

The Interview  
Part Two, Maddie  
By Marcia Gloster



*I Love You Today is the story of Maddie Samuels, who arrives in New York in the summer of 1964 with dreams. Dreams she has already been warned might be unattainable. Ever optimistic but naïve, she meets challenges she never expected in her efforts to avoid becoming just another secretary and to find the job she really wants. And while hoping she'll meet some cool guys, she's surprised that the heretofore respectable young men she dated while living at home have suddenly developed drastically different viewpoints, particularly when it comes to working girls living alone in the big city.*

*Rob McLeod on the other hand is a brash and confident art director who is convinced he can bend the world of advertising, especially the female part of it, to his will.*

*This is the second prequel in a series of three in which Maddie and Rob will meet for the first time. Although this isn't her first job, she is still somewhat reticent, aware of her place as a woman in a man's world. And yet, of all the interviews she's had, she is hardly prepared for the self-assured and seductive Rob McLeod, a man who in a moment will change the course of both of their lives. These prequels were a lot of fun to write and afforded me a chance to give the reader a sense of the characters and a bit of their history. And while a story set in the era of the sixties may be history, it nevertheless rings true today.*



Maddie stepped out of the elevator and looked down the hallway. At the far end, she saw a wide glass door with the *Status Magazine* logo. As she walked toward it, she smoothed her hair, took a breath, and reminded herself to be cool; this was an important interview. Forcing a smile, she pushed the door open and approached the reception desk. After telling the gum-cracking, kohl-eyed receptionist she had an appointment with Mr. McLeod, the art director, the girl sighed and told her to have a seat; Mr. McLeod might be a few minutes. Wondering if he made all his appointments wait, Maddie sat down on the sofa, glancing around at the rather stark space broken only by large fashion photos.

After Mr. Collins called to tell her about the interview, she had gone out to buy the latest issue of the magazine. It appeared that the articles, targeted to socialites, celebrities, the fashion elite, and wannabe's, were written in a rather pretentious, occasionally arrogant style that actually validated its name. She had also been surprised to see several pages of rather titillating gossip that stopped just short of scandal. It wasn't exactly her kind of publication, but she needed this job, her third in two years.

After about five minutes, she sat back and tried to relax, letting her mind wander to her first days in the city.

*New York was a trip.* At least that's what she had been told. In 1964 hemlines were rising, short hair had be-

come chic thanks to Twiggy, and suddenly girls could go to bars with other girls without guys thinking they were hookers. *Dune* had just been published, and it seemed there was a James Bond movie in every theater. Unfortunately, it hadn't worked out quite as she expected. At least at the beginning.

She had gone straight from graduation to New York City. Her parents were footing the rent for her apartment which, she was fully aware, had less to do with her and more with maintaining a childless and thus stress-free environment in their home. Her studio apartment in a new high-rise on East 61<sup>st</sup> Street was far more upscale than anything she would have imagined, her thoughts having run more to a "garret" in the village. But her parents had friends in the building who had promised to look out for her. Since she was on the second floor and they on the twentieth, she wasn't sure where they'd be looking.

Her large black portfolio at the ready, she had, with some hesitancy at first, started making phone calls from the list of ad agencies she had compiled in her last months at art school. Magazine and book publishers were on a secondary list, mainly because agencies sounded more exciting, not to mention that's where the "cool" guys were. Not that she was interested in marriage, or even a long term relationship. This was New York, and nightlife beckoned in the form of The Village Gate, Café Au Go-Go, the folk scene at Cafe Wha? and the jazz clubs in the Village. The Peppermint Lounge was still going strong and Arthur's, a swinging discotheque, had just opened on East 54<sup>th</sup> Street. And who knew where else? She imagined those guys already working would know.

After calling a dozen agencies, she was disappointed she had only gotten four appointments. But it was a beginning, and to celebrate she went out to explore the city. That was the afternoon she discovered Bloomingdales, a slightly musty department store with a real post office in the basement that co-existed with oddly mixed bins of sale items. Upstairs, racks of women's clothes were strung along the walls, leaving the impression that not much of interest was for sale. In truth, she preferred Saks, where her mother used to take her shopping, or Peck and Peck that boasted of clothing for so-called career girls.

