

Chicken Scratch

By

Megan Ablott

Megan Ablott
Registered with WGA
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Megan Ablott
megan.ablott@gmail.com
(626) 201-6534

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - DAY

An average apartment complex parking lot rests peacefully late one afternoon. Trees and carports provide shade for the tenants' vehicles.

Two tenants, a twenty-something couple, are dressed for a nice evening and walk to their car. CHRIS gets by with simple sacks and a button-up shirt, while MAGGIE seems more in her element wearing a short, fashionable dress. She carries a small wrapped gift.

Their relationship is not new, and it shows in their casual, comfortable interactions with one another.

CHRIS

I just don't understand why we have to dress up. The party is at their house, not some fancy, froo-froo la-la restaurant.

MAGGIE

It's a house-warming party at their new house, that's why.

CHRIS

I feel ridiculous.

MAGGIE

Honey, just because your shirt doesn't involve Wolverine or The Beatles, it doesn't mean you're wearing a tux. You look handsome.

Chris clicks the key beeper and unlocks the car. He opens the car door and gets in. Maggie pulls on the passenger handle, but the door is locked. She sighs, bends down, and looks through the window at Chris. After a moment, she taps on the window glass. The DOORS UNLOCK and she gets into the car.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Maggie fastens her seatbelt as Chris pulls the car onto the street.

MAGGIE

I'm happy for Dave and Carolyn. It's not easy to afford a house.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

But why a fancy party? Can't we just barbeque like we usually do?

MAGGIE

Because it's a big deal! It will be fun, and it's an excuse for you and Dave to hang out. Plus it's free food and wine.

CHRIS

(intrigued)

Ooh, you and wine?

Chris raises his eyebrow and gives Maggie a flirty smile. She returns with a flirty and slightly sensual look.

MAGGIE

See? good things will come from this party...

CHRIS

Unless you drink more than three glasses and fall asleep on me, I can't count how many nights I get my goodnight kiss from that fuzz ball Pepper. That peanut butter joke might become a reality...

MAGGIE

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder, babe. If you got it all the time it wouldn't be as fun.

CHRIS

I beg to differ...

Maggie sharply glances to the center console, turns and looks to the back seat, and then at Chris.

MAGGIE

(to Chris)

Hey, where's the invitation? I need the address.

CHRIS

Oh, here.

Chris reaches into his shirt pocket and hands a piece of scratch paper to Maggie. She stares at the paper, and then squints to try and read the scribbles.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

Wha... I can't read this. Why didn't you just bring the actual invitation?

CHRIS

It was taped to the fridge so I just wrote it down real quick.

MAGGIE

How is that easier than pulling the invitation off the fridge...?

CHRIS

Dunno, I just did it.
(pause)
Gimme the paper.

He reaches for the paper and glances at it. His eyes shift back and forth from the road to the paper. His lips tighten and his face begins to scrunch together.

MAGGIE

See? You can't even read it.

CHRIS

Yes, I can. It says 437... Harbor Ave. Yep, Harbor.

MAGGIE

That says Harbor? It looks nothing like it.

CHRIS

Well, it is. I'm sorry my handwriting isn't aesthetically pleasing. (smirks)

Maggie scoffs and enters the address into the navigation. The navigation chimes and reads "ADDRESS NOT FOUND." Maggie turns to Chris.

MAGGIE

(annoyed)

Well, turns out you're wrong. It's not a real address.

CHRIS

What do you mean I'm wrong? Maybe you entered it in wrong.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

Or maybe, you wrote it down wrong. If I remember correctly, Carolyn said Harver when I talked to her the other day. Are you sure you didn't write down Harver?

Chris lets out a heavy sigh and stares ahead at the road.

CHRIS

I know it said Harbor, and that's what I wrote, but if you think you are so right, then enter in your address. I'm almost to the freeway and would like to know if I gotta go east or west.

Maggie reaches for the navigation and begins to type in the address. Chris shifts his eyes back and forth from the road to the navigation and watches her, anxiously awaiting her failure.

The navigation chimes and reads "ADDRESS NOT FOUND."

Chris fist pumps.

CHRIS

(excited)

Ah ha! Told you!

MAGGIE

Told me what? Your address was just as lost as mine was!

(frustrated)

We are no closer to getting to the house. No one wins.

CHRIS

Good, I didn't want to go anyways. I can just see the house when Dave gets the new Madden.

MAGGIE

Stop it. I'll just get out the Thomas Guide.

CHRIS

If the navigation can't find it, how the hell do you think a map will?

Maggies reaches to the back seat and pulls out a map book. She turns through the pages.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

Because it lists all of the streets, that's how. It will tell us who is right.

CHRIS

And since when have you become Christopher Columbus? You got lost at Disneyland, and their map has pictures with a giant castle as a focal point.

MAGGIE

When I find Harver Ave. and get us to the party you will regret all you have said.

Maggie runs her fingers down the pages as she reads through the columns on the map.

MAGGIE

(mutters)

Harbor... Harbor... there's no....
oh, Harbor. Found it.

CHRIS

(points to the road)

Told you!

MAGGIE

Hang on... (reads on) Harkin...
Harmon... Har.. ha! Harver! (smiles
at Chris) Harver lives.

CHRIS

(heavy sigh)

Fine. Call Carolyn or Dave. Let's see who is right.

MAGGIE

Don't mind if I do.

