

BETSY, a pregnant woman near 40, stands on a balcony of her third-floor apartment in New York City. She is watching the city move below her. A delicate, warm smile flirts with the corners of her mouth. Suddenly, her face changes. She reaches down to her belly, presses her hand firmly against it, doubles over and collapses to the floor.

A swarm of bubbles floats up from below, circling and bobbing around her body. From the second-floor balcony, a LITTLE GIRL twirls around, giggles, dips her wand into the bottle again and blows. The escaping flurry of bubbles gets caught in a gush of wind and drifts playfully down to the street.

They dissolve into the air, one by one. The last standing bubble twitters down toward the ground, bursting on the tip of a clear umbrella which has just unfurled to the soft beginnings of a downpour. As the sky opens, so do more umbrellas, until the street becomes nothing but a mass of pulsing, waterproof black and brown - an intoxicating rain dance. The lone clear umbrella turns a corner, it's PLATINUM BLONDE OWNER making her way to the entrance of a neighborhood coffee shop. As she reaches for the handle of the door, it swings open.

DAVE, a ruddy, bearded construction worker, steps out wielding three coffees. He curses at the rain then notices the blonde, who ignores him as he holds the door open for her. He follows her in with his gaze, then joins his BUDDY who has been holding a soaked newspaper over his head. His buddy throws the newspaper in a trash can and takes two of the coffees. The men hurry off to a construction zone, where the buddy hands off one of the coffees to MIKE, a scruffy, white-haired man in his 60s. Dave makes his way to a forklift parked partially in the street.

A CABBIE attempts to inch by the forklift, unsuccessfully. He raises his hand out the window at Dave, who dismissively waves him off. The cabbie backs up, shoves the gearshift into drive, jerks the car up on the curb and passes him, cursing the whole way. He speeds to the corner where he drops off CHARLIE, a bushy-tailed new city habitant, suitcases packed with a slow, sweet history of the South. Charlie pays the cabbie, steps up on the sidewalk and into the bustling street traffic. CHEYENNE, a dog walker flanked with an army of small dogs, advances toward him. She's on a vehement, dog-walking mission. Charlie attempts to get out of her way but not before the walker shakes her head at his pedestrian incompetence.

Cheyenne continues on, one of the miniature dogs taking a quick pee on a blue recycle bag filled to the brim with name-brand plastic. It's suddenly whisked away by R.J., a heavysset man wearing a city uniform and a pair of dirty latex gloves.

He launches the bag into the recycle truck, grabs the handle at the back and struggles to pull himself up. As the vehicle lurches away, the DRIVER takes his last angry pull at a cigarette and flicks it out the window.

The cigarette lands on a bundle of Daily News papers and is quickly wiped away by the NEWSSTAND WORKER, who yells after the driver. He cuts the band on the bundle just as a WELL-TO-DO WOMAN approaches and empties a fistful of pennies into his hand. She takes a paper and walks on, snapping the paper open to the center where a picture of a FAMOUS ACTOR smiles back at her with a set of bleach-white teeth. She turns the page as the same actor passes her on the street, smiling the same perfect smile, a spring in his celebrity step. Ahead of him is a NANCY, a 4-foot 8-inch ball of unadulterated energy. She carries a sack of single red roses wrapped in cellophane, handing them out to whomever will take them. The actor reaches over her and swipes a rose, skips his way ahead of the crowd until he reaches a gathering of onlookers watching STREET DANCERS prepare for their next trick. The actor offers the rose to the LEAD DANCER, who takes it and lifts it into the air as the crowd cheers.

The lead dancer places the rose between his teeth, inhales deeply and breaks into a sprint toward a line of other dancers crouched on the ground. He launches over them, rolls into a somersault mid-air, lands, then continues into a set of handsprings until he reaches the edge of the crowd. He stops suddenly, removes the still-in-tact rose from his teeth, bends down and hands it to a GABRIEL, a strikingly beautiful child of about 5, who takes it shyly with a little urging from his MOTHER, a frail, apologetic woman in her 20s.

His mother picks him up and whisks him away, a look of uncertainty and fear on her face. She glances around then heads for a nearby subway station. As she passes a POLICE OFFICER, she lowers her head and scurries down the stairs toward the train.

The police officer eyes her carefully, then gets a radio call that takes him from his post and toward the farmer's market, which is bubbling over with people on what is now a clear, pristine afternoon. The officer approaches a VENDOR, who is crouched next to a HOMELESS MAN passed out on the sidewalk. Even in his unconsciousness, he holds on tightly to his worn, overstuffed bag. The officer tries to wake him up as ONLOOKERS step over the man so they can get in line for a free cup of homemade apple cider.

A CUSTOMER, dark-skinned and handsome, smiles back at the GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER, nods and makes his way through the market and across the street, where a FLIER DISTRIBUTOR forces a flier into his hands.

The distributor mouths quick, repetitive words as he continues to force wasted paper into the hands of STRANGERS. Most of them pretend he isn't there; one BLEEDING HEART, a young and thoughtful woman in her 60s with eyes the color of dust, takes the bait even though she knows it's bait. But is it?

