

We Were Friends, Episode 1
Two Years In: Birthdays

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Note: any dialogue that is [bracketed] indicates hesitation, interruption, overlap, which is part of the sometimes awkward rhythm of conversation between Margaret and Waldo.

A park. Audience is seated on picnic blankets in a large oval. Perhaps they've brought picnics, too. An envelope and a cupcake rest on each blanket.

Margaret arrives from afar carrying a big bag and picnic basket. She finds a spot on one end of the oval. She lays out a blanket, sits, snacks, and watches the day, and waits for Emerson, who will be joining her. After some time, Emerson comes along.

Emerson: Sorry, I was running late. *(pause, realizes)*

Margaret stops him in his tracks. She has a bad cold, she explains. He doesn't mind, but she doesn't want him to catch it. Margaret throws him his own picnic blanket several feet away -- the opposite end of the oval. They will have to raise their voices a bit to talk and be heard.

Emerson: Oh crap, I forgot my...I left it in the car.

He goes to his car to get what he forgot...and he returns.

Emerson: Ok. *(sets down his man bag, pause)* Happy Birthday!!!

Margaret: Happy Birthday to you!!!

Emerson: Well...how are you --

Margaret: Welcome back! I have something for you.

She digs around in a big bag and finds the gift. She stands. How to give it to him and not infect him with her cold? She decides to toss it to him. He catches it.

Emerson: Thank you. This isn't necessary.

We will discover later it is the same size and wrapping as Ralph's gift for Margaret.

Emerson: [Sh-...Shou...Should I open it now?

Margaret: You.... you can... can open it now, if you want.]

Emerson opens the gift, meticulously.

He pulls the gift out of the box. Looks at it uncertainly. And doesn't know what to say.

Margaret: [They're Seeds.

Emerson: Seeds?]

Margaret: Do you remember what you said you would be if you weren't —?

Emerson: [Painter?

Margaret: Gardener?]

Emerson: [Painter.

Margaret: Gardener.]

Margaret is not sure what she heard or if she heard right.

Margaret: What?

Emerson: (*realizing*) No, you're right. I did say Gardener.

Margaret: Yeah, you did. You said you wanted a greenhouse. You said you dreamed about it.

Emerson: Yes, that's right.

Silence.

Emerson: I, um,

Margaret bursts into tears. Or maybe some other high-blown reaction.

Emerson: Margaret?...It's just I've been thinking about *painting* Gardens. I saw a print -- Cezanne's "The Garden at Lauves," in Hudson last week... Patches of color, patches of white, toward the end of his life...M., you thought of seeds.

Margaret is gathering herself.

Emerson: It's so kind of you! ...What kind are they?

Margaret: I had to look up what you plant in late May.—Carrots, turnips, dill.

Emerson: I'll make you a salad. You will just have to wait a while.

Bit.

Margaret: *(re-composed)* It's beautiful. We got lucky today. Our in-between day.

Emerson: *(smiles)* What'd you do yesterday?

Margaret: I called my mom —

Emerson: Also Margaret.

Margaret: I took a walk and I journaled —

Emerson: Good.

Margaret: Thank you.

Emerson: You're ---.

Margaret: One year older.

Emerson: Right.

Margaret: How are you celebrating tomorrow?

Emerson: Haven't thought about it much. Lydian has a secret plan for dinner. I might get up early, go to Greenville.

Margaret: Will your mom make you breakfast?

Emerson: I'll bring something. Have a walk around the town before breakfast.

Margaret: It's supposed to be nice tomorrow.

Emerson: Yes.

Margaret: I think it's supposed to rain later this afternoon/evening.

Emerson: Really?

Margaret: Yeah. There's a chance of lightning.

Emerson: Picnic, lightning. Hold onto your thermos.

She smiles, knowing the reference.

Margaret: Are you hungry?

She begins to unpack her elaborate picnic.

Emerson: Not really. [Are ...are...

Margaret: Ok...ok...] Okay, I'm going to eat.

Emerson: I will too.

Margaret attempts to make a plate for Emerson without touching anything.

Emerson feels a little awkward, picks through his bag and takes out a sunflower.

Time taken, and they begin to eat.