Maggie digs through her purse and pulls out her phone. She dials the number, puts the phone on speaker, and holds it between the two of them. It rings. The couple sits, staring ahead at the road, waiting for an answer. With each ring, their bodies lean closer toward the phone and reveal their desperation to hear a voice on the other line.

The call goes to voicemail. Chris tosses his hands in the air and grips firmly back onto the steering wheel. Maggie tries to hide the frustration in her voice.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

(to the phone)

Hi Carolyn, it's Maggie. So we're on our way, but we are having a *bit* of a problem finding the place. Please call us back on my cell. Thanks!

Maggie hangs up the phone and places it in her lap. The couples settles back in their seats and does not look at one another. The car falls silent.

A moment passes, and still neither speaks. Chris chews on his lip. Maggie reaches forward to turn on the radio when the phone rings. Her hand shoots down to her lap, picks up the phone and she reads the caller ID.

MAGGIE

(to Chris)

Here we go...

Maggie opens the phone and puts it on speaker. The couple leans again toward the phone, waiting to see who was right.

The phone call's reception is poor.

MAGGIE

(to the phone)

Hi, Carolyn?

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Hi! Are you gu... ost?

MAGGIE

Uh, yeah, we're having a problem with the street.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

What?

MAGGIE

The street!

CAROLYN (V.O.)

The str... ame.... arver.

Maggie's eyes squint, and she pulls her face tight as if it will improve the phone's reception.

MAGGIE

You're breaking up. What's the street?

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN (V.O.)
....arver.

MAGGIE
Harver?

CAROLYN (V.O.)
Yeah.

Maggie's face relaxes. She smiles and looks at Chris. Chris does not return the look. His feelings of defeat are apparent on his face.

MAGGIE
(smiling at Chris)
Thanks Carolyn. See you soon!

Maggie hangs up the phone, and gently places it in her lap. She calmly reopens the Thomas Guide and begins to look for the street for directions.

CHRIS
Do you even know what you're doing?

MAGGIE
I'm looking for my street, Harver Ave., because I was right.

Maggie hums as she turns the pages of the map book, and Chris grinds his teeth and shakes his head. Chris' hands twist tightly on the steering wheel.

Freeway signs can be seen in the distance.

CHRIS
Any time now! The freeway is literally 2 blocks away!

MAGGIE
(still looking down)
Just a minute....

Chris grunts and tightens his mouth. Maggie starts to look like she is having trouble with the map, but tries to hide it. Chris catches onto her confusion and reaches for the map.

CHRIS
Give me the map.

MAGGIE
No.

CHRIS

Why are you always so stubborn? You clearly don't know what you're doing.

MAGGIE

Oh, and you think you can find it?

CHRIS

Yeah, actually I can.

MAGGIE

In that case, let me give you a map for later on tonight so you can find a few more things you seem to have been missing. Maybe you just wrote down *those* names wrong too.

Chris angrily chuckles.

CHRIS

You're gonna go there, are you? Fine, I will too. Stop watching "Twilight" because you're turning into a damn vampire. No one should use that much teeth.

Maggie glares at Chris.

MAGGIE

I wouldn't have to, if you didn't have so many problems in the hardware department. Did you have the same problems with Jessica too, or is it just me?

CHRIS

When we met you knew I was dating someone else. Am I with her now? NO. I am stuck with you and your fucking rat.

MAGGIE

Pepper is NOT a rat. He is a chiweenie.

CHRIS

The fact that your mutt is considered a "breed" is bullshit. You paid two grand for an ugly mutt that shits everywhere and is useless for any sort of protection.

(CONTINUED)

Maggie aggressively leans toward Chris. Her seatbelt digs into her chest.

MAGGIE

Like someone else I know! And that's right, I did pay two grand, because unlike some people I'm not a cheap son of a bitch, and I don't buy (signals air quotes) "jewelry" from Wal-Mart!

CHRIS

I am not cheap. I'm sorry I don't overspend like you do.

MAGGIE

You don't even know what overspend means because you don't know how much money we have! You just watch sports and play video games all day! Do you even know how much utilities cost a month for us? Or groceries?

CHRIS

No, because it's not my job to be in the kitchen.

Maggie's jaw drops.

MAGGIE

Take.... that.... back....

CHRIS

I'm sorry, Rosie the Riveter, did that upset you?

MAGGIE

Consider this morning's breakfast your LAST meal from me. Rosie is retiring!

CHRIS

Was that breakfast? I couldn't tell since it was all the same color - you know, a delicious toasty black!

MAGGIE

If that's how you feel, then you can...

(CONTINUED)

Maggie's phone beeps. Her eyes dart down. Her phone reads "1 MISSED CALL, 1 NEW VOICEMAIL." She huffs as she opens the phone.

MAGGIE

Great, Carolyn called.

She calls her voicemail and places the phone on speaker.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Hey there, I think we had bad reception earlier. Our address is 437 Marver Ave. The house a blue door, you can't miss it. See you guys soon!

Maggie hangs up the phone and awkwardly glances out the passenger car window. Chris lets out a sigh. The couple slowly rests back into their seats. The car is silent. The only sound is the hum of the engine.

A rigid moment passes before Maggie reaches forward and enters the new address into the navigation. The navigation chimes and reads "CALCUALTING ROUTE."

Maggie settles back into her seat. The couple's eyes are fixed forward. Maggie's hands rest in her lap. Chris' hands fall to the bottom of the steering wheel. Tension fills the car.

THE END.