


THE LADY IN BLUE

Written by
Paul J. Matta



Registration, WGAw #1990385

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE:

"I feel there is nothing more truly artistic
than to love people.

- Vincent Van Gogh"

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. GALLOWAY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bright light pours onto cardboard boxes. A MOVER, in uniform, lifts a box from a tall stack. We TRACK WITH HIM until reaching a wall.

ON THE WALL

A faded square outline where a painting once hung.

Across the room, the Mover walks past MALCOM GALLOWAY, 30s, a talented painter living in his dead mother's shadow. Next to him, his adopted daughter, EMMY, 7, inquisitive and very huggable.

Malcom and Emmy stare into the empty room. Clench hands. They know of happier moments here. Emmy overwhelmed, reaches up to Malcom. He lifts her. Tucks her head into his shoulder.

MALCOM

It's gonna be okay.
I love you.

PHILLIP, 30s, Malcom's soon-to-be ex-husband, eccentric, and passive aggressive, comforts Emmy.

PHILLIP

Awe, sweetie. We're still a family.
We just won't live together. You
can thank Daddy-Malcom for that.

MALCOM

Phillip, come on, that's unfair.

JAKE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

JAKE, supervisor of the moving crew, with an iPad.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I apologize for interrupting,
but may I see one of you?

PHILLIP

Sure.

(to Emmy)

I'll be right back.

(to Malcom)

Love. Then marriage. And an empty
home is all we have to show for it.

Malcom points to Emmy.

MALCOM
 (kindly reminder)
 Our daughter is what we have to
 show for it.

CUT TO:

INT. GALLOWAY'S HOME - FOYER/STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

MOVER #1 and MOVER #2 haul a kitchen table through the foyer to the front door. Phillip weaves around them, while still following Jake up the stairs. Phillip slowly climbs each step, sliding his hand up the banister, caught in a sentimental ascension into his past.

INT. GALLOWAY'S HOME - FRONT DOOR/FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

LORI, 30s, Malcom's bestie, boisterous, partier, bursts through the front door like she owns the place.

LORI
 Hello!

EMMY
 Aunt Lori!

LORI
 Hi, Emmy, my love.
 (to Malcom)
 Sorry I'm late.

MALCOM
 It's okay.

LORI
 (gently)
 A divorce is what you wanted.

MALCOM
 I know. But I feel empty.

LORI
 Listen, you're following your truth about this relationship. And divorce was not your first choice.

PHILLIP (O.S.)
 Malcom! Malcom!

MALCOM'S POV

Phillip descends the stairway carrying a painting. Jake taps his iPad. MOVER #3 carries several canvases wrapped in cobalt-blue cloth.

INT. GALLOWAY'S HOME - FOYER/STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Malcom, Lori and Emmy meet Phillip at the bottom of the stairs.

PHILLIP

Can you believe this? One of the movers found these paintings tucked in the corner of the attic.

MALCOM

I know. I hid those there.

PHILLIP

What?

EMMY

Dad, did you paint those?

MALCOM

No, sweetie. You know I burned all my paintings. Your famous grandmother painted those.

PHILLIP

Edna painted these? Wow. No wonder you stashed them away.

(then, epiphany)

Wait, these are worth a fortune.

(accusatory)

Still dealing with mommy wounds?

MALCOM

No.

PHILLIP

If you say so.

(beat)

Edna. God rest her soul. She must have been very meticulous about caring for these.

Mover #3 raises the paintings in his arms as a way to accent Phillip's compliment.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

And just look at this one...

ANGLE ON PAINTING

An impressionistic portrayal of a woman wearing a cobalt blue suit, like the fashion worn by Jackie Kennedy Onassis. Depicted on this woman's head is a vintage blue cloche hat. She stands in a room filled with extravagant antiques in front of a massive ceiling-to-floor window.

[The painting is a hybrid of Claude Monet's "Woman with Parasol (facing left)" and "The artist's studio" by Frederic Bazille.]

