

THE NEW YORKER'S GUIDE TO BEING UNEMPLOYED

Written by  
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INT. SHAW & TAYLOR ASSOCIATES - OFFICE: DAY.

In a corporation located on the middle floor of a Manhattan skyscraper, ALTHEA SAGRETI, 20s, witty, urbane, dynamic, is perched in a cubicle situated outside of a small office. From the cubicle, the office's view of the side of another building is visible. The phone rings and Althea answers.

ALTHEA

(On the phone)

Brooke Weitz's office. Althea speaking. How may I help you?

(She listens intently)

That position was filled months ago. By me. HR must've forgotten to take down the listing.

The stomping designer boots of BROOKE WEITZ, 50s, are heard as she clomps down the hall towards Althea's cubicle. Althea hangs up as Brooke, dressed in overpriced black clothing, plods into view and stops in front of the cubicle.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Hi, Brooke. Rough commute?

BROOKE

I had a fight with my still-unemployed boyfriend. He had the nerve to ask if his daughter could come to Miami with us this weekend.

ALTHEA

That's pushing the definition of a romantic weekend to its limits.

BROOKE

I'm paying for the whole trip. And I'm like, why I am I doing this? We haven't had sex in over a year.

ALTHEA

I hate to see you unhappy. You're here until nine every night because you don't want to go home.

BROOKE

You're like the daughter I gave up for adoption, but wonder about every day of my life.

ALTHEA

Remember that when it comes time to write my performance review.

BROOKE

Can you come in for a quick sec?

ALTHEA

I'm always up for crossing another conversational barrier.

Althea casually follows Brooke, who lumbers into her office.

INT. SHAW & TAYLOR ASSOCIATES - BROOKE'S OFFICE: DAY.

Althea is surprised to see NAOMI, 40s, sitting in a corner of the room. Brooke crosses and sits at the head of the desk.

BROOKE

You know Naomi Hannigan from HR.

ALTHEA

Am I being fired?

NAOMI

We prefer to think of it as "providing you with an opportunity you're not yet aware of."

Althea takes a seat and searches Brooke's face for answers.

ALTHEA

You said I was like a daughter to you.

BROOKE

That's why I'm pushing you out of the nest. I know this is your first job out of college. But you're always on the phone, talking about boys or going to some party.

ALTHEA

You're firing me because I have a life?

BROOKE

I had a body like yours when I was young. It doesn't last forever.

Naomi pushes a stack of papers across the desk at Althea.

NAOMI

This outlines your severance package. You just have to sign it.

Althea flips through the papers to the last page.

ALTHEA

It says if I publicly disparage the company, you can sue me.

NAOMI

That's standard language in most severance packages.

ALTHEA

So unless I agree to waive my First Amendment rights, you send me out there to starve?

BROOKE

Your father's loaded. He'll probably buy you a car to help you deal with it.

ALTHEA

Not only am I not signing this, but I'm starting a blog called "Brooke Weitz is a Huge Backstabber."

BROOKE

So much anger and entitlement.

NAOMI

Ladies, please. I know this is stressful, but let's keep it civil.

BROOKE

(To Althea)

You may have a life outside of this office, but I'm the mama bird here.

ALTHEA

Have fun in Miami with your boyfriend who can't get it up and his teenage daughter.

Althea storms out of the office as Brooke starts to cry.

EXT. SHAW & TAYLOR ASSOCIATES - SIDEWALK: DAY.

Althea emerges from the building as she takes out her phone.

ALTHEA

(On the phone)

Hi, Michael. I got fired from my humiliating entry-level job that didn't pay enough to cover my bills. Call me back.

She hangs up and walks slowly, unsure of what to do.

EXT. MANHATTAN - STREETS: DAY (MONTAGE).

Althea meanders from Midtown through Chelsea into the Village and to the Lower East Side. PEOPLE stroll and bike past her while she is lost in thought, upset about having been fired.

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE - PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY: DAY (MONTAGE).

Althea strolls over the bridge as Brooklyn stretches out on either side of her. She moves purposefully, as if to shake off the mortification of having been laid off.

INT. MOODY'S COFFEE - MAIN AREA: DAY.

Althea, exhausted from her walk, crosses to the counter, where the barista, KEN, 20s, kind, generous, friendly, breaks into a broad grin at the sight of her.

KEN

Althea. How's my favorite future socialite queen of New York doing?

