

Live, Laugh, Love

By Elizabeth van Oorschot

Maggie is sitting on a couch with slouched posture. There is a table in front of the couch scattered with coffee table books and an empty glass. She stares despondently in front of her, unmoving. Avery enters stage left.

AVERY: Hey, Maggie. *(Pause, then with a sigh)* Maggie. *(Continues, not expecting a reply)* How was your shift? *(Beat)* I had a crappy day. *(Takes off her coat and hangs it up)* Worked overtime I'm not going to get paid for. *(Beat. Glances at Maggie, then continues as though she doesn't notice that Maggie isn't responding)* Smiled at customers who didn't tip. *(Glances at Maggie, then, cattily)* A guy gave me his number. *(Maggie looks up at Avery, shrugs, looks away)* Maggie. *(Beat)* God dammit Maggie I'm not in the mood for one of your— *(rolls eyes with a scoff)* one of your days.

(Maggie stands listlessly and walks away from Avery, to stage left)

AVERY: Your glass, Maggie.

MAGGIE: *(Blinks)* My— *(Pauses, looks at the glass on the table, looks back at Avery)* Oh.

(Beat)

AVERY: Well? *(Beat, then sharply)* Maggie.

(Maggie makes eye contact with Avery. Looks down. Walks over, picks up the glass and puts it away. As she does this, Avery sits down. Maggie sits back down, on the opposite side of the couch from Avery)

AVERY: You know I'm just trying to help us stay on top of things here.

(Maggie nods)

AVERY: *(Glances at Maggie who is staring straight ahead. Avery rolls her eyes, then places a hand just above Maggie's knee.)* So, Mags, how was work?

MAGGIE: Didn't go.

AVERY: You had a shift.

MAGGIE: Yeah.

AVERY: But you didn't go.

MAGGIE: Told my manager I was sick.

AVERY: *(withdrawing her hand, Maggie's eyes follow it)* Jesus, Maggie. You're not sick.

MAGGIE: I'm— *(starts wringing hands)* Sorry.

AVERY: I'm serious. You don't like your job? I get it. You're tired? Well, so am I. But you're an adult, for god's sake, Maggie, when are you going to start acting like it? Why do you always have to make me be the bad guy here?

(Wringing with greater vigour)

MAGGIE: Avery, no, I— that's not fair, it's—

AVERY: *(Cutting her off)* I'm the one who does everything around here. You know that, Maggie. So why can't you do one single thing when I ask you to? I washed the dishes last night, because you 'needed a break' and *I* can't stand living like a slob.

MAGGIE: I—

AVERY: Because you are a slob, Maggie, you know that, right?

MAGGIE: No, I—

AVERY: You know it's true.

MAGGIE: Okay, fine, maybe—maybe sometimes I...

AVERY: You what, Maggie?

MAGGIE: *(Rushing to get it out, embarrassed)* Okay, okay, sometimes, maybe— I mean, I can *act* like a slob but—

AVERY: And last week, when I asked you once, just for once, to be the one to hang up the laundry. *(feigning confusion)* What was it? What did you do, Maggie?

MAGGIE: I said— I told you, I'm sorry I—

AVERY: Nothing. You did nothing, Maggie. You never *do* anything. *(Beat)* Isn't that right? *(Beat)* You know it is.

MAGGIE: I—I do, I mean, I don't I—

AVERY: You're such a baby, Maggie. *(Avery gestures angrily at Maggie. Maggie flinches, then goes stiff, staring off into space. Avery does not notice, continues talking)* And that's all you'll ever be. A useless

baby with no one to take care of you but me. *(Avery glances at Maggie)* Mags. *(she snaps her fingers in front of Maggie's face)* Mags, don't be like that. You know I'm just trying to help—

MAGGIE: *(Quietly)* I'm done.

AVERY: *(Avery does not hear Maggie and continues, as if uninterrupted)* —I'm not trying to be mean here, Mags, but this is the real world. That's just how it is. I won't always be around to baby you. Not everyone gets how you are. Not everyone will help you, forgive you, like I do. You know I don't say these things to be mean—

MAGGIE: *(A bit louder)* I'm done.

AVERY: I just— wait, what?

MAGGIE: I said— *(swallows)* I'm done. I— I'm moving back in with my mom. I'm leaving here... you.

(Avery is silent)

MAGGIE: I— I'm sorry. I mean, no, I'm not. I don't— *(swallows)* I don't have to apologize. I'm done. Us— we're done.

AVERY: *(Mockingly)* Us, we're done? *(Maggie remains silent, but keeps eye contact)* What, are you trying to break up with me?

MAGGIE: I— yes, I am.

AVERY: *(Deadpan)* Who the fuck else would take you?

(Maggie takes a breath as if to speak, then pauses, swallows, exhales. She goes stiff and stares off into space. Beat.)