Malcom kneels before the painting.

A long beat -- he soaks in the view.

MALCOM

I can't believe I never opened these. This is genius.

Phillip turns the painting around exposing the back canvas.

LORI

There's something written on the corner. What does it say?

MALCOM

(squinting)

I think...

(beat)

It reads... The...

(inhales)

CUT TO BLUE:

TITLE CARD:

"The Lady in Blue"

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Lawyers with brief cases, stand in the corner talking to each other. Across the room, Malcom and Phillip hug.

MALCOM

It's almost official.
(beat)
How are you feeling?

PHILLIP

We were good together.

MALCOM

We agreed our hearts lived in goodness, not greatness... as friends, not lovers.

PHILLIP

Ah, the painter turned poet.

MALCOM

Nope. Just sharing my heart.
By the way, I've been thinking about Edna's paintings. It was stupid of me to hime them. They're worth a lot of money. Also... I want you to keep them.

PHILLIP

I'll take 'em. But you're saying that because you don't want anything to do with your mother. Just moving on from her like you're moving on from us.

That stings Malcom.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

(long beat)
Please do me a favor.
(sincerely)
Please... keep at least one of her paintings. I'll gladly take the others.

Malcom agrees.

INT. LAW OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Malcom and Phillip across from each other at a long conference table. A lawyer at their side.

MALCOM'S LAWYER slides papers across the table. Ritualistic. Cold. Phillip fidgets with a pen.

INT. MALCOM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Malcom, Emmy and Lori cuddle together on the couch. Malcom loosely holds a folder of divorce documents.

EMMY

Daddy, why did you do this to us?

MALCOM

One day, you'll understand. Until then, I promise to be here for you. And Daddy-Phillip will also be around. We all just need to take it one day at a time.

ON DIVORCE DOCUMENTS

Slipping from Malcom's fingers onto the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALCOM'S ART GALLERY - HALLWAY - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE:

"1 YEAR LATER"

Malcom and Lori walk down a hallway past colorful paintings hanging on the walls. Malcom's attention fixed on an abstract painting of fruit.

MALCOM

(puzzled)

Lori, why is this in our gallery?
Do you think someone will actually buy it?

LORI

I hope so. We need the money.

MALCOM

Also, I've never understood why artists choose to paint fruit instead of people. At that... abstract fruit.

LORI
(inquisitive)
Just because you never painted
fruit doesn't mean there's not a
market for it. Still... are you
sure that's fruit in this painting?

MALCOM
Actually -- no, I'm not sure.

LORI
Malcom, we need to talk about the
financial situation of the gallery?

MALCOM
I can't do this right now.

LORI
You always say that. Come back!

INT. MALCOM'S ART GALLERY - OFFICE - LATER

Malcom leans against his desk, sifts through prints of
paintings. Lori paces and talks to herself. We can't hear
her, but she's obviously about to blow a fuse. Then...

LORI
We don't have money to stay open!

MALCOM
I'm not hearing this.

LORI
Listen, if business continues at
this rate, we'll have to close our
doors in three months. But I have
an idea that can save us.

He's interested.

LORI (CONT'D)
How would you feel about selling
your mom's painting of The Lady in
Blue? It's worth a fortune.

He considers her idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALCOM'S ART GALLERY - BACKROOM - LATER

Mostly a dim room except for bright lamps hanging directly above an observation table. Malcom wears a smock, goggles, white gloves and inspects The Lady in Blue painting.

LORI
Whatcha doin'?

MALCOM
Authenticating the painting.

LORI
And...

MALCOM
Edna Galloway definitely painted
this.

LORI
Malcom, that's wonderful!

Taking off his gear.

MALCOM
I've been thinking about what you
said earlier... about selling it. I
mean, it's time to take care of us
and this gallery -- which I've
neglected since the divorce --
besides we need the money.

LORI
Yes!

MALCOM
And guess what? There's already
interest in it.

