

# Next October

By Greg Lam

*SCENE: Pete and Gina sit on a couch, intently watching a TV. Gina has her legs over Pete's lap. They are relatively young single people wearing Red Sox gear. Their faces are contorted with a mix of concentration, consternation, and tension.*

Pete: Not the curveball again. Throw the fastball. The fastball.

Gina: He's losing it.

*Pete calls offstage.*

Pete: Heather! Get your butt in here.

Heather: (*offstage*) Just a second.

Pete: No just a second. We need you.

Heather: (*offstage*) Just a second.

Gina: She can't not be here for this.

Pete: She's doing girl stuff.

Gina: Are you friggin' kidding me?

Pete: That's what she said.

Gina: This is game seven of the World Series. Girl stuff can wait.

Pete: You tell her.

Gina: Heather! If you don't get your ass in here now I'll drag it in for you.

*Heather Enters.*

Heather: Did someone score or something?

Pete: Not yet.

Heather: Then why'd you drag me in here? A girl can't take a friggin' pee break without getting static?

Pete: Not during the playoffs.

*Heather starts to sit on the couch next to Pete and Gina.*

Gina: No no no no! You can't sit there.

Heather: What?

Gina: You got to sit in that chair.

Heather: Why?

Pete: Cause that's where you were sitting when the Sox scored three runs in the fourth.

Gina: AND when Pedro got out of that jam in the sixth. You can't move.

Heather: Fine.

Pete: *(toTV)* Christ. You can't pitch to this guy.

Gina: He hasn't had a hit all series.

Pete: That's just it. He's due to get a hit because he hasn't had a hit all series.

Gina: You're right.

*Heather start to get up.*

Heather: Anyone want a beer?

Pete: What are you doing?

Gina: You don't get up during the most crucial moment of the game.

Heather: Why not?

Pete: It pisses off the baseball gods big time. That's why not. Please, just sit down and watch the game.

Heather: You know what, Pete? I don't even like sports that much.

Pete: But you can't just change up the mojo. The vibe. Not when we're this close, alright? You were here when we won game five and game six so you gotta be here now.

Heather: It's funny. You two swear up and down there's no curse on the team.

Gina: No such thing.

Pete: A stupid invention of lazy, hack sportswriters.

Heather: Right. But you go through contortions because you think it might affect the game.

Gina: *(To Pete)* Does she have to be here?

Heather: It's funny, that's all. I mean, you don't go to a play thinking that you have to wear your lucky theater hat or else the actors will suck. And you don't sit in a special seat at a movie theater to cause a better movie to come on screen. But you guys have to be in the same seats in the exact same position wearing the exact same clothing for God's sake, or else a game being played miles away will change.

Pete: Listen, alright? It's not that I do believe it... but if I don't do something that I always do and they lose when they won before when I did something different, then I'll always wonder if they would've won if I did it like I did it before and not different. See?

Heather: Well, when you put it that way it makes perfect sense.

Gina: Like last year. I didn't have on my lucky game seven sweatshirt on and they lost.

Heather: I thought you said they lost because the manager was an idiot.

Gina: He was. AND I didn't have my sweatshirt on.

Heather: This just seems silly, is all.

Gina: Listen, Heather. This is like chaos theory and stuff.

Heather: What?

Gina: You know that thing where if a butterfly is flapping his wings in China. That'll cause ripples in the wind that'll reverberate on a global scale and eventually go on to affect events in Europe?

Heather: OK.

Gina: Well that's what this is. If we are not at our predestined places in these times of greatness, we'll create a small rift in the space/time web of fan destiny. And the wind will be blowing out instead of in and a fly ball out becomes a cheap home run which will scar another generation of Red Sox fans for years to come.

Pete: It's like that thing with all those scientists. What am I thinking about?

Gina: Sub-atomic particles?

Pete: Right. How you can't measure them without changing the results?

Heather: You guys are insane.

Gina: Excuse us for caring about sports.

Heather: Caring is one thing. Wearing the same T-shirt for three weeks because it's "lucky" is another thing. Ordering the same burrito for dinner for 10 days straight is another thing. Having your ex-girlfriend perched on your lap for game seven is a whole 'nother thing.

Pete: I explained that to you.

Heather: I know.

Pete: She was here, on this couch, on my lap, when the Sox beat Cleveland in 2000. And when the Celtics beat the Sixers and the Pistons in 2002. And when the Pats friggin' won it all that year. So ex-girlfriend or not, she's gotta be here.

Heather: But wasn't she here all the times when they didn't win it, too?

Gina: Now just a-

Pete: Hold it!

*They all look at the TV screen intently.*

Pete: Aw, crap.

Gina: Catch it, catch it-

Pete: C'mon, Trot.

*They wait.*

Pete: Dammit.

Gina: Tie game.

Heather: Bummer.

Pete: Here he comes. They're going to the bullpen.

Gina: See, this wouldn't have happened if you weren't yapping.

Heather: Fine, I'll leave then.

Pete: No. Don't go. The last time you weren't here they lost by six runs.

Heather: I don't believe this.

Pete: C'mon. Just a few more innings.

Heather: That's what you said a week ago. They played 17 innings.

Gina: Maybe we need a different arrangement. Here. I'll sit over there and you sit here.

Heather: What?

Gina: Just do it.

*Gina trades places with Heather. Pete puts his arm around Heather. Heather settles in. Gina takes off her baseball cap.*

Gina: Here, wear this. But do something funny with this.

Heather: What?

Gina: Wear it funny. It's called a rally cap.

*Heather puts it on backwards.*

Gina: Funnier. It needs to be funnier. Here.

*Gina takes the cap, turns it inside out, then puts it on Heather's head, crooked.*

Pete: Do you think this will work?