ALTHEA

I feel like I crossed the Sahara in heels. After fighting a battle.

KEN

The usual? Cold brew and a sparkling mineral water?

ALTHEA

Forget the mineral water. I got fired this morning.

KEN

That blows. What happened?

Althea shrugs, not wanting to elaborate upon her ordeal.

KEN (CONT'D)

Tell you what. It's on me today.

ALTHEA

Is that your "unemployed goober special"? That's sweet, but I can't accept it.

KEN

You spend nine dollars a day here.  
Every day.

She gestures to indicate that she's grateful. When he heads off to prepare her order, she takes her wallet out of her purse and stuffs a ten dollar bill into the tip jar.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM: DAY.

Althea flings her coat and purse onto the couch as LONNY THE CAT approaches and brushes against her calves. She picks him up as he purrs and rubs his face against hers.

ALTHEA

Hi, Lonny. I could use a hug.

He mashes his face against her cheek as she laughs. She sets him down, then crosses to the kitchen as he follows.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN: DAY.

Althea swigs from a bottle of mineral water as Lonny glides around her feet. WINTER, 20s, loyal, direct, clever, appears in the doorway, surprised.

WINTER

You're home early. Everything OK?

ALTHEA

I got laid off.

WINTER

Fuck. I'm sorry. Why?

ALTHEA

My boss is jealous I'm not trapped in a sexless relationship.

WINTER

You know what'll cheer you up?  
Italy this summer. Did you talk to your father yet?

ALTHEA

If by "talk," you mean, "leave a billion messages he hasn't returned," then yes. It's at the top of my list of things to not accomplish.

(Thinking of something)

I should file for unemployment.

WINTER

Do it soon. It takes six weeks to get your first check.

ALTHEA

A negative balance would be an improvement at this point.

WINTER

That's why I don't do office jobs. They act like they own you for seventy cents on the dollar.

ALTHEA

You're a painter with a trust fund.

WINTER

It's barely enough to eat without having a day job.

ALTHEA

And yet you've managed to keep your dignity while struggling so much.

WINTER

I'm meeting Charlie for dinner. Come with us. Have a little fun.

ALTHEA

I figured I'd go cry on Michael's shoulder. Lunch tomorrow?

Winter nods, then leaves the room. Althea looks down at Lonny, who gazes up at her with demanding eyes as he meows.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

You're supposed to be providing unconditional love and support.

The cat purrs again as she scoops him up and kisses him.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: DAY.

Althea lies on her bed and makes a call as Lonny sleeps soundly beside her.

INT. SAGRETI & LONDON - RECEPTION AREA: DAY.

At the entrance of a prosperous financial firm, MARLENE, 40s, officious, harried, direct, sits at the front desk as the phone rings.

MARLENE  
(On the phone)  
Sagreti & London. How may I direct  
your call?

During the rest of the conversation, cut between Althea and  
Marlene:

ALTHEA  
(On the phone)  
Marlene, it's Althea. Is my father  
there?

MARLENE  
(On the phone)  
I'm afraid he's in Amsterdam on  
business.

ALTHEA  
(On the phone)  
Did he leave the name of the hotel  
where he's staying?

MARLENE  
(On the phone)  
It'd be strange if I didn't know  
how to reach him. I've managed  
this office for twenty years.

ALTHEA  
(On the phone)  
And I've been his daughter for  
longer than that.

MARLENE  
(On the phone)  
It's unfortunate that your  
relationship with your father is so  
strained you have to call his  
office to find out where he is.

ALTHEA  
(On the phone)  
It's even more unfortunate that you  
have the nerve to comment on it. I  
got fired and I need money. Can  
you ask him to make a deposit into  
my bank account?

MARLENE  
(On the phone)  
Maybe you should look for a new job  
instead of begging for a handout.

ALTHEA

(On the phone)

Maybe you should stop being such a snotty bitch.

Althea hangs up and calls her Russian stepmother ANASTASIYA, 20s, sensual, pragmatic, confident, but gets her voicemail.

ANASTASIYA (O.S.)

(On the phone)

You have reached the voice mailbox of Anastasiya Sagreti. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

There is a beep.

ALTHEA

(On the phone)

Anastasiya, it's Althea. I don't know if you're with Dad or at home in New Jersey. Can you ask him to get in touch with me?

Althea hangs up and sighs in frustration.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: NIGHT.