Her first interview, at a medium-sized Madison Avenue agency, went less well than she had hoped. In fact, it wasn't even with an art director, despite that she had specifically mentioned that she was looking for a job as an assistant in an art department. The personnel director she met with had informed her in a terse tone that the only jobs currently open were for a receptionist, a secretary (albeit in the art department), and a bookkeeper. Although she had been advised that these were often the only jobs available to women, she had chosen to ignore it and was determined to get herself the position she wanted – even as a lowly assistant. Was that such a big deal? Hadn't any of these people read Betty Friedan about women getting out of the kitchen? She already knew the pay would be dismal, but what counted was getting that first job. She had thanked the lady and left.

The next two interviews were all too similar to the first but, ever undaunted, she either walked or took the subway back to her cramped, dark apartment whose

only view was a brick wall sporting a torn poster of the Supremes. After dropping her portfolio, she peeled off her interview outfit, the black dress that hit just slightly above-the-knees, white gloves, and a straw hat with black ribbons that recalled a Venetian gondolier. Gratefully replacing it with shorts and T-shirt, she grabbed whatever was in the fridge, took a breath, and set up to make more calls.

Interviews were one thing, but she had expected to meet at least some guys to date along the way. Although half population of New York City were men, she hadn't met many, at least so far. Other than friends or, God forbid, her parents fixing her up, it was more difficult than she had imagined. She could only hope that when she finally got a job it would be easier.

She was running out of agencies, and with her fragile confidence waning, she'd had to revert to her list of magazines. After making appointments at Conde Nast and *Cosmopolitan*, she began to feel a bit more optimistic. Meanwhile, a boy – he could hardly be called a man – she had met at one of the agencies had finally called. And although her friends kept reminding her that it was 1964 and perfectly fine to go to bars alone, she wasn't comfortable with the concept.

The one time she had given in was when Heather, a friend from high school, called, saying a few girls were getting their nerve up and wanted to go to a couple of bars in the city that were becoming known as “singles bars.”

When Maddie demurred, she coaxed. “It's worth a try. There will be tons of eligible men there.” She paused. “Although I better remind the girls to look out for guys with wedding rings. Come on Maddie. You're not dating anyone and maybe you'll meet someone.”



"I don't know, Heather. It just seems strange to me. I don't even like meeting a date in a bar. I always feel the men are staring at me."

"Look: Ellen, Mary and Susan are coming, and there'll be five, maybe six of us. You're the only one living in the city, so I'm surprised you're so nervous about it."

Maddie took a breath. "It's not that I'm nervous. But we won't know anything about these guys."

Heather laughed. "Don't be such a chicken. Remember when your mother fixed you up with the son of a friend of hers who she swore was really attractive? You told me he was a troll. You only get to know them after you've talked to them for a while. That's the point: in the bar we can talk."

She had finally given in and the next Friday had met five of her high school friends at Dorrian's on the Upper East Side.

They had huddled at the bar, glancing furtively around, until a young man in a suit came up to chat. The man singled out her friend Ellen, they talked together for a few minutes, and, with a grin and a quick glance back, Ellen followed him to a table. Maddie was becoming apprehensive that no one seemed interested in six, now five, giggling girls, when a couple of young men wandered casually over and, after some conversation, suggested they all go to a table. Maddie relaxed; they certainly appeared respectable and they were wearing nice suits. One of them, Gill, an attractive guy with dark hair falling over his forehead, proudly announced he was working on Wall Street. While the others chimed in about their jobs, Gill took a swig of his Budweiser and turned to Maddie, asking what she was "doing." When she told him she was in the process

of interviewing for a job in either the art department of an advertising agency or a magazine, he sat back with a grin. "You're an artist? I like artists. They're free-thinkers, not conformists." He leaned in close, too close, his voice seductive. "I'll bet you're a free-thinker, aren't you?" She looked back at him, aware of the somewhat officious attitude that men, even younger men, appeared to have, particularly in regard to working girls. She was tempted to ask him the same question, but she was sure she already knew the answer. Instead, she just smiled. He asked if he could buy her the next drink.

