

Maggie's Movies - Second Shot

By Sarah E. Daniels
sarah@soyoused.com

WRITING SAMPLE

Genre: Drama

Format: Time Management Story Game

Demographic: Adult Women

SET-UP

Maggie Welles is back on the set! She's optimistic until she discovers her new movie deal comes with a lot of strings attached. Forced to accept the help of a Hollywood has-been, Maggie must navigate a tumultuous sea of frail egos - including her own. In this story about the complicated bond between fathers and daughters, Maggie takes us on a personal journey to define what it truly means to be a success. In the end, will Maggie prove she has what it takes to survive her second shot at fame?

The story centers around four characters: Maggie and her estranged father, David, and Javier and his estranged daughter, Izzy. On the surface, Maggie, Javier and David are all successful adults. The world is at their feet, and they make no apologies for who they are or what they want. Beneath the confidence and bravado, we discover each character is driven by personal demons obvious and otherwise.

EXCERPTS

(establishes the baseline dynamic between Javier and Maggie)

It's late at night and Maggie is walking to her trailer. She has her arms full of scripts and notes. She's talking to herself regarding the next stage of filming.

MAGGIE

Let me see...We need to get all the costumes packed and loaded first thing.

MAGGIE

Oh, and we need to be sure to pull down the rigging in the morning.

MAGGIE

And the ship needs to be broken down and stored for next month.

Maggie stops in her tracks.

MAGGIE

A live action pirate movie. In this day and age.

MAGGIE

(throws her hands up)

What was I thinking?

Maggie hangs her head in disbelief, then resume her trek.

She reaches the door to her trailer and hears a commotion behind her.

Javier is lurching through the shadows drunk as a skunk. He has a flirtatious waitress on his arm. They pause at the door to his trailer across the lot from Maggie's.

WAITRESS

(giggles)

Oh wow. I've never been on a movie set before.

JAIIVER

You still haven't, sweetheart. This is the lot. Now where's my key?

Javier fumbles with his key. Drops it. Bends over to pick it up and falls on his butt. The waitress giggles.

MAGGIE

You're late.

Javier looks at her through his groggy mind.

JAVIER

Maybe I'm early. Who's to say?

MAGGIE
(annoyed)

I am. You're late. We wrapped up the set today.

JAVIER

Well, then. Congratulations.

Maggie walks closer, clenching her jaw against her thoughts.

MAGGIE

Look at you. Don't you take any pride in your work?.

Javier eyes her slyly from his prone position, an arm draped casually over his knee.

JAVIER

Pride, huh? You know what they say about pride?

The waitress helps Javier to his feet. He makes sure he has his key. He pokes at the lock on his door, but keeps talking to Maggie.

JAVIER

Pride comes before the fall.

His door finally opens. Javier holds out his hand to the waitress.

She takes his hand, winks at Maggie, and saunters into the trailer.

Javier follows her. He pauses in the doorway to look back at Maggie one last time.

JAVIER

It's a good lesson to remember.

Javier closes the door. Maggie stands outside and fumes impotently, then turns back toward her trailer.

MAGGIE
(mutters under her breath)

Sure. He's the indispensable one.

(This scene establishes the tension between Maggie and Javier on the set and illustrates the depth of his alcoholism.)

Javier is sitting a little straighter in the chair. Maggie nods to Jack, but keeps her eyes on Javier.

MAGGIE

Let's break for lunch.

Jack follows her gaze while he addresses the room.

JACK

Back in 30. Clear the set, people.

Everyone leaves the set except Maggie and Javier. Javier tries to stand up from his chair, but Maggie puts her hand against his shoulder, and he stumbles back into a hard sit.

JAVIER
(belligerent)

Why so pushy? I gotta go.

Javier tries to stand up again, but Maggie easily pushes him back down. She stands over him; he squints up at her as though the lights hurt his eyes.

MAGGIE

We need to talk.

JAVIER

You sound like my ex-wife. Emphasis on Ex.
Now let me up.

Javier tries to stand again, but Maggie keeps her hand on his shoulder.

Javier loses his patience. He pushes away Maggie's hand and stands, crowding her so she has to take a step back.

JAVIER

Get off me.

Javier and Maggie stare angrily into each other's eyes for a beat. Maggie folds her arms. Javier folds his arms.

JAVIER

Fine. You want to talk? What do you want to talk about?

Maggie takes a breath and collects herself.

She's searching the heavens and the back of her mind for the right words. Maggie unfolds her arms and gestures.

MAGGIE

I... I may have been a little harsh yesterday. I'm... I'm sorry for that.

MAGGIE

But it's not an excuse for you to get plastered.

Javier's offense sobers him up a notch. He points at Maggie.

JAVIER

Get over yourself, Sunshine.

JAVIER

What? You think one little crack from you can push me over the edge?

He sneers at her, but Maggie stands firm.

Javier takes a step away from her, toward the exit, but stops and looks directly at Maggie. He leans forward a bit as he says his line driving home the point.

JAVIER

Do me a favor. Don't project your daddy issues onto me.