Althea, still lying on her bed, is now on her laptop while Lonny slumbers contentedly. Her checking account has \$50.35 left in it. Althea shakes her head at her predicament.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN: NIGHT.

Althea spoons the contents of a can of cat food into a bowl as Lonny howls impatiently from the floor.

ALTHEA

Enjoy the organic stuff while you can. If I don't find a job soon, you'll be eating the garbage they sell at the bodega across the street.

As Althea sets the bowl down, Lonny jams his face into it and devours his dinner as she smiles while watching him.

INT. ALTHEA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: NIGHT.

Althea sits on the edge of her bed while she makes a call.

ALTHEA

(On the phone)

Hi Michael, I'm still trying to reach you. And we still have plans tonight. Call me back.

She hangs up as her eyes land upon a French maid's outfit hanging in her open closet across the room.

INT. ALTHEA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: NIGHT.

Althea tries on the maid's outfit, which is also comprised of a headpiece, fishnet stockings and high heels. She examines herself in the mirror as Winter appears in the doorway.

ALTHEA

It's a special treat for Michael. He's been begging me to put it on ever since I wore it on Halloween.

WINTER

I hope the erection killer won't be home tonight to ruin everything.

ALTHEA

I think it's nice that he has a platonic female roommate.

WINTER

She's more annoying than a late summer cold. Enjoy. Don't have too much pre-marital sex.

Winter leaves as Althea grins at her image in the mirror.

INT. MICHAEL'S LOFT APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM: NIGHT.

LUCY, 20s, sensitive, insecure, anxious, opens the door to reveal Althea, who has a huge purse slung over her shoulder.

LUCY

Althea! It's great to see you!

ALTHEA

Hi, Lucy. Is Michael home yet?

LUCY

He texted me ten minutes ago. He should be here any second.

Althea steps inside as Lucy envelops her in a tight hug. Althea reciprocates politely and patiently allows Lucy to embrace her a little too exuberantly.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You're like sunshine on a day when nobody will talk to me.

Althea crosses to the couch and makes herself comfortable as Lucy sits right beside her, despite the ample free space.

LUCY (CONT'D)

So what do you lovebirds have going on? A big, romantic evening?

Althea shrugs as her eyes move to the gigantic purse, which rests beside her on the couch.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I'll be invisible so you guys can have some privacy. But you should join me for the mega ultra delish bacon mac and cheese I'm making.

ALTHEA

That's sweet, but I already ate.

LUCY

We have so much in common. It's like we're related, you know?

ALTHEA

Go with it if it works for you.

LUCY

What I mean is I admire you so much. I think it's great that you're OK with what happened.

Althea indicates that she has no idea what Lucy means.

LUCY (CONT'D)

How Michael and I got drunk and slept together on Monday night.

Althea is shocked as Lucy realizes she's imparting completely new information.

LUCY (CONT'D)

He said he told you and you were super duper OK fine with it.

ALTHEA

Yeah. That didn't happen.

LUCY

I never would've said anything if  
I'd known he hadn't told you.

The door opens and MICHAEL, 20s, easygoing, kind, spineless, enters. He registers Althea's expression as Lucy leaps up and embraces him.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh, Michael, you need a spanking.  
How could you not tell Althea what  
happened on Monday?

MICHAEL

(To Althea)  
It's complicated.

LUCY

The three of us should sit down and  
work everything out.

ALTHEA

Lucy, this is between Michael and  
I. Would you mind giving us some  
privacy?

LUCY

I'm involved. I feel like I should  
have a say in whatever happens.

ALTHEA

Get out of here. Now. Please.

MICHAEL

Lucy, let me talk to Althea alone.

Lucy heads towards the hallway, then glances back at Althea.

LUCY

I never meant to hurt you.

Althea glares at Lucy, who vanishes into her room. Michael stands awkwardly near the front door as Althea turns to him.

ALTHEA

We had plans Monday night. You  
canceled because you said you had  
to work late.

MICHAEL

Lucy and I went for drinks after.

ALTHEA

While I was home, thinking about how great the last nine months have been, you had your dick inside her.

MICHAEL

This has been traumatic for me too.

ALTHEA

Try to control your stress level.

MICHAEL

I feel like you have a lot of hostility towards me right now.

Althea stares icily at Michael as he gazes evenly at her. She slings her purse over her shoulder, then leaves abruptly.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: NIGHT.