It was getting close to midnight and her friends had begun looking at their watches. Since they were all still living at home while either looking for jobs or preferably the right man to marry, they'd driven to the city from Scarsdale. Heather finally spoke up, saying it was time to leave. Fortunately, her car was just down the block, parking not being a problem on Second Avenue. Before she left, she drew Maddie aside. Indicating Gill, she whispered, "See? I told you this would be fun." Maddie nodded, not entirely happy to be deserted by her friends.

After they left, Gill said, "I hope you can stay for a while."

"Actually I should probably be getting home."

"Why? The night is young."

She'd heard that cliché before, and started to get up. "This was fun but maybe another time."

He wasn't taking no for an answer. "Come on, loosen up. I live a couple of blocks away. Why don't we go to my place for a drink? Then I'll walk you home."

"Thanks. But I really should go."

As she got up, he paid the check and followed her out. She was hoping he'd ask for her number, but instead he again tried to convince her to go with him.

She shook her head and stuck out her hand. He ignored it and, as he moved in for a kiss, she stepped back. "Thanks for the drinks, Gill. It was nice meeting you."

He shook his head. "I don't get it. Why do girls like you come to this kind of bar? I figured you'd like a good time."

"I do like having a good time. But I also like to get to know a man before I sleep with him, assuming that's what you're implying by 'a good time.'"

"Fuck it," he muttered and went back to the bar. She took a breath and started walking home, feeling nothing but relief. Had he really expected she'd be so naïve that she'd go to his apartment after meeting him for, what, a couple of hours? Interviewing at agencies where women were treated as second class citizens was one thing and something she was convinced she could eventually fight through. But what was it with these men? In the few dates she'd had, they always seemed in a hurry to get her into bed. When she was living at home, her dates had been far more respectful. Maybe because they'd had to meet and shake hands with her ever-unsmiling stepfather. She didn't know how often she'd heard guys say they liked to go out with fast girls but only wanted to marry a virgin. She had put it down to just another example of 1950's hypocrisy. Had the mere fact that she now lived alone and was looking for a job put her into the category of those fast girls who were expected, unlike her friends who were safe and protected at home, to jump into bed with every man just because he'd bought her a couple of drinks or taken her to dinner and maybe a movie?

Still, she was looking forward to her date next Thursday with Tom, the guy she'd met at the agency. She was leaving another dispiriting interview when he

had actually followed her out, asking her name and if she would have a drink with him.

It turned out that on the afternoon of their date, she had, after repeated phone calls, gotten an appointment at *Cosmopolitan*, a long-standing, conservative magazine featuring novellas, short stories and articles on beauty and fashion advice for women. Since it was with the art director, she was hopeful. The only problem was the art director turned out to be short, fat, and garrulous. He'd leafed through her work, a scowl never leaving his pudgy face. When he'd looked up at her, his breath was as sour as the look in his piggish eyes. "You'll never get a job with this portfolio," he barked. "It's too artsy and you have too many illustrations. I suggest that before you go on another interview you sign up for graphic design classes at Visual Arts. Either that or get a job as a secretary."

She had left holding back tears. To make it worse, as soon as she had taken no more than five steps out the building, before she even heard the thunder, the heavens opened up in a drenching rainstorm. Already soaked, she ran for a taxi, but a man in a suit beat her out.

She had ended up taking a bus across town. By the time it reached Third Avenue the storm was over, the streets wet and shimmering in bright sunlight. When she got to her apartment, the doorman reminded her she should have taken an umbrella. "A bit belated," she muttered in frustration. Trying to put it down to just a bad, really bad, day and even though she hadn't gotten a job yet, she realized that not one person she had met with had said anything negative about her work. In fact, a couple of weeks before she'd had an interview at an agency where the art director wanted to hire her, only to be told by a vice president that they didn't hire girls, at least not in

the art department. Unfortunately, that seemed to be the mantra all over Madison Avenue. She took a breath and told herself she just had to keep going. As she hung up her dress to dry, she was glad she had a date that night.