Emerson: One spring break in college -- service trip, we went down to Chattanooga, TN. Mid-week, we were dropped at this new fancy mall -- town very excited because it had two levels. After a while I wandered to the food court for an ice coffee. Chance, I saw a classmate, acquaintance -- nice guy, big guy -- seated at a small table at the center the rotunda. His head was up like he'd just seen something pleasing in the distance. (*name retrieved*) Barry. Then he looked down at his mound of fast food. For ten minutes I watched him as he slowly unwrapped and chewed two big burgers, filled his mouth with an extra large milk shake, and dipped curly fries in ketchup and gravy -- under this light from a big skylight, high, high above... It was the most sumptuous meal I've ever seen eaten.

A bit or two of silence.

Margaret: A few summers ago I was at the beach. It was one of those really hot days. All the kids were in the water splashing around, in these little clusters. One kid was playing by himself, probably around eight, baby face. He looks up and calls to the shore. He says, "Mom! I'm having a great time!"

Lull.

Margaret: How's little Waldo?

Emerson: He's a pisser. He and his friend Ruthy -- trouble, they have a new game called *peeing outside*. She learned it from her brother. But with their pronunciation, sounds more like *being outside*. Their favorite place to pee: front lawns, less clothes the better. To dry off, Ruthy scuttles like a crab, Waldo jiggles like Mick Jagger. Did you know urine is --

Margaret: Sterile.

Lull. And then sputter alive with overlap, something that may be repeated.

Emerson: [What are you wor...

Margaret: I'm thinking of freezing my e...I'm thinking of freezing my e...]

Emerson: Sorry?

Margaret: I'm thinking of freezing my eggs.

Emerson: Oh.

Margaret: But maybe not.

Emerson: (*pause*) Once I donated to a sperm bank in the Empire State Building, 73rd floor.

Margaret: What?

Emerson: Maybe I shouldn't have said that.

Margaret: Is there, like, a picture of you and a bio? So someone can flip through a binder of sperm donors and find Ralph Emerson's sperms? How old were you? I have so many questions. Is this true?

Emerson: (*shifting focus*) What are you working on?

Margaret: Ralph!

Emerson: (*playing along, but refusing to give in*) I think the plural of sperm is sperm.

Margaret not satisfied with her statement not being fully considered.

Margaret: You know, you haven't given me my birthday present.

Emerson: That's right! I'm sorry.

Emerson again digs through his man bag. And...

Emerson: *(taking it out of bag)* Here.

It is a slightly crinkled and beaten version of the gift wrapped box Margaret gave to Ralph.

Margaret: Thank you, Ralph.

Again, it's a gift toss. The box floats from Ralph's island to Margaret's. She catches it, opens it.

Bit.

The box is empty.

Margaret: There isn't anything in here.

Emerson: What?

Margaret: It's an empty box.

Emerson: What do you mean?

Margaret shows him. He takes it in. Looks at her.

Emerson: I was in the laundry room -- thinking, then.

Emerson: *(explaining)* [...I was debating!

Margaret:What happened!]

Margaret: Debating what?

Emerson: Between the bag and the box.

Margaret: So...my present is in a bag in the laundry room?

Emerson: The box seemed more "you."

Margaret smiles.

Margaret: *(playfully)* I love it!

Emerson laughs a little.

Margaret: It's not really my color though. Did you keep the receipt?

Emerson laughs a little more. Playing along.

Emerson: There wasn't much choice in color. *(excited)* It was on sale!

Margaret: I'm glad you got a deal. I was thinking you really overdid it and I just got you seeds. I was beginning to feel embarrassed.

Emerson: *(sincerely)* Don't be. *(telling her the real gift)* I got you a paperweight, for your projects. Glass with a bumblebee inside. Looks real, but it's not...I also practiced a simple version of "Flight of the Bumblebee" called "Flight of the Bumblebee, for Recorder and for Margaret." *(looks to bag)* But I am not ready.

Margaret is touched, surprised.

Margaret: That sounds ... That sounds... I'll love that!

Emerson: Good.

Margaret sees the birthday card she wrote for Emerson on the blanket. It sits in the same place as the audience's cards.

Margaret: I wrote you a card.

She hands Emerson the card. He reads silently. Maybe the audience is inspired to read theirs, too.

Emerson looks at Margaret. Smiles.

Emerson: *(pause, looks again to his bag)* Ok, I will give it a try...

(pulls Waldo's recorder and takes his best shot at simple version)

Emerson: The finger...the finger...the fingering...

Margaret: Why bumblebee?

Emerson: Weather started getting nice: bumblebees. *(joking)* Pretty sure they're following me -- bit slow, fat with life. They might be my totem spirit...insect. Like your--?

Margaret: Gopher.

Emerson: Red squirrel.

Margaret: Or a shark.

Emerson: Hummingbird!

Margaret: Yes! Then you and I can meet on this sunflower and talk.

Emerson: Excellent.

Margaret: Do you have a birthday wish?

Emerson: Wish? You know, I don't believe in wishes.

Margaret: Even on your birthday? What's to lose? It's a wish.

Emerson: Except for one or two, I've left wishing.

Margaret: For what?

Emerson: For surrender. I recommend surrender: there's nothing to lose.

Margaret: It's your birthday!

Emerson: Not 'til tomorrow.

Margaret: What did you wish for when you were a kid? Do you remember?

Emerson: *(trying to remember something)* Hockey stick!?! I don't know. How 'bout you?

Margaret: Always, friends. Just that. A friend.

Silence.

Emerson: What else are you working on?

Margaret: I'm grading papers right now. End of the school year. All the kids are wiped and just want to be outside. I'm working on a poem for a change. I started in the middle. I haven't figured out how it starts yet.

Emerson (*smiles*): In the middle. That's you. Do you have it?

Margaret ("of course"): Yeah.

She digs through her lady bag and opens a notebook.

Margaret: I might not read the whole thing. Alright.

*Father was my first sun.
I could feel him everywhere.*

*On braver days I looked at him.
The risk of course was there.*

*He looked past me, decidedly --
my shadow, stretched, and gray.*

*Past eyes and mouth, past all I guess.
Through pain and age and me.*

*When Father died, cool darkness came.
The longest night I've known.*

*The clouds moved west so I moved east.
I tripped, and I pressed on.*

*And then: stars.
So young and beautiful.
So strong and pulsing,
right at hand.*

*Clusters of lights keeping me safe.
I walked and rested.
I closed my eyes.
Then morning.*

*Gentle, distant, a new sun rose,
more warm than stars at night.*

*What colors many I can't recall.
What changes to my sight.*

*I felt such warmth, alive and young.
Together we stood that morning.*

*We laughed and smiled.
Then you rose up, you said you would be going.*

*Higher and higher, and others came out.
I felt ...*

Margaret trails off...not wanting to share or because she has written no more.

Emerson: [You felt?

Margaret: Don't say anything.]

Silence.

Emerson: Why "cluster of lights?"

Margaret: *(takes out some sunscreen)* "Clusters." -- They're the people I met when I left home.
(re: the sunscreen) Do you want some?

Emerson: Expiration date?

Margaret: What?

Emerson: No experience with expired sunscreen?

Margaret: You mean, like, it doesn't work?

Emerson: Yes. It's dangerous, blotchy -- some patches of skin are protected, some aren't.

She tosses him the bottle.

Margaret: *(playful)* Sounds like you just have to surrender.

Emerson: *(Checks the date, confirms it's fine.)* Okay. *(Tests it, squirts out considerably more than he can use)* I was asked to speak at the high school. Graduation.

Margaret: Do you want to share any of it? *(Ralph looks at the lotion mess)* No, I mean the speech. I could use some hope and promises of a bright future and new horizons.

Still putting on sunscreen.

Emerson: I don't know. I like this idea "clusters of light keeping us safe!"

Margaret: *(smiles)* You have some sunscreen you need to rub in.

She gestures to her own face. He mimics, and rubs in the sunscreen.

Emerson: It's good: You're outside! You have some right there.

Emerson points close to a dab on her neck.

Emerson: There.

Margaret: *(re: sunscreen:)* Thank you. I'm not an outdoorsy person. My dad would never let me outside unless I...well, he rarely let me play outside. He's gone two years this October.

Emerson still managing the excess sunscreen.

Emerson: Two years. He probably had a vitamin D deficiency.

Margaret: Is that why *I* feel so gloomy?

Emerson: You don't have to be outdoorsy to be outside.

Margaret: Well I can't write outside. All my papers would go flying. What I really need is a nice paperweight.

They smile.

Margaret: It will be two years for us first meeting, this fall.

Emerson: Two years. Thank you.

Margaret: For what?

Emerson: Agreeing to me, when you did.

Margaret: *(laughs)* What?! Are you kidding? I emailed you so many times. I finally wrote you a letter and *then* you wrote me back.

Emerson: And you agreed to meet me.

Margaret: Your remember the first thing I asked you?

Emerson: Favorite moment of the day.

Margaret: You pulled a Ralph and said, "My favorite moment? This one."

Emerson: Let's meet here on our half-birthdays. Our half-birthdays-in-between day.

Margaret: I hope you're not saying we'll wait six months to see each other.