AVERY: Hey, Maggie. Mags. You know I don't mean that. I just can't stand the thought of us, not being, y'know, us. *(glances at Maggie, who is not reacting)* Baby, come on... Mags. *(Starting to get angry)* Maggie. *(Beat)* Fuck you, Maggie. You can't win an argument just by going silent. Jesus, it's so manipulative. What are you trying to do, guilt trip me? *(Voice starting to rise)* After everything I've had to put up with from you, and this is what I get? As soon as anything gets hard, as soon as you actually have to work, you just shut down. Well guess what? Sometimes life gets hard. And the rest of us normal people learn how to deal with it but you—

MAGGIE: *(Quietly, desperately)* No, no, Avery, no, stop it— I, no, no, stop—

AVERY: *(Speaking over Maggie)* —something's wrong with you. You're just too lazy, or maybe just too stupid to ever —

MAGGIE: *(With growing volume)* Stop, just stop talking, I can't— just— *(Yelling)* Shut up, Avery! *(Continues yelling, but with her voice breaking)* Shut up! *(Breathing heavily)* You're the problem here. You're the one who, who, can't handle anyone else showing a single emotion, or, or disagreeing with you, or straying from the perfect little templated life you shove down my throat. It's not my fault you have a crappy job. It's not my fault your parents kicked you out. And it's not my fault I react to things like an actual fucking human being while you just, you— *(Heavy breathing, stuttering)* And it's not my fault I can't— I just— There's nothing wrong with me!

(Avery is silent, staring at Maggie unimpressed. Maggie glances at Avery, looks away, then looks back. She looks down and runs her hands through her hair)

MAGGIE: *(No longer yelling, still emotional)* That's why I'm leaving, why I have to leave. Because nothing's wrong with me but you, you just treat me like I'm broken every time I need help, and like I'm not worth fixing. Or, can't be fixed. But I'm not broken. And if you think I am, why are you still here? Why do you keep sucking me back in? Dragging me down with you and then making me thank you for it. I told you, I'm moving back in with my mom. I can't stay here. And if I do, you'll never let me leave.

(Beat)

AVERY: Are you finished?

MAGGIE: That's— that's what I have to say. And I'm not going to change my mind... not this time.

AVERY: *(With a scoff)* Alright. But *I'm* not the one who keeps 'sucking you back in,' as you put it. I'm just the one person in your life who will take you. Who could possibly love you. You drive your friends away with your moody little pity parties. You've driven all your other partners away because you're just so goddamn much to deal with. Hell, your *family* doesn't want you around anymore. Even they're tired of putting up with you. I'm not the one dragging you back in, Maggie, I'm just the only person who will take you.

MAGGIE: That's not true, my mom—

AVERY: *(Mockingly)* Oh, what are you going to do, go cry to your mommy? Sure, she'll let you move back in *(beat)* because she feels guilty. Hey, maybe she even thinks it's her fault you turned out like this. But she doesn't want you there. You remember how happy she was when we told her you were moving in here. Couldn't wait to get rid of you.

MAGGIE: No, no, she said you'd do this, but she doesn't— she still loves me. I'm not broken. I'm not.

AVERY: Yeah, she tries to love you, but deep down? Deep down she resents you. Like everyone else in your life who only puts up with you out of pity. Deep down she knows, and you know this too, that you're the reason your Dad left her. Because that's what they always do, isn't it? You're too much for them and they leave. They always leave, Maggie.

MAGGIE: Stop, please. Please. I'm not—I—I'm not too much. I try so hard not to be too much... I try, I—I'm doing my best... but, they always leave...

AVERY: It's okay, Mags. I'm here. I'll always be here.

MAGGIE: Please, please don't leave me. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean—I don't want— Please, Avery, I promise I'll do better.

AVERY: It's okay. We're going to be okay. Because I love you, even though no one else can. I understand you, when no one else can. And I know you didn't mean all that, baby. You just get so upset sometimes, and it hurts me to see you like that.

MAGGIE: I don't, I don't. I'm sorry I—I always do these things. But you're the one who knows how to fix them.

AVERY: You were just upset, Mags. I want to help you. You want that too, don't you?

MAGGIE: I do, but—but I don't want to be too much for you.

AVERY: It's alright. But who were you talking to, who put all those silly ideas in your head? About leaving. (*Maggie avoids eye contact*) It was your mom, wasn't it?

MAGGIE: Well, yeah...

AVERY: She just makes you so upset. She puts these things in your head that make you so upset.

MAGGIE: She's— she's trying to help.

AVERY: I'm the one who helps you, Maggie. But you mom? She plants these poisonous little ideas in your head that drive us apart. *I* don't want us to be driven apart. You don't want that either, do you?

MAGGIE: I— no.

AVERY: I think it's best if you stopped talking to her so much, then, isn't it? So she can't upset you like this. So she can't make us leave each other. You don't want me to leave, do you, Maggie?

MAGGIE: No, no, I don't want you to leave.

AVERY: So do you think you can stop talking to her? Stop letting her get between us. (*Maggie frowns, looking worried*) Can you do that for me? For us...

MAGGIE: Well... I— yeah. (*Seeking approval*) Yeah, it'd be for the best, wouldn't it?

AVERY: Exactly. It's for the best.

(They embrace)

BLACKOUT