Shock and anger wash across Maggie's face. She folds her arms and takes a step back, glaring at Javier.

MAGGIE

Don't show up drunk on my set again.

JAVIER

Or what?

MAGGIE

Do it, and you'll find out.

Javier storms off the set. Maggie fumes.

(This scene illustrates the depth of Javier's guilt and remorse around his relationship with his daughter - unhealthy and emotionally stunted as it may be.)

Al is outside Javier's trailer. He has a bounce in his step. He walks up the stairs and knocks on the door.

AL

Alllooo. Anybody home?

No answer. Al knocks again. He puts his hand on the knob to open it and talks through the door.

AL

Javier? Buddy? You in there?

Al cracks the door open, as Javier comes stumbling around from behind the trailer. He's fall-down drunk. He has a bottle in one hand and the stuffed kitten [he bought for his daughter] tucked under his arm.

Javier sings sloppily.

JAVIER

So it's your birthday... da... da... da... da... dada...

Al is taken aback by Javier's appearance.

AL

Javier... Jeez. You're a mess.

Javier looks up, sees Al, and as slow recognition dawns across his face, he raises the bottle in offering. Javier loses his balance and falls back against the trailer. Now that he's leaning he decides it's easier to slide to the ground than stand up.

Javier slides to the ground. The bottle is still in one hand. The kitten is now in his lap.

Javier sings.

JAVIER

...and it's birthday to you... da... da... da...
da... dada...

Al stands over Javier with an open expression of concern.

AL

Javier. Come on. We gotta get you inside
before anyone sees you like this.

Javier barks out an angry laugh.

JAVIER

Let them see.

Al grabs the kitten then Javier's hand. He leans back and tries to get Javier to his feet.

Javier staggers.

JAVIER

Give the people what they want, right Al?

JAVIER

Isn't'hat whatchu alway say?

Javier stands unsteadily. Al puts his arm around Javier.

AL

Awh... Jeez, Javier... Every year...

Javier agrees.

JAVIER

Yup. Ev'ry year. ...Ev'ry 'ear.

Al helps Javier into his trailer.

Javier sings as the door closes behind them.

JAVIER

You know it's your day day... da... da.da..da...
dada...

(Al has surprised Javier with a visit from Izzy [age 12]. Unfortunately, they show up just as things come to a head between Maggie and Javier. After realizing his daughter has witnessed his drunken tirade, Javier flees to his trailer to wallow in self-indulgent despair.)

Javier mills about his trailer. No longer trying to hide his "bad habit," he's pouring liquor out of the bottle into a paper dixie cup. He pours a cup, downs it, then immediately pours another.

JAVIER

(to the cup)

One more for the road.

Javier downs the drink, wipes his mouth with his hand, and sets the cup down.

Javier stares at the cup for a minute, then pours another.

JAVIER

Why not?

Javier shrugs.

JAVIER

I'm sure Maggie was happy to explain all of my shortcomings.

DOOR

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Javier straightens for a shocked moment, then eyes the door with suspicion.

JAVIER

Who's it?

The door opens, and Izzy walks inside. She shuts the door behind her.

Javier puts the cup down, picks it up again, puts it down again. He tries to hide the bottle behind him and fails.

He steps back and sits/falls into a chair.

IZZY

Hi Dad.

Javier manages an awkward reply.

JAVIER

Hi.

FADE OUT:

(...continued from previous level)

FADE IN:

Javier sits where he fell on the couch.

Izzy stands in clutter free patch of space just inside the door. She looks around. The trailer is a mess. Trash, bottles, discarded clothing litter every surface. The only clean areas are where Izzy is standing and the table where a stuffed kitten sits with a new bow tied around its neck.

Izzy is her father's daughter.

IZZY
(with wry amusement)

Nice place.

JAVIER

It's the maid's day off.

Javier lurchingly stands so he may pace awkwardly. Realizing he's closed the gap between them, he glances at Izzy, before turning to pace the other way.

The silence builds for a moment. Izzy a picture of calm curiosity in contrast to her fathers anxious laps.

JAVIER

So... ummm... How you doin', kiddo?

Javier gestures to the chair while trying to walk around Izzy.

JAVIER

Have a seat... How've you been?

Izzy sits on the edge of the chair allowing her hands to find the sides of the seat where she clamps hold for support. She swings her legs a little.

Javier turns to get some distance between them and knocks over the bottle as he goes.

It crashes to the floor and the booze starts pouring out.

They wrestle with mutual embarrassment.

Javier stoops to clean up, sees Izzy's expression, and stops, but then stoops to pick up the bottle.

Javier sets the bottle on the counter across the room to avoid her gaze.

Izzy notices the kitten. She picks it up and fidgets with the bow.

A small ray of hope breaks behind Javier's eyes.

JAVIER

You like it?

IZZY
(shrugs)

It's cute, I guess.

Izzy puts the kitten back down.

IZZY
(shrugs)

I almost never play with stuffed animals any more.

Javier has forgotten how to work his limbs. He flails in an interpretive dance of suppressed despair.