Emerson: Course not. Winter picnic: fun.

(Margaret goes somewhere in her head -- the future)

Margaret: Winter. Ralph. Is that where we are going? I don't know if I can stand another winter. I thought the seasons... The days are still getting longer, right? We can't miss the solstice. I thought I was heading in the right direction, on my way to being someone important.

Emerson: Margaret, you are. Who's more important!

Margaret: *(can barely look at him)* You are important. I'm...no one. My dad would say, "mediocrity is obscurity." Timothy Fuller original. I don't have time.

Emerson: *(studies her)* Time. I know --

Margaret: *(scowls)* You know? I don't think so, Ralph. I'm not saying I'm busy or I'm overwhelmed or I've got too many speaking engagements. I'm saying I'm *running out of time*. To do what I want to do. *(struggling, emotional)* It's different for a woman. I hate saying that. But it's true.

Emerson: *(thinking)* Ok...So, what can you do?

Margaret: I need a change. I...think I might...I don't know, move.

(pause)

Emerson: Move? Where?

Margaret: I'm looking at jobs, apartments. In New York and DC.

Margaret leans back on the ground and covers her eyes.

With a slight frown, Ralph thinks, and reaches into his bag and pulls out and places cupcakes and cupcake plates. He checks the time. And has likely checked time earlier.

Margaret: I hate birthdays. I like yours, just not mine. It's so much pressure.

Margaret: *(trying to loosen up)* I don't like teaching anymore, Ralph. I don't have any money. I'm single now. A few years ago I seriously thought I could be president. *(She laughs really hard.)* God, I feel like I'm five years old.

Emerson: Right. Well. Okay.

Emerson takes out two candles from the bag and places one on her cupcake and one on his.

Bit.

Emerson: Pretty soon, I'm going to have to start --

She pops up.

Margaret: Don't say you have to go. Not yet.

Emerson: Ok. Not yet. *(sitting quietly with her for some time)* You know what's the best?

Margaret: What?

Emerson: *(trying to take it all in)* ...all of it.

Margaret nods.

Margaret: I have less to say when I'm with you. It's nice.

Emerson: Well... thanks.

Margaret: Fire and Light.

She has pointed to herself on Fire, and to Ralph on Light.

Emerson: *(pause)* Has a certain glow to it.

(bit)

Margaret: Ok, what *you* are working on?

Emerson: An essay deadline -- not much wiggle room. And a talk-- in Worcester, next week. I'm working out a couple things from my journals. Not sure where it's going.

Margaret: Do you want to read me any of it? Or to talk through it?

Emerson: *(smile)* Moving. Feels like you ...just arrived.

Margaret: Yeah.

Bit.

Margaret: I haven't decided yet. I mean, there's no job offer.

Emerson: The articles you've written this last year. You sold how many? Five? Six?

Margaret: Six.

Emerson: Plus, managing everything else.

Bit.

Margaret: West coast next, right?

Emerson: *(resigned)* August.

Margaret: What?

Emerson: This is what we work for, right? The wave of interest and demand...I'm away, I'm presenting, I'm trying to read and write. I get home -- Lydian and Waldo, mom, mom's house the emails -- texts!

Margaret: What part of it all is your favorite?

Emerson: Favorite?

Margaret: What are you doing it all for? Is there a moment -- on the road or when you come home or when you get a paycheck, I don't know -- when you're like, yes, this is why I work so hard?

Emerson: Do I work hard? I work long, Margaret. *You work hard.*

Margaret: *(with a smile)* Well that's infuriating.

Emerson: You don't want the long I am talking about: shaking hands at the meet and greet...

Margaret: Then what?

Emerson: *(smiles, a little sadly, then)* ... Certain moments creating, I enjoy, parts of the preparation ... Ah, it's tricky.

Margaret: *(nods)* The other stuff -- the travel, the networking, the demands -- I don't think it's going away. You haven't peaked yet.

Emerson: The peaks are encouraging. The climb can be lonely.

Margaret: I bet.

Emerson: Seductions of the heights, thin air, there's not much life up there.

Margaret: What do you mean?

Emerson: *(gestural moment)* The work, the rest of our lives -- that's our puzzle.

Margaret: You've got more of both right now -- more work, more life. It wears on you, I can see that.

Emerson: Sometimes.

Margaret: You could retire early and paint gardens.

Emerson: Ha!

Lull.

Margaret: You could come visit me. See my next shitty apartment.

Emerson: I'll bring a cactus.

Ralph starts to collect and put away a couple things.

Margaret: Ralph...

Emerson: What?

Margaret: *(silence)*

Emerson: *(to lift Margaret and himself)* A part of the talk for Worcester I haven't sorted. I'm talking about Beauty -- things I've been saying, Margaret. But people aren't getting it, and I

mean “getting it,” that Beauty is intrinsic to us all, it’s our essential Nature. That once embrace it, you carry it with you.

Margaret: Like in your pocket?

Emerson: It’s in you, too. It’s both. It was always in you, but now you are...awake to it. And once we are awake? We can imagine a world, flourishing! The garden is there: sunflowers and fruit trees and rivers. But we don’t walk in.

Margaret: What’s holding us back?

Emerson: People don’t really believe the garden is ours to tend to, to enjoy. People don’t really believe they can find, *make* beauty if they want to...

Margaret: *Want* to?

Emerson: Want to and know how. Know how to...

Margaret: [...extract it. Oh.

Emerson: ...abstract it. Make it abstract.]

Beat.

Emerson: I need a story, an analogy, to make it less...

Margaret: [...abstract?

Emerson: highfalutin.] To bring it back down, to earth.

Margaret is quiet for a moment. Thinking face.

Emerson: It’s a hard one. I should just say, “Hey, Beauty ain’t highfalutin. It’s right here in Worcester.”

Margaret: Do you address the idea that some things in life are just never beautiful, never will be? I mean, do you believe there’s always beauty to be found—

Emerson: —and made—

Margaret: —alright, made—under any circumstance?

Emerson: I think there’s Beauty under any circumstance.

Margaret: I know you aspire to it. But do you really believe that?

Emerson: Yes... *(pause)* But you don't.

Margaret: *(with smile)* No!

Emerson: Can you think of a moment... without any Beauty in it?

Margaret: Yes.

Emerson: When?

Margaret: There's abject misery everywhere. Where do I start? Ok, ok. This girl I babysit for, Francesca, she's 8 now. Last summer she went to sleep-away camp. Two weeks. I remember, she was so nervous to go. It was her first time away from her parents. Finally, it's time to go home. She steps off the bus with all her friends. One by one, they get picked up by their parents. More and more time goes by. And she's sitting on her duffel bag, waiting. She's the last one. Her mom...[died in a car crash...

Emerson: *(quietly)* Died in a car accident.]

Margaret: You remember that? *(Ralph nods)* On her way to pick her up. That waiting. That trust. And for what? What can you make out of that, Ralph? I mean, I'd like to think you could make something, make Beauty—we can hope, I guess. I just think it's...naive. Or selective.

Emerson: Selective?

Margaret: *(sidestepping)* Right now I can think of hundreds of objectively ugly, horrible things. It's selective not to consider them. What a privilege to see Beauty everywhere!

Emerson: I do consider them. But it's more than seeing. It's what you choose to look at. What's going on in your head when you're looking.

Margaret: Francesca. Sitting on her duffel bag. Waiting.

Emerson: Your heart goes out to her.

Margaret: Yes.

Emerson: Because?

She gives him a "isn't it obvious?" look.

Emerson: Because she's stuck. She's in limbo, no clear way out, alone. Or, she appears to be.

Margaret: She is alone.

Emerson: Not when you're holding her -- in your head, night and day, keeping her company.

Margaret: I think she'd rather have her Mother, Ralph.

Emerson: You've put this girl into words. Her plight. You've offered her up. The poorest, most pitiful stuff in Nature, *and* the least beautiful—the corpse, worms at work in the corpse—

Margaret: Oh come off it...

Emerson: But we have to tend to it! Beauty is accessible ... everywhere. It's in that balloon, this blanket, in your own handwriting. You said it yourself, it's every move we make -- or fail to make: to wait, to trust, to drive, to pick up...We just have to Pay Attention.

Margaret: But Ralph, not all of us can afford to pay attention. To find or make the Beauty you describe. *(Fire:)* *That's* a privilege, to stand back and...*(she can't finish, it's too hard)* I'm tumbling, Ralph...Why are the authors of Beauty so rarely the same people who are sitting on their duffel bags, dying for the lack of it?

Emerson: Yes. This is what's so tough! We can't seem to put faith in the broad lens, the wide shot that shows how much Beauty serves us all -- all the time. Instead, we tend to collect close up after close up. That moment, that action...

Margaret: But people who are just trying to survive—I don't know if you know what this is like—they can only see what's in front of them. They only get the tight shot.