Tom had asked her to meet him at an Irish bar not far from her apartment. Not wanting to arrive before him, she made it a point to be late. He was already there, sitting at the bar trading banter with the bartender while in the background the Beatles were singing "Can't Buy Me Love."

Tom was tall with sandy hair and blue eyes and, when he turned to say hello, she noticed that his tie was loosened, the typical after-work look that went along with the narrow fitting sport coats and tight pants that, thanks to those same Beatles, had become the current fashion.

She listened carefully as, with a certain sense of pride, he described his job in the bullpen at the agency. "The best part is working with the art directors, pasting up layouts and finishing off mechanicals. The shit stuff, pardon my French, is cutting mats. And, believe me, we end up doing a lot of that for presentations. The trick is getting friendly with one of the big guys. That's when you get promoted."

"Promoted?" she asked, taking it all in.

"Yep. You get out of the bullpen and become a real assistant." He leaned forward as if confiding in her. "I'll be there soon enough."

After lighting a cigarette, he sipped his scotch and asked about her.

"I guess you could say I'd like to be where you are," she said.

He looked surprised. "What do you mean?"

"I want to find a job as an assistant to an art director."

"Seriously?" He laughed, draining his scotch and signaling the bartender for another.

"Sure. Why not? I went to art school, and I have a portfolio."

He nodded. "Yeah. That's right. I guess I saw you carrying it. Looked heavy."

She nodded. "It is."

"Better consider becoming a secretary in an art department. If you're lucky, they might give you a shot."

He shook his head. "Although I can't even think of an agency that has girls in their art departments."

"Well. I intend to be the first. If not at an agency, then at a magazine."

He smiled and touched her hand. "I like your attitude. You seem very independent. Determined."

She looked at him, thinking he sounded far too much like Gill, the guy at the singles bar. And yet, despite a bit of conceit, he seemed like a nice enough guy. After a few drinks he asked if she wanted a hamburger. She nodded and picked up a menu that had been left on the table, untouched until his question.

They were finishing off Irish coffees when she glanced at her watch. "This has been fun, Tom. But It's getting late and I have an early interview tomorrow"

"Where?"

"Gimbel's."

"What would you do there?"

"It's really for freelance work. Paste-ups for the newspaper, I think. And I have an interview at *Today's Bride* next week. They actually called back and asked me to come in. I'm keeping my fingers crossed."

He shrugged as though it was insignificant, but stood up. "I'll walk you home."

Outside, he reached for her hand and she let him take it. She expected to say goodnight in front of her building with the doorman nearby, but he insisted on taking her to her door. As she unlocked it, he grabbed her, pulling her into a kiss. She pushed him away.

He suddenly looked angry. "What's with you? We talked for hours. I like you. I figured I'd come in and we'd get to know each other better."

She looked surprised. "Get to know each other better? That's fine. But what's the rush?"

He put his hands up, his eyes narrowed. "No rush," he said with a smirk. "You're real independent aren't you? What are you saving it for? I expected you to be cool, you know? Into free love. Everyone is these days. C'mon, just a quick fuck. It'll be fun. I'll put in a word at the agency for you."

She backed into the doorway. "Everyone? Really? Sorry, but I'm not that kind of girl. I may think for myself and make my own choices, but no one intimidates me"

"Yeah, right. I've heard that before," he said, starting toward the elevator. "I'll bet you're one of those chicks who'll end up sleeping with your boss." He punched the button and looked back at her. "Those big art directors eat girls like you for lunch."