Gina: Well, we had to do something, right?

Heather: I'll be so glad when this is over.

Pete: Don't say that.

Gina: Hey Pete, why are you going out with this chick if she's gonna be like this?

Heather: Excuse me?

Pete: She wasn't this bad until now. I think it's the not changing my clothes during the playoffs that's getting to her.

Heather: Wouldn't it get to you, too?

Gina: No. Listen. When we went out together, if one of our teams was making a run, we did everything we could to get them to the next level. I'm sorry, Pete. She doesn't have the commitment to hang with you.

Heather: You're insane.

Pete: Quiet.

Heather: Pete.

Pete: Just watch the game.

Heather: You're gonna let her talk to me like this? Your ex-girlfriend? I think I've been pretty understanding on this ex-girlfriend situation, even though it's kind of weird, but now she's talking smack at me and I have to take it?

Pete: Can it wait until after the game?

Heather: Y'know what? It can't.

*Heather grabs the remote control, turns the TV off.*

Pete: Hey!

Gina: What are you doing-

Heather: Just listen to me. I mean, do you really think that we can affect the outcome of the game by what we do? Really? I really am trying to work with this obsession of yours, Pete, but there's a limit. We can't arrange our entire lives around the activities of 25 guys we don't know on TV. I mean, you should go back to dating Gina if you're really like that. Weren't you two together when the Patriots won the Super Bowl?

*Pete and Gina look ashamedly at each other, then away.*

Heather: What? What? What is that look about?

Pete: I know you were probably kidding, but Gina and I can't date each other anymore.

Heather: What do you mean you can't?

Pete: I never told you this, but we broke up last year because the home teams kept losing whenever we went to the games.

Heather: You're kidding. Tell me he's kidding.

Gina: It all started with the Patriots. They lost all the games we went last year and won all the ones we didn't go to. Every one. Then the Celtics lost on back to back nights to really crappy teams. Then we tried some Bruins games, and though two of those were overtime losses and they technically got a point in the standings, it was still a loss. And then... last year's Sox-Yankees series showed us that our love... our love was not meant to be.

Pete: It's OK.

*They hug. Gina cries on Pete's shoulder.*

Heather: You're serious. Whenever I asked about you guys breaking up, Pete just said it was too painful to talk about.

Pete: It was too painful. It was fifteen straight losses. We got so desperate... We went to pro soccer games.

Gina: And they still lost!

Pete: We knew the gods of sports were demanding that we make this sacrifice to appease them, so that our teams might flourish once more. And so we broke up. She kept the

signed Nomar card. And I kept the foul ball by Lou Merloni I caught last August when they beat the Devil Rays 5 to 2 and Varitek hit two homers.

Heather: I give up. I am not going to win this one. Here.

*She hands the remote back to Pete. He turns the TV back on.*

Gina: I can't look.

Pete: We're batting, baby, but we're down by one.

Heather: Although, there might be a way to change things on a cosmic scale.

Pete: How would we do that?

Heather: So this team hasn't won it all in your lifetime, right?

Pete: Right.

Heather: And every year you watch and they break your heart, right?

Pete: Right.

Heather: So, maybe the way to get them to win is not to watch them at all.

*Pete and Gina slowly absorb this idea.*

Pete: That's... that's...

Gina: We can't do that-

Pete: That's brilliant.

Gina: What!

Pete: She's right. Every year we watch them and every year they come up short. Maybe the baseball gods were telling us something, Gina. Not that we should break up. That we should make the ultimate sacrifice... and not watch them play.

Gina: No... No...

*Pete shuts off the TV.*

Pete: Yes. It's the only thing we haven't tried. It's the only way.

Gina: I can't do this-

Pete: You have to. We gotta try this. Once. C'mon, sit down, on the couch.

*They sit in silence.*

Gina: This is so weird.

Pete: Yeah... Weird, but good. Good weird.

Gina: *(To Heather)* If this doesn't work-

Pete: If this doesn't work, it'll just be like all the other years. Don't blame Heather. We have to try this.

Heather: Maybe we could read. Or talk about stuff.

Gina: This is eating away at my soul. Somewhere out there. People know what's happening. Either they got a hit or a walk, or they didn't. And everyone in the world knows but us. Because... why?

Pete: But we are a part of it. The spirit of the team is flowing through us in this room flowing out of this window and cascading with the spirits of all the other true believers, then shooting across the night sky to a ballpark many miles away, so that it will guide Nomar's bat to hit that damn ball over the wall and bring it all home to us.

Heather: Or not. It is just a theory.

Pete: If this works, Heather. I'm going to marry you.

Heather: Whoa whoa whoa. If we ever get married maybe it should be because we, you know, decide we love each other and stuff? Not because the Sox win the World Series? Because they probably won't win every year?

Pete: We'll talk about it later.

Gina: I can't stand this. I can't stand this.

Pete: Gina it's OK. Just-

*Gina and Pete suddenly look up, stare out with wide eyes.*

Gina: Did you feel that?

Pete: Yeah. It felt good. Real good.

Gina: Oh my god.

Heather: What? What?

Gina: Deep. Right field.

Pete: Ortiz. Definitely feels like Ortiz.

Heather: What the hell are you two-

Pete: Fair? Is it fair?

Gina: There was a man on, Pete. I can feel it.

Pete: It's... It's...

Gina and Pete: Fair! It's a home run. Oh my god, it's a homer!

*Gina and Pete hug and roll on the ground. Heather turns on the TV.*

TV: ...two-run homer by David Ortiz and the Red Sox have taken back the lead. Unbelievable...

*Heather hugs herself, chilled, and sits on the couch, watching.*

THE END