

It's a Gas

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Out on the front steps, NICK BARLOW and MAGGIE DAWSON, both late 20s, enjoy a sweet, lasting goodnight kiss.

NICK
I really had a good time tonight. You
look very beautiful.

Maggie blushes.

NICK (CONT'D)
We should do this again sometime.

Maggie BELCHES. Her eyes go wide with terror.

NICK (CONT'D)
Um...

MAGGIE
(covers mouth)
Aarrngh!

Maggie flees for the front door. She fumbles with her keys, rushes inside and SLAMS the door shut behind her.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maggie, distraught, sits on the couch. Her roommates, feisty DEBRA and LIL, the nurturing mother hen, comfort her.

MAGGIE
I'm so embarrassed. I can't face him
again.

DEBRA
Well, what did he say?

MAGGIE
I don't know. I ran up here so fast,
he's probably still standing outside.

Lil peeks out the window.

LIL
Nope. He's leaving.

MAGGIE

It's gotta be the worse thing ever.

DEBRA

Technically farting's the worse thing. But you score points for originality. That's a definite no-no, especially after the goodnight kiss. Where's my little black book? I gotta jot this one down. What's today's date?

MAGGIE

What am I going to do?

LIL

Nothing. It's natural. You'll go back to work, you'll undoubtedly see him and when you do... beats the shit out of me.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

DEBRA

No way. Maggie, you've gotta find a new workspace. I mean, you can't be all sexy and coy with him anymore. He's gonna look at you and see a drunken sailor.

LIL

You're not helping, Debra!

Debra gives an offhand wave.

LIL (CONT'D)

Maggie, maybe you're going about it all wrong. Maybe he didn't hear it.

MAGGIE

Didn't hear it? I'd be surprised if he didn't smell it.

She begins to cry.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

We had Mexican.

DEBRA

Oh, well, there you go.

LIL

Ooooh... Yikes.

MAGGIE

What's done is done. Can't go back, no matter how hard I wish.

LIL

You guys have been working together for what, two, three months?

MAGGIE

Seven.

LIL

Close enough. And you've pretty much established a good rapport?

MAGGIE

We flirt constantly. I figured it was something light during the day to pass the time. Then he sprang this date on me and I got caught off-guard. In a strange way, it felt safer in the office. Now he wants to bring it outside.

LIL

And you're not okay with that? Don't you like him?

MAGGIE

Well, yeah, but if you're gonna surprise me, at least let me know first.

DEBRA

Want my advice? Date an ugly guy. This way, no matter what you do, you'll still look better.

LIL

Oh my God.

DEBRA

Trust me. You date an ugly guy, the good-looking ones will be like, "Whoa, dude. What-the-fuck?" They'll throw themselves at you to prove they still got it. There'll be so many, you'll have to fight them off with a stick... Not that you'd want to.

A lusty Debra STROKES her pen suggestively.

LIL

(to Debra)

Oh, stop that.

(to Maggie)

My point is you shouldn't try to plan everything, especially matters of the heart. It's better to let nature take its course. Leave it to chance and let fate be your guide.

DEBRA

You've been watching too much Lifetime.

LIL

SILENCE!

MAGGIE

No, you're right. I overreacted. Nick's one of the good guys and I screwed up.

DEBRA

Pretty much.

LIL

Nick doesn't strike me as superficial.

MAGGIE

Oh, he's not, by any means.

LIL

You're behaving as if he were, that's the problem. Some guys are a lot deeper than you give them credit for. Remember, it's what's inside that counts.

Debra LAUGHS OUT LOUD. Harsh glances are aimed at her. She quits laughing and goes back to her black book.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A double-cubicle. Nick is on the phone. Maggie sidles in and takes a seat at her own desk behind him. She quietly places her bag down, careful not to make a sound.

NICK

(into phone)

I'll forward your balance statement to you this week. Any questions, feel free to call us. You have a good day as well.

Nick hangs up.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Huh? What? Yes?

NICK

Good morning.

MAGGIE

Oh. Hi. I mean, good morning.

NICK

Hey, I had a really good time at dinner last night.

MAGGIE

Oh... great. Listen, I'm sorry --

NICK

About what?

MAGGIE

You know.

NICK

That? Don't worry, happens all the time.

She gives him a look.

NICK (CONT'D)

Well, it doesn't happen all the time. What I meant was, it didn't bother me.

MAGGIE

You don't have to say that.

NICK

I'm being honest, it didn't bother me. Still doesn't.

MAGGIE

Sorry for the panic-attack. Not the impression I wanted to leave.

NICK

I have to admit, it was kind of cute, in an oft-kilter sort of way.

MAGGIE

I just wanted everything to be perfect.

NICK

That's the funny thing about dating. People try so hard to make a good impression, when the quirks come out it's all catastrophic. I look past that.

MAGGIE

You're a rare breed.

NICK

I'm a good judge of character. I asked you out because I knew we'd have a lot to learn from each other. I like romantic comedies, you like action flicks. I like rock concerts, you like museums. I want to know more. So, I'm up for a second date, maybe even a third. Who knows where it could lead. No pressure, I just want you to know that's where it is. You don't have to feel awkward around me. Just be you, You.

He smiles and turns back around to face his desk.

MAGGIE

Well, there's that new Jackie Chan movie opening this Friday. Top grossing martial-arts film overseas. It's supposed to be really cool.

NICK

Hmmm... an old college buddy of mine is playing in a band this Friday. Late show, they don't go on 'til eleven. What do you say we go to dinner after work, see Mr. Chan kick major butt on the big screen, then go get some drinks and hear some live music? Sound good?

MAGGIE

Sounds very good.

NICK

Great. It's a date.

Maggie's phone RINGS on her desk.

NICK (CONT'D)

Now get back to work.

Maggie answers her phone, eyes beaming, cheeks blushing.

MAGGIE

(into phone)

Good morning, Grenville Credit, this is
Maggie speaking. How may I help you?

Nick glances over his shoulder at Maggie and grins sincerely.

FADE OUT.