Althea cries as she hugs Lonny like a teddy bear. A bottle of bourbon and a shot glass lie on the bedside table.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM: DAY.

Althea's eyes are red from crying as she watches TV. Winter enters the apartment in the same clothes as the night before.

WINTER

Hey. Ready for our lunch date?

Althea remains glued to the TV as Winter sits beside Althea.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Come on. The apartment smells like bourbon, cigarettes and despair.

ALTHEA

By the time I got home, he blocked me on Facebook.

WINTER

Social media is so stupid.

Winter takes out her phone and her eyes widen in surprise. She looks at Althea, then back at her phone.

WINTER (CONT'D)

He forgot to block me.

Winter hands her phone to Althea. Michael's Facebook profile photo shows he and Lucy posing lovingly.

His status reads, "in a relationship." Althea is in shock as she stares at the picture.

ALTHEA

It's like she beat me in a contest  
I didn't even know we were  
competing in.

WINTER

You still win. She has to go  
through the rest of her life as  
herself.

Althea hands the phone back to Winter, who scrolls through Michael's Facebook photos.

WINTER (CONT'D)

He deleted every picture of you  
two. It's like you never existed.

Althea's eyes well up and fill with tears.

INT. ALTHEA AND WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM: NIGHT.

The maid's outfit still hangs in Althea's closet. As she lies in bed, she stares at it with eyes full of pain for a long moment, then turns onto her side so she doesn't have to look at it.

INT. BANK - ATM VESTIBULE: DAY.

Althea stands at a cash machine as she retrieves two twenty-dollar bills. The receipt slides out and she examines it. She has \$3.47 left in her checking account. She frowns as she crumples up the receipt and tosses it away.

EXT. MOODY'S COFFEE - SIDEWALK: DAY.

Althea walks past the front window and considers going in, but decides to skip it. Ken spies her through the glass and waves. She returns the gesture, but when she doesn't enter, he comes outside.

KEN

You'll go into cold brew withdrawal  
if you're not careful.

ALTHEA

If I was going to write a guidebook about being unemployed, chapter one would say, "do not spend nine dollars on a cold brew and mineral water every morning."

KEN

I'd treat you again, but the owner's here today.

ALTHEA

That's sweet, but there's no reason for you to join me as a Department of Labor statistic.

KEN

Treat yourself to something nice. Go out for an expensive dinner.

ALTHEA

I'm down to my last three dollars. I have a credit card my father gave me, but I'm only supposed to use it in emergencies.

KEN

What's he going to do? Ground you?

ALTHEA

Maybe he'll call me back.

She smiles as he holds the door for her and she goes inside.

INT. MOODY'S COFFEE - MAIN AREA: DAY.

Ken makes his way back to the register as Althea follows him as she stands happily on the customer's side of the counter.

KEN

What'll it be? The usual?

Althea takes a moment to peruse the display of overpriced artisanal pastries, which beckon from behind the glass.

ALTHEA

In addition to my standing order, throw in two dozen macarons and three golden opulence donuts.

KEN

You don't do anything halfway, do you?

ALTHEA

It's easy when someone else is paying the bill.

KEN

Remind me to make you sign a prenup if we ever get married.

ALTHEA

Totally not necessary. It's my dream to live in poverty above a coffee shop.

Ken winces from the remark, but does his best to hide it. Althea doesn't notice. He heads off to prepare her order, then returns with her two beverages and a small stack of beautifully wrapped pastries. Ken rings the order up.

KEN

That'll be \$73.45.

Althea indicates that it's no big deal as she hands the credit card to Ken, who swipes it.

KEN (CONT'D)

It didn't go through.

ALTHEA

Try it again. The person who pays the bill makes more in a week than the two of us do in a year.

Ken runs the card again, then hands it back as he shakes his head with a sympathetic look in his eyes.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

That makes no sense whatsoever.

KEN

Maybe he just forgot to pay the bill. Happens to me all the time.

ALTHEA

It's probably like junior year of college, when he didn't pay my tuition until they refused to let me register for classes. But he and my stepmother Anastasiya just remodeled the guest cottage at our house in New Jersey.

KEN

Do you want to take everything and pay me tomorrow?

ALTHEA

No. I can't do that. Sorry about  
being such a deadbeat.

She turns and leaves the shop, dejected, as he watches her go  
with concern in his eyes. \*