JAVIER

Yeah, right, of course not..."

Javier picks up the kitten.

JAVIER

You're... ummm... what? Twelve now?

Izzy nods mutely.

JAVIER
(shaking the kitten derisively)

Right! You're too cool for kittens.

JAVIER
Probably too cool for your old man, too.

Javier folds his arms, defensively, smashing the kitten against his chest.

He feels too big for the space.

Izzy looks down.

Neither speaks for an interminable beat.

IZZY
(to her shoes)

Maybe I should go...

Izzy stands up to leave.

Javier is finally still.

JAVIER

Go...? Of course, yeah. You should probably go...

Izzy stops in front of the door and looks up at her father.

IZZY

You could... you know... come around sometimes...

Javier's thousand mile stare pierces the floor, but he doesn't meet his daughter's eyes.

JAVIER

Yeah... sure...

Izzy turns away before the first tear can fall and rushes out the door.

Javier is left alone in his trailer defensively clutching the kitten to his chest.

(These are the last scenes in the game. Javier and Izzy have reconciled, but Maggie is having trouble connecting with her father - both literally and figuratively. He arrives late to her movie premiere where he quickly becomes the center of attention due to his acclaim as a photo journalist. After a lot of interruptions, Maggie and David are finally allowed their awkward reunion.)

Maggie and David have found their way back to the general privacy of the lounge.

DAVID

It looks like you've created quite the family for yourself.

Maggie is lost in thought.

MAGGIE

Huh. I guess I have.

MAGGIE

It was a rough time, but we came out the other side, and we're still together.

At this point, Maggie is talking more to herself than her father.

MAGGIE

Besides, it's not like my actual family is ever around.

David can't hide his hurt. The evening of near misses has finally struck home.

DAVID

Look Margaret. If you didn't want me here, why did you invite me?

DAVID

Maybe I should just go.

Maggie succumbs to her own expectations, and snaps.

MAGGIE

There is it. Looking for an excuse to leave already.

MAGGIE

Sure, it's just entertainment. It lacks the prestige of terrorist cells and drone strikes, but some people think I'm pretty great.

David is taken aback.

DAVID

Margaret! You are great.

DAVID

More than great. You're amazing.

DAVID

I mean, how many other people your age who could pull together a project like this.

Maggie remains defensive.

MAGGIE

My age. Sure. Thanks, Dad.

David is sliding into disbelief. Maggie is firmly rooted in self-righteous indignation.

DAVID

What do you want me to say?

DAVID

You mean the world to me, pumpkin. There's nothing I wouldn't do for you.

Maggie sees her opening.

MAGGIE

Except, you know, be around.

MAGGIE

There are plenty of jobs for journalists.

MAGGIE

You don't always have to be in the most dangerous place at the most dangerous time?!

David is speechless.

Maggie, the flood gates open, continues her deluge unchecked.

MAGGIE

What if something happened to you? First, Mom. Then, Grandpa.

Then, just like that, her walls crack and fall away, and they share a mutual epiphany.

MAGGIE

I don't know what'd I'd do if something happened to you.

David tries to meet her where she's arrived.

DAVID

Oh, Maggie. It's my job...

A swing and a miss.

Maggie bursts into tears. David takes her into his arms.

(The last scene of the game. Our main characters are in the empty lobby; the last to leave. They stand on opposite ends of the room engaged in their own conversations.)

The crowd has thinned out.

David and Maggie are in the lounge to the left.

Javier and Izzy are at the VIP table across the room.

The couples are out of earshot of each other.

JAVIER

It's late.
Let's get you home.

IZZY

Sounds good.

MAGGIE

I'm really glad you came.

DAVID

I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Izzy pauses to reconsider.

IZZY

Straight home?

DAVID

Drive you home?

Maggie considers the possibilities.

MAGGIE

That would be great...
although...

JAVIER

What are you thinking?

DAVID

Whatcha thinkin', kiddo?

MAGGIE

Ice cream?

IZZY

Ice cream?

MAGGIE

I know this great place.
They're open late.

JAVIER

Hmmm. A double hot fudge
butterscotch sundae?

DAVID

A double dipped cone with
peanut sprinkles?

MAGGIE

I'm thinking more a hot fudge
sundae with extra whip cream.

DAVID

(playful)

Suit yourself.

IZZY

Can you think of a better way
to celebrate?

JAVIER

I honestly can't.

Maggie faces David. She pats
the lapels of his jacket like
she's brushing off some lint.

Izzy faces Javier. She pats
the lapels of his jacket like
she's brushing off some lint.

Maggie steps up on her toes to
kiss David's cheek.

Javier bends down, and Izzy
kisses his cheek

The couples turn to walk toward the exit and merge together.

Izzy and David exit first.

Javier makes a "go ahead motion to Maggie."

MAGGIE
(with genuine warmth)

Good night, Javier.

Maggie exits.

Javier watches her go with a crooked smile.

JAVIER

Good night, Sunshine.

Javier exits.

FADE OUT: