

Self-Portrait

FADE IN:

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM - DAY

Close up of a bathroom sink, one side impeccably neat and organized, the other messy, with expensive-looking makeup and hair products strewn everywhere. ELSIE SUTTERS, 26, wets a toothbrush, then sticks it in her mouth and walks out of the bathroom where MARGOT LAVAL, 28, effortlessly cool, the kind of person everybody pretends they're closer to than they are, is sprawled out across her bed.

ELSIE
(muffled)

Did you know that cell phones cause cancer?

MARGOT
So does red meat. And the sun.

ELSIE considers this, then takes the toothbrush out of her mouth.

ELSIE
When did you get back?

MARGOT
Last night? Two-ish. I left at, like, one. But my Uber driver and I got into a fight, so I had to get out and get another one.

ELSIE
That's on you for getting an Uber.

MARGOT
Would you have walked back?

ELSIE
Probably. I like having my life flash before my eyes. It's cheaper than the movies.

ELSIE begins to change into a light blue retro waitress uniform with her name stitched on the left side.

ELSIE
How was Jane?

MARGOT
She brought Milo.

ELSIE
Ugh, Milo?

ELSIE raises the hand not holding her toothbrush and pretends to smoke a cigarette as part of her Milo impression.

ELSIE
(cont.)
"I don't trust people who know what Target is. I have to use exclusively Glossier skincare products or I can feel my skin screaming at me. Have you tried that grilled-cheese pop up bar?"
Actually, that sounds kind of good.

ELSIE drops toothpaste on her uniform and on the floor.

ELSIE
(cont.)
Fuck!

MARGOT
Nobody'll notice.

ELSIE
Yeah, but I'll know. Is the other one in the wash?

MARGOT
Unless you've done it already.

ELSIE huffs.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - CONT.

Close up of the fridge as ELSIE opens it. Half is filled with neatly stacked bento boxes and fruit, all with labels printed ELSIE. MARGOT'S side is a mess of kombucha and tofu.

ELSIE

But you know, you put sunscreen on. And eat fish. It's sort of funny nobody seems to care.

MARGOT

Stop using your phone then.

ELSIE

Yeah. Maybe I will.

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S APARTMENT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

ELSIE and MARGOT sitting on the couch. ELSIE is using her phone.

TITLE CARD plays over image.

EXT. JO'S DINER - DAY

ELSIE runs into work late. She stops, panting in front of an old-timey diner, Jo's Diner, then runs in.

INT. JO'S DINER - CONT.

ELSIE

Will!

WILL JACOBS, 26, is at the diner's counter. He's wearing hipster glasses. You'd think he would work at Starbucks.

WILL

I had to open ten minutes ago. There were actually people lined up.

ELSIE

I know, I know. I'm sorry. I'll smuggle us some grilled cheeses to make up for it.

WILL

It'd make me feel better if you didn't.

ELSIE

You don't have to worry about me. Margot said I can make up rent once I land on my feet.

WILL makes a face; ELSIE has clearly said this before.

WILL

Elsie, I love you, but you're like that penguin suit in Super Mario where you just keep sliding on your stomach, like whoosh-

WILL acts it out.

ELSIE

Ugh, you're so Harvard sometimes.

WILL

What's that supposed to mean?

ELSIE

I don't know. It's just something people say, I guess.

WILL

And you know I don't like Margot.

ELSIE

Hey, we're friends.

WILL

What are you going to do if she moves to Paris or something on a whim?

ELSIE

She's not.

WILL

I don't trust people that cool.

ELSIE

She's not really, she shops at J. Crew Factory. I've seen the bags.

WILL

I'm just saying. I graduate in a few months and-

ELSIE

Stop steamrolling me!

WILL

Have you been watching Oprah clips on YouTube again?

ELSIE

Bye, go do your job now.

WILL goes to take drinks orders from LAURIE and PETER, both in their 40s, both too well-dressed to be eating here, sitting at a table.

ELSIE absentmindedly pours coffee into a man at the counter's mug and watches WILL.

LAURIE

I'm getting waffles. They're always good, aren't they? With the little bottles of syrup.

PETER

Get whatever you want.

LAURIE

And the butter pats in smiley faces. Just brings out the kid in me, I guess.

PETER

Laurie.

LAURIE

Peter, just... please. Let's eat. Let me finish my waffles and then we'll talk on that bench out there.

PETER

Laurie, stop that.

Laurie begins to cry.

ELSIE makes a worried face as WILL walks back to her.

ELSIE

Hey Will, can I take that table?

WILL nods but ELSIE is already walking towards them.

LAURIE

(through tears)

I'm going to order my waffles and then I'm going to eat them and then we can go talk. I'll finish my waffles and then I'll go to the bathroom and apply my lipstick and then we can talk.

ELSIE

Good morning folks! What can I do for you?

PETER

Look, Laurie, look at-

LAURIE

I changed my mind. She and I are going to leave and go shopping on Newbury Street. And it'll be-it'll be so expensive. And fun.

And-

PETER

Jesus.

ELSIE

We're going to have so many bags people will think there's another *Sex and the City* movie coming out. Come on, Laurie.

ELSIE holds out a hand to Laurie, who takes it. They walk out to the back of the restaurant.

EXT. BACK OF JO'S DINER

Mid shot of Laurie hugging ELSIE, almost collapsing into her.

EXT. BACK OF JO'S DINER - SOME TIME LATER

Both of them sit on the ground. ELSIE is smoothing out Laurie's hair.

EXT. BACK OF JO'S DINER - EVEN LATER

ELSIE sits alone, her head leaning back against the wall, completely exhausted.

EXT. FRONT OF JO'S DINER - END OF ELSIE'S SHIFT

ELSIE and WILL walk out together, then pause before the path splits.

WILL

I'm graduating in three months. I'll never have to go to school again.

ELSIE

Don't get too excited about it.

WILL

There are a couple firms I think might hire me. Maybe.

ELSIE

In Boston?

WILL

Some.

ELSIE

Do you really want to leave?

WILL

I don't know. I need to graduate first.

ELSIE

The diner will be so weird without you. I'll actually have to, like, do my job.

WILL

Well, how long are you going to keep working here?

ELSIE

I don't know. I try not to really think about it. Why have you only been talking about scary stuff today?

WILL

It's what all my school buddies are talking about. Just been on my mind lately.

ELSIE

Tell them I miss them.

WILL

You can come around sometime.

ELSIE

No, it was a whole thing before, like, they begrudgingly accepted their buddy's girlfriend into the group but then

realized she was awesome. But now it'd be janky. What if one of them fell for me?

WILL
Bye, Elsie.

He turns right.

ELSIE
I love you!

She turns left.

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM - DAY

French music is playing loudly. ELSIE has wet hair and a towel around her. She consults a Pinterest board full of pictures of Jane Birkin and french models, then combs a chunk of hair forward and cuts it to make bangs.

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

ELSIE sits on the couch, letting her hair dry. MARGOT comes in with Whole Foods bags.

MARGOT
Oh god, Elsie. Did you let that Instagram guy with the swords cut your hair?

ELSIE
What? No, I cut them myself. I watched like, three videos on YouTube.

ELSIE checks her hair in the mirror. Her bangs have shrunk.

ELSIE
Oh. Yikes.

INT. ELSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ELSIE lies on the couch, scrolling through pictures on her phone of her without bangs: one at a concert, one at a party wearing a half-hearted Dana Scully costume, one a blurry selfie of her and WILL at a baseball game.

MARGOT knocks as she opens the door.

MARGOT

There's spaghetti squash on the stove if you want any.

ELSIE

Thanks, Margot. I'm probably just going to eat Lucky Charms though.

MARGOT

I'm sure they have fake bangs on Amazon. You can just pull them back with a headband or something until they come.

ELSIE

I feel like I'll have to explain to everyone why I look like a seven year old going to sleepaway camp for the first time.

MARGOT

Just tell them the truth.

ELSIE

I was just getting into French new-wave cinema and felt so inspired, you know?

MARGOT

Mmmm. I heard you watching one of those movies last night.

ELSIE

It was such an influential movement.

MARGOT

Could you turn the volume down a little though? That's what I'll do if I'm watching something really late, I'll turn the volume to maybe three and then turn on closed captioning.

ELSIE

(not listening)

I'm not sure if I really love it though. I was actually thinking of starting to write poetry.

MARGOT

That sounds interesting. I didn't know you liked poetry.