She shook her head and closed the door. Another crappy date. And what had he said? *Sleep with my boss? What boss? I don't even have a job yet.*

But all that was history. A week later, she had been offered the position as assistant to the art director at *Today's Bride*. She had worked there, learning her craft,

until her boss had left to live in Paris, and the publisher brought in an art director from another publication. Although Maddie had left after some duress, she'd quickly gotten, and just as quickly left, another publication. The office had been dismal, and her boss had been purposely difficult. While Maddie was in no position to argue with him, she refused to work in an office where she was either ignored or demeaned. And yet, she smiled to herself, here she was two years later waiting, although with some apprehension, for an interview for a job that could take her to another level.

She was uncomfortably aware the receptionist was glancing at her every few minutes, in between whispered conversations on the phone. Trying to appear nonchalant, Maddie casually picked up a slightly tattered magazine and leafed through it. After a few minutes, she was aware that a man had emerged from the hallway and had stopped, albeit briefly. When she turned to look, he was gone. Trying not to be impatient, she took a breath; she really wanted, actually needed, this job, and she was fully aware that her competition were young men with exactly the same goals as she: to graduate from assistant to art director, hopefully as soon as possible.

For whatever reason, she suddenly recalled the disastrous interview at *Cosmopolitan*. That had been the worst day of her first summer in New York. But vindication had come a year later when the obnoxious art director had been summarily dispatched and Helen Gurley Brown had taken over, making *Cosmopolitan*, now known as "Cosmo," into a sexy bible for career girls like her. And the guy, whatever his name was, who had said she'd end up sleeping with her boss? She had actually taken his statement to heart, vowing then that she



would never even date any men she worked with, no matter how fascinating or attractive they might be. So far that hadn't been a problem; *Today's Bride* had been populated by women, and her boss at her second job was a fat, sloppy man who smoked cigars and considered women chattel.

After a string of bad dates – *bad* meaning those guys who had tried to pressure her into going to bed with them on the first date – she had promised herself she would stand her ground and not allow any of them to try to coerce her into even one night that she would regret. But she had been lucky; she had finally met an intelligent, not to mention attractive, man. His name was Danny and, although he worked for an ad agency, he was in marketing, not the art department. They had gone out a couple of times before he even kissed her, although things had since progressed, quite pleasantly, from there.

A short, dark-haired woman suddenly appeared and asked Maddie to follow her. As she stepped into Mr. McLeod's slightly cluttered office, he smiled and stood up. She blinked and took a breath, thinking he was almost too handsome to be true. Reminding herself why she was there, she shook his hand and sat down opposite him. As they talked, he kept a slight smile on his face; she wasn't sure if he was being seductive or it was just part of his routine for questioning aspiring assistants.

After they got past the expected questions about marriage and babies, her answering no to both, saying she was far more committed to a career than becoming a wife or mommy, he seemed satisfied and asked

to see her portfolio. She put it on his desk and stood next to him explaining her layouts and describing the photography sessions she had arranged and overseen at *Today's Bride*.

"How are you at mechanicals? You said you had only done paste-ups before."

"*Today's Bride* was letterpress, so we had no need for mechanicals, but the other magazine was offset, so I had to do them." She smiled, "I've gotten pretty good. I work fast," she said with just a touch of pride. She hoped he hadn't taken it the wrong way.

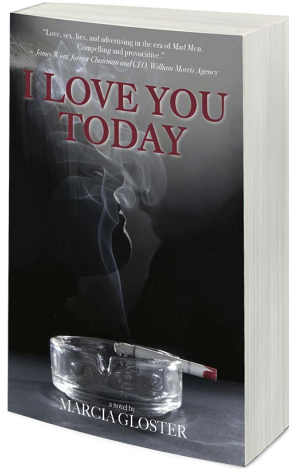
He laughed and closed her portfolio. "Well, maybe we'll have a chance to race each other."

She felt the knot in her stomach begin to unwind. Maybe she really did have a shot at this job.

He sat back and stared at her for a minute. The knot gave way to butterflies. "I think you should leave your portfolio with me. I'm going to make a decision today."

As she thanked him, he said, "Call me later, about five. By the way, do you have a boyfriend?"

*Thanks for reading!*



"A romp through the Mad Men era, told from a woman's point of view." — Pamela Fiori, author and former editor-in-chief, Town & Country

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