Emerson: It's a master shot on an infinite reel...No. Not right. Beauty is not mechanical, it's...chemical. It's inside of us. It's relational -- the eye, the image, internalized. We are Beauty. We are the projector.

Margaret: The projector?

Emerson: No, the film, we develop...

Margaret: *(teasing)* Put that in your graduation speech. You're all Beauty!

Emerson: If we could understand that, then...

Margaret: I don't know, Ralph, there are many times where I don't feel Beauty inside myself. Are you saying it's there and I just don't know it? What does it matter if I haven't found it?

Emerson: It matters.

Margaret: Maybe Beauty isn't the goal. Maybe it's just Truth. Seeing things for what they are, regardless of their Beauty.

Emerson: No. Truth and Beauty must stand together -- move together. Truth is thirsty; it absorbs the rain; it roots; it ramifies; it lays out a picnic with one hand and sweeps it away with the other. Truth needs Beauty's warmth.

And how do we hold on to it? We can't! Ralph -- paint it fast, don't let the paint dry.

Margaret: *(laughs)* Oh, Ralph, I miss this! Teaching is squeezing the juice out of me. I'm dried up.

Emerson: *Busy writing down notes, he checks in with her. Smiles.*

Emerson: Last thing! The girl waits for her mother to pick her up: collision, death, tragedy, yes. Ugliness, possibly. These things happen. The girl waiting for her mother to pick her up, waiting forever even: *(for Margaret, too)* but Beauty doesn't grow weary in this moment -- in the girl, in her mother, in you, in us. Beauty doesn't cease, its laws are not suspended. They are constants, and constantly changing. *(Trailing off as he writes)* Immutable and in perpetual motion.

Emerson makes a few final furious notes.

Margaret: *(smiling, half joking, as if it's a challenge)* I can think of even more horrible things. *(Emerson looks up)* When Beauty's suspended—even if just for a moment.

Bit.

Emerson shifts to focus on Margaret's dilemma.

Emerson: You can. *(pause)* I don't think you're dried up, M. I think you're divided.

Margaret: What do you mean, divided?

Emerson: You aren't all together -- in one place.

Margaret: What do you think? Of me leaving?

Emerson: It doesn't matter what I think. What do you think?

Margaret: (*chuckles, this is absurd*) Of course it matters what you think. I can think what I think any time. This is my time with you. I'm asking you. I'm actually asking.

He doesn't say anything.

Margaret: Do you think I should leave?

Emerson: When you think about it, it isn't even a matter of thinking; that's what I think.

Margaret: (*under her breath*) Oh my god.

Emerson: (*looks at Margaret*)

Margaret: Can you just meet me down here for one minute? (*pounds the ground*) My god, you're like that balloon over there. Without the string, you'd float away.

Emerson: (*clears his throat*) You're angry.

Margaret: I am angry.

(breath)

Emerson: (*holding on*) You could stay. We have fifteen species of bumblebee. They don't form huge colonies like honeybees -- they have little nests underground. They don't swarm, too solitary. But they do leave traces of themselves -- some kind of scent. Then again, the summers are short.

(directly to Margaret) It may not seem like it now, Margaret. But before long your hearth, your hearth will be crowded -- people, ideas, conversation, you'll barely know what to do with yourself. *(breath)* Margaret, the Everything you seek must come from you.

A moment.

Margaret: Maybe I want more than there is. Out of everything.

Emerson: (*thinking*) Everything...(*admitting*) Everything. It's in you, Margaret. Trust me -- whether you're here, or New York or DC.

Bit.

Margaret: (*nods*) This is a good birthday. I've got a lot to think about.

Emerson: *(Emerson looks to the balloon, then back to Margaret)* You do.

(shifting focus)

Emerson: Right. *(He reaches in the bag for a lighter, pulling out one of those long-ass clicker lighters for bar-b-q's)*

Margaret: [Yum!

Emerson: Yum.]

Margaret holds the cupcakes -- Ralph with lighter, first two clicks don't work, but third does. They look at the cupcakes, at each other sometimes. There is a space here -- there won't be any singing or wishing, and they both know that. It's something else.

Emerson: *(candles still lit, checks watch)* I have to [...to go.

Margaret: You have to go.]

Ralph hands his cupcake to M., and gathers what needs to be gathered. He pauses and looks at Margaret once more.

He heads out.

Margaret cleans and packs everything up. The space they held is now empty, just as it started. With her big bag and picnic basket, she walks away.