ELSIE

I didn't either. But it seems like something I'd probably be into.

MONTAGE

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

ELSIE, now with fake bangs, hands the woman at the counter several books of poetry to buy: Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, etc.

INT. BOOKSHOP - LATER

ELSIE returns the books.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

ELSIE tries to keep up with several people in a dance class. Every movement feels and looks wrong.

INT. THEATRE

ELSIE is on stage at a community theatre, delivering a quietly painful monologue. MARGOT is watching in the audience, trying to keep herself awake.

INT. ELSIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

ELSIE reads an email telling her she didn't make the cut.

INT. ELSIE AND MARGOT'S KITCHEN - DAY

ELSIE finishes frosting a cupcake, bites into it, and immediately runs to the trash can to spit it out.

EX. OUTSIDE OF GALLERY - DAY

ELSIE and WILL walk out with two canvases. WILL'S is a smudgy looking but recognizable self-portrait. ELSIE'S has one stroke of yellow paint.

END MONTAGE

WILL
That was fun.

ELSIE

I knew it was going to be wrong the second the brush hit the canvas.

WILL

Aren't you glad you spent twenty bucks on this?

ELSIE

Well, what's the point of doing something if you know it's going to turn out bad?

INT. ELSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ELSIE is on her bed, staring at the ceiling. She checks her phone. No new messages. MARGOT opens the door. She's wearing a date dress and looks very "adult" and good.

MARGOT

Your hair looks so cute like that.

ELSIE

I think the fake hair is giving me a rash.

MARGOT sits on the edge of the bed.

MARGOT

Are you okay on your own tonight?

ELSIE

I'm gonna eat a whole cake for dinner! I'm fine, I lived without you for years.

ELSIE laughs. MARGOT frowns.

MARGOT

I know. Sometimes I forget you're only two years younger than me.

ELSIE

Who's the date?

MARGOT

Just some friend of a friend.

ELSIE

Will keeps telling me I should get back out there.

MARGOT

I'd feel so weird staying friends with an ex.

ELSIE

Well, we were friends first.

MARGOT

How many do you still talk to?

ELSIE

Uhhh, four, I think. But just texts on their birthdays and stuff. Sometimes they'll ask for advice with their girlfriends.

MARGOT

I think you're the most human person to ever live.

Awkward pause.

MARGOT

(cont.)

Ummm. I think we need to talk about this rent thing.

ELSIE

Ugh, nobody ever wants to have a real conversation with me. It's always a "talk".

MARGOT

I want to work with you. I mean, are you really happy working at a diner?

ELSIE

No. I don't think anybody has ever been excited to work at a diner.

MARGOT

There are other options. There are lots of places to work with a college degree.

ELSIE

I don't want to trade the witch for the devil.

MARGOT

But maybe a devil with a 401k?

ELSIE

I just want to wait until I find something that I love. Like you
at the gallery.

MARGOT

I hate the gallery.

ELSIE

What?

MARGOT

Well, no, I don't. I guess I sort of just thought that would
sound good. I wanted to quit for the first few weeks though. I
thought it was too stressful.

ELSIE

But—

MARGOT

And then all of a sudden, on a thirty person conference call, I
realized I loved it. My point is you never get that sort of
realization first thing. It's like one of those puzzle books
where you're supposed to find a red hat hidden in the jungle or
something. One second you can't see it anywhere, and then all of
a sudden, it's there, behind the tiger.

ELSIE

You sound like someone who doesn't believe in soulmates.

MARGOT

I mean, ask yourself right now: What do you love? You say you
love things, but you just love the idea of doing them.

ELSIE

I've never said anything that I didn't think was the truth.

MARGOT

You kept talking about going to London and you never went.

ELSIE

Because I was poor!

MARGOT

You're poor now!

ELSIE

That's why I'm not in London right now! Don't you think I'd rather be in London than standing here?

MARGOT frowns and leaves. This is worse than telling ELSIE off.

ELSIE fumbles for her phone and calls WILL.

ELSIE

Will, do you ever get in a fight and you know you're the one who's wrong but you can't say that because it's embarrassing?

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

ELSIE

People are just my friend because I watched The Office. But I want them to like me because I'm good at something. Because my personality is so cool. But I don't think I even have one.

WILL

Just pick one.

ELSIE

Which one do you like the best?

WILL takes ELSIE's hand.

ELSIE

Is this going to be fun?

WILL

It's a party.

ELSIE

Are any parties actually fun?

They're silent for a second.

WILL

Do you remember when you broke up with me?

ELSIE

Can't you just say, "When we broke up?"

WILL

You don't remember marching in and saying, "Go change. I'm not breaking up with you when you're dressed like that."?

They both laugh. It goes on too long.

ELSIE puts her head on WILL'S shoulder.

ELSIE

I'm sorry I messed up your plan to propose.

WILL

Would you have said yes?

ELSIE

Probably not. Just, ugh, just imagine it. We get married. We dance to something really dumb, because we compromise and I get to have red velvet cake even though you hate it because it's knockoff chocolate and you get to dance to Arcade Fire with me.

We go to Paris on our honeymoon and it's the happiest week of our lives. I mean, really. But that's what I was afraid of. That can't be the happiest week of my life. I was just so scared that, I don't know. You know when I'd stretch my foot wrong and scream for you and you'd come running in?

WILL

Yeah.

ELSIE

I mean, it really did hurt. But then you'd laugh and I'd start to laugh and I would think, *this is as good as I'll ever feel*. And then I'd think, *ow*, because I'd remember my foot. I don't think I could handle it if we ever got to a point where you didn't laugh.

WILL

(lightly)

We could have had kids.

ELSIE

Oh, I didn't want kids! They're loud and mean and they willingly eat those little boxes of raisins.

They both laugh.

ELSIE

I know I'm wrong. I know that's a horrible reason. But I couldn't do it.

WILL

Remember Karaoke Krazy?

ELSIE

I got stuck to that seat that one time! All four of us had to pick all the gum off my ass. Our Disney Channel orgy. I can't believe I'd forgotten.

WILL

And the attendant with the-

ELSIE

The bowling shoes! Carlos. Such a hottie. Do you think he stole them?

WILL

It was a bowling alley before, right? He probably worked there before and then stepped on gum one day and got stuck. What about that time when we convinced Emma to sing all of "American Pie" with her date?

ELSIE

They fell in love in those twenty minutes.

WILL

We told Carlos to keep repeating the chorus.

ELSIE

That's what plays in Hell. And probably, like, Spotify ads.

WILL

How long have we been on this Subway?

ELSIE

This is our stop.

ELSIE kisses the top of WILL'S head.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

WILL is in a corner, making out with a girl. She takes off his glasses and throws them over her shoulder. ELSIE rolls her eyes and looks away. This isn't the first time this has happened.

ELSIE stands frozen, the beat of a vaguely familiar song in her ear, then decides to let go. She throws her arms up and begins to dance for a few seconds, then...

ELSIE is holding a girl's hair as she throws up into the toilet. WILL'S glasses are on top of her head.

MONTAGE

INT. BAR - NIGHT

ELSIE holds back a new woman's hair as she throws up into the toilet of a dive bar.

INT. HARVARD PARTY - NIGHT

ELSIE holds a girl's hair as she throws up out of a window.

INT. NEW PARTY - NIGHT

ELSIE holds back MARGOT'S hair as she throws up.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

ELSIE holds back a girl's hair as she throws up into a bush.

INT. PIG THEMED BATHROOM - NIGHT

ELSIE holds back a girl's hair in a pig-themed bathroom.

END MONTAGE

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

Elsie holds back a GIRL'S hair hair as she cries by a toilet.

GIRL
You're so... so good at this.

ELSIE
Thanks. Good to know the college degree comes in handy.

GIRL
You studied puking?

ELSIE
Yeah, sure.

GIRL
Ughhhhhh.

ELSIE
Shhhh. It's alright.

EXT. SAME PARTY - CONT.

ELSIE goes with the GIRL to make sure the Uber driver isn't a creep.

GIRL
(slurred)
You know, you could make a whole job outta this.

ELSIE
Yeah, open up a little storefront with all these toilets lined up.

GIRL
That's funny.

She gets in the Uber and waves as she drives away. Elsie waves back. Though the music of a party is blaring in the background, it fades as she's left alone. Suddenly, we see a close up of Elsie's face. She begins to smile as she realizes that she's good at this.

A new song plays, something happy and sweet, as the screen dims and we...

FADE OUT.