LORI
From who?

MALCOM
Her name is Helen. After lunch, I
got an email from her people asking
who we are and what we have to
offer. So I told them about this
painting. Turns out, Helen is a big
fan of Edna Galloway.

LORI
Most art collectors are.

MALCOM
And I confirmed a meeting with her.

LORI
When?

MALCOM
Next week.

LORI
Uhm - I'm going.

MALCOM
Nope.

LORI
It's like you don't even know me.

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Malcom and Lori rushing down a long hallway lined with impressionistic paintings. They're trying to catch up to Helen's butler, MR. BOBBY, 50s, middle-aged, smug. He stops in front of a set of heavy wooden door.

MR. BOBBY
Please, follow me to meet Ms. Wilhelm.

MALCOM
(to Lori)
How do I look?

She straightens his shirt collar, suit collar and cuffs.

LORI
And you didn't want me to come.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - ANTIQUE ROOM - DAY

Antique furnishings. High ceilings appear to be held up by giant windows stretching up from the floor. Near these massive windows stands HELEN WILHELM, 30s, elegant with a calm aura, mannerly, with dashing fashion. She wears a cobalt blue suit. On her head, a vintage blue cloche hat. She's using the window as a mirror to adjust her hat.

Mr. Bobby leads Malcom and Lori into the room. Lori adjusts her cleavage. Malcom freezes. Lori bumps him.

MALCOM
(bewildered)
This can't be.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. GALLOWAY'S HOME - DAY

Phillip holds the painting of The Lady in Blue.

ON MALCOM (as seen prior to Title Card).

MALCOM
(deep inhale, then)
The Lady in Blue.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - ANTIQUE ROOM - (BACK TO PRESENT)

Helen approaches Malcom and Lori.

HELEN
Good morning!

LORI
Good morning, Ms. Wilhelm.
I'm Lori.

HELEN
Lori, just call me Helen.
(to Malcom)
Hi, Mr. Galloway. It's lovely to
meet you. I've been an admirer of
your mother's paintings for such a
very long time...

Helen's voice fades to silence.

ON MALCOM

Blank stare, nodding, jaw open, too shocked to speak. Then...
Malcom darts out the room. Passes Mr. Bobby who shrugs his
shoulders. Lori, now embarrassed.

LORI
Helen, I'll be right back.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Malcom sprints down the hallway. Lori chases him until he gradually comes to a halt. Out of breath.

MALCOM
(to himself)
I don't believe it. I just...

LORI
Malcom, what are you doing?

MALCOM
Did you notice? It's just like the painting of *The Lady in Blue*.

LORI
Our jobs are at stake and you're talking about your mother's painting.

MALCOM
Did you see Helen's clothes...
(taking a breath)
... and the tall windows?

Lori confused.

MALCOM (CONT'D)
Helen and that room are just like Edna's painting! *The Lady in Blue* is real.

Off Lori's expression...

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S HOME - ANTIQUE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lori scoots into the room, slithering along a wall, trying to avoid being seen by Helen and Mr. Bobby. She sneaks a peak from around the corner at Helen...

LORI'S POV

Helen sets down a cup of tea near the tall window. Turns... and for an instant we see a replication of the painting, *The Lady in Blue*.

BACK TO LORI

She gasps.

CUT TO:

INT. HELEN'S HOME - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lori circles Malcom. Her arms flailing.

LORI

I just can't believe it. I just...

MALCOM

See? I told you. Anyway, let's calm down. We need to get in there and save our gallery. Come on.

LORI

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Lori pulls a tiny flask from between her cleavage. Takes a swig... offers it to Malcom. He hesitates.

LORI (CONT'D)

(off his look)

It's just whiskey.

MALCOM

That's not my hesitation.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - ANTIQUE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malcom approaches Helen.

MALCOM

Hi, Helen. Please forgive me. I'm not myself today.

HELEN

All is forgiven.

She grabs his hand.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now, let's talk business.

CUT TO: