYN

I'm not trying to. I just-

MARC

(frustrated)

Just what, Bryn? God you think you never say or do anything that gets under my skin?

BRYN

Marc that's not what this is about!

MARC

Oh really?

BRYN

No! You're missing the point!

(a pause)

Maybe I said it wrong, but-

MARC

Then tell me Bryn, tell me the point of comparing me to your abusive father.

Bryn looks as though she's about to speak, but hesitates. She's on the verge of tears.

Just then a plate of escargot is brought to the table beside them. Suddenly, the woman seated there jumps up.

WOMAN

OH MY GOD! Jordan! AH!

The woman is gazing in awe at the engagement ring on her finger, nearly jumping up and down. The man across from her runs a hand through his hair, seemingly unsure of what to do. He looks surprised, as if he didn't know this was about to happen. The rest of the restaurant guests watch with smiles.

Except Bryn. Spotting the ring, she takes one look at Marc before standing up, slamming her napkin on the table, and storming out.

MARC

Bryn!

But she's nearly out the door. Marc hesitates and then stands up. He snatches the woman's fingers, trying to pry the ring off.

WOMAN

(shrieking)

No! No! What are you doing?! You asshole!

The man across from the woman stays sitting, simply watching the scene in front of him in amazement. Suddenly, the ring is back in Marc's hands.

MARC

(nearly growling)

It was meant for her!

The woman sits, her face in her hands, and it's unclear as to whether or not she recognizes through her sobs that the ring was not from her own partner. Marc opens his palm to see the diamond ring he was going to give to Bryn glint in the light. He looks back up, scanning the confused crowd around him. Marc looks in the direction of the main doors, as if contemplating whether or not to run after Bryn. Instead, he throws the ring onto the floor with a grunt in a moment of defeat. The diamond ring bounces and CLATTERS as it hits the ground.