She looks down at the flier in their hand. It reads: "FREE RICKSHAW RIDE." She looks up and over toward a band of pedicab drivers and heads over to them. She hands them the flier and climbs into one of the carriages. The pedicab driver scans the traffic, pulls into a lane and speeds off. The passenger watches the city pass, a quiet smile lingering on her like a familiar scent, a soft wind enveloping her like a silken cloak. She gestures for the driver to pull over as she notices something in the distance. The driver heeds her request. The passenger tips him, steps out of the carriage and wanders over to a MUSICIAN who is beginning to draw a small crowd.

The musician is surrounded by an intricate drum set. His fingers are taped tight and hard. He pounds his drums with bare hands. Attached to his left leg is a shaker. He lifts and drops his leg to keep up with his own intense rhythm. JAY AND CHARLOTTE, a young couple walking arm-in-arm, watch him play as they pass. They lean down and throw a dollar bill in his jar. The musician nods his approval, never missing a drumbeat, as the couple rounds a corner and heads into the park.

The couple comes upon a GAGGLE OF TEEN-AGED GIRLS, who excitedly gather for a group photograph. The posing girls motion for their friend, the FLEDGLING PHOTOGRAPHER, to get the couple to take the picture for her. Charlotte agrees to take the picture, Jay stuck to her side even as she sets up the shot. The fledgling photographer runs over to the group and they all welcome her with dramatic hugs. They pose. The shutter clicks. The group breaks. The fledgling photographer trots back to Charlotte, thanks her and takes back her camera. The couple moves on as the teen-agers exit the park and head over to a huge statue encased in a fountain. Some walk ahead but the fledgling photographer lags behind, marveling at the immensity of the monument. She frames up the picture. Click.

In the forefront is an ARTIST dabbing the last few touches to the statue in a painting. The artist contemplates the teen-ager, remembers something specific from when he was that age, and continues with his work, as does the ARTIST NEXT TO HIM and the ARTIST NEXT TO HER and so on. A whole line of PAINTERS is working diligently on their own version of the statue. Their PROFESSOR, an aging overachiever, weaves in and out of each painter, looking, judging, moving, notating, moving again.

As she comes to the LAST PAINTER, she cocks her head, scribbles a few notes, nods to herself, moves on. The last painter fixates on a tiny portion of the painting: A STREET PERFORMER painted in metallic silver. Beyond the canvas, in the far distance, is the same street performer standing still as concrete.

Onlookers stop and watch as the performer continues to make no movement. They laugh and point. A KID IN A BASKETBALL JERSEY approaches the performer and holds up box of chocolate bars. Suddenly, the performer moves in robotic spurts, reaching into his cardboard box of tips. He produces a dollar bill for the kid, who shakes his head, laughs, pockets the money and hands over a chocolate bar. The performer takes the candy but seems to run out of power as he jerks and shudders his way back to stillness. The candy bar dangles invitingly from his metallic hand. The kid jogs off to join his TEAMMATE, who has just finished up his own sale. They run up to an outdoor coffee/food stand and order two sodas.

The STORE MANAGER, a young Spanish girl not quite 20, hands over two soda bottles with straws and winks at her two young customers. As they run off, the manager invites the next person in line to order.

EDWARD, a slight man with an acute, severe face, buys a bottled water. He hurries through the transaction, rushes away and darts across the street. TWO PEDESTRIANS pass him reading pamphlets, discussing something serious. He continues on, rounds the corner and joins ANTONIO, a less serious version of Edward, who hands him a sign that says "TREASON." The two men become the crowd; the crowd shifts into the street, stopping traffic. Over the mass of picketers, on the other end of the protest, a scuffle begins. It spreads, spiraling quickly out of control.

JOCELYN, an unbreakable woman in her 30s, is delivered from the chaos with a bloody nose. Her hand covers her face but blood creeps through her fingers. DIANE, a middle-aged New York native, stops to help her. She takes her arm to lead her into safety but Jocelyn gently pulls away. ANOTHER HELPER appears, but both are unsure whether to help or leave her alone. ALEXEI, a Russian shopkeeper, comes out of his store with a towel wrapped around some ice, takes the woman's hand from her face and gently applies the towel. Jocelyn hesitates. Finally, she submits.

DIANE slowly falls back into street traffic. Every now and then, she glances back at JOCELYN and the frenzied crowd, which has begun to break up under the rule of police. She quickens her step, still looking over her shoulder. Suddenly, JONATHAN, 30s, dressed in a tailored, expensive suit, runs into her from behind.

He turns back, apologetic, but continues to run ahead as fast as he can. He turns the corner and keeps running, desperate for something, panicked. He crosses a street without waiting for the walk sign. Cars and cabs break quickly, one swerves to miss him. In the distance ahead of him, the lights of an ambulance roll and flash over the neighborhood where, minutes ago, a pregnant woman named Betsy collapsed. Jonathan digs in his pocket for keys, finds them and shoves them into the door of his apartment building. On the balcony above, several EMTs huddle around Betsy. They are counting 1, 2, 3, before lifting her onto a stretcher. As they do, Jonathan arrives on the balcony, reaching for his wife.

A FLOCK OF PIGEONS is frightened from the commotion. They flap madly to make it up to the roof, where they land, quivering, unsettled. They wander over to the other side of the building, away from the danger of noise and huddle, shaking out the last of their fragile nerves. As their heartbeats slow, their eyes dart over the pulsating sea of buildings, lights, traffic and people below them - the endless, beckoning beast of perpetual motion.