

NADINE

a novel by John Steinberg © 2020

TV SYNOPSIS and FILM TREATMENT

TV Synopsis, 1st Episode and Character List

London 2012 Theatre-owner and impresario Peter Greenberg has just seen another of his West End shows flop. Bankruptcy looms - and his meaningless marriage doesn't offer much in the way of consolation, because all Peter and Suzanne Greenberg really have in common is their large mock-Georgian house in North London.

Flipping through the Arts section of the newspaper one morning, Greenberg is jolted out of his despondency by a profile of the award-winning Broadway theatre director, Dominic Langley. The article reminds him of his own past . . . when he too had a string of successes. And in that past, there was a very special woman.

Her name was Nadine.

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London 1974

The 22-year-old Greenberg is riding high. Every play he puts on in London's Theatreland is a hit and the money is rolling in. Driving around town in a luxury car, with his loyal girlfriend Melissa at his side, his empire feels secure. And then everything changes. One evening, he calls in to see a rival's musical and falls inescapably - and unrequitedly - head over heels in love.

The Paris-born dancer who catches his eye is a star in the making. Like Greenberg, she too is in love - but with someone else.

The eternal triangle is complicated by the birth of a child, and by tragic secrets that go back before the war; slowly, they reveal themselves in a drama that out-performs anything on the West End stage or Broadway. Nadine's suicide seems to bring that drama to an end, but there is more to come.

London, present day

As Greenberg faces the reality of personal betrayal leading to his Duke's Theatre 'going dark', there is an offer of a financial lifeline from Nadine's rich, elderly father, Jacques Bertrand. The three men - Greenberg, Jacques and Dominic Langley, who turns out to be Nadine's stolen son - come together in the most unusual way to put on a show about the woman all three have loved and lost. Like the young dancer herself it is called, quite simply, *Nadine*.

Seeing the show achieve international acclaim is the catharsis which Greenberg has craved. His reputation is restored; his memories are finally at peace - and with Dominic in his life in a father-son relationship, he can now move on.

TV: Episode 1***St Martin's Lane, Central London, 2012***

Greenberg looks on impassively as the last pieces of the set on the stage of his Duke's Theatre are being disbanded. A muted trumpet is playing Miles Davis's 'Sketches of Spain' in the background. The truth is that he feels his insides have been torn out. How could it all have gone wrong so quickly? he asks himself. In a final act of defeat, he tears down a poster of his show *Scarlet*, based on the story of the Scarlet Pimpernel, turns off the lights and disappears through a side door to seek refuge upstairs.

Peering down from the top-floor window of his stifling hot office to see his Bentley being dragged away by a clamping lorry, he shrugs and takes a large bite out of a smoked salmon bagel. He examines himself in the mirror, sticks out his tongue and cringes at the face staring back at him. Desperate for a winner that might just turn around his ailing fortunes, he reaches for one of the scripts that sit in a pile his desk, then changes his mind and instead, takes out a Romeo y Julieta cigar, nips off its end and lights up.

There's the sound of a percolator gurgling next door. A horse-faced young woman in dungarees appears, a cup in one hand and newspapers under the other arm. The PA clumsily lets the papers slip onto the desk, knocking over a photo of her boss's wife. Greenberg shrugs, making no attempt to right it. Maybe he'd feel differently had Suzanne shown the slightest interest in his business affairs; but then they'd never had that type of relationship. Just as well she was off again to

Spain; at least the flat over there was in her name, he muses.

Making her apologies, the PA retreats to her cubbyhole clutching a stack of Final Demands her boss has asked her to see to, enclosing the cheques he's made out for them. Chucking them carelessly onto her desk, she looks at the smart dress she's hung up behind the door in its plastic cover; she is going to change into it for her job interview that afternoon. Smirking, she follows the instructions she has been given by another party and conceals the all-important cheque that Greenberg has signed for the rent on the theatre under some other paperwork in her desk drawer.

Greenberg, flipping through the Arts section of *The Times*, focuses on the profile of award-winning Broadway director Dominic Langley. The name triggers a memory. He ferrets around in his desk and retrieves a small black diary; holding it for a moment in his hand, remembering, he then opens it at the very last entry, written in wild handwriting: *When I am dead, please tell my son the truth about his mother.*

Clearly affected by a powerful emotion, Greenberg recalls the first time he saw the writer of those words, dancing onstage more than forty years ago.

Her name was Nadine.

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London 1974

Twenty-two-year-old Peter Greenberg is in high spirits. Driving around town in his new Jag with his Greek-Cypriot girlfriend Melissa Nicolau by his side, he feels on top of the world. Every show he puts on is a success and the money is rolling in. Perhaps he should succumb to her parents' pressure and get married? He pulls up outside a North London fruit and veg shop and lets Melissa out into the charge of her suspicious older brother, Mikey. Greenberg then heads back to Central London for the opening night of a rival's musical, accepting that he can't do much about Mikey Nicolau's visible resentment of him. Mikey has always had a chip on his shoulder about Peter ever since their schooldays, just because the Greenbergs were better off and had it easier than the Nicolaus.

Greenberg arrives at the Palace Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue just as the curtain goes up. His attention is immediately drawn to a stunning blonde dancer who stands out from the rest of the cast. After the show, he goes backstage and approaches Vince, the stage manager whom he knows well, and asks for a run-down on the girl in blue. It takes the offer of a job in his forthcoming production to extract her telephone number out of Vince. The fact that there's apparently another man in the dancer's life makes no difference at all.

It's game on!

A week later, Greenberg meets Nadine for lunch at his favourite Italian restaurant in the Kings Road. He is blown away by her natural beauty, which reminds him of the actress, Mia

Farrow. Nadine eats little and rushes off to the loo complaining of a bad stomach, while Greenberg enjoys a full meal of fried escalope of veal. (He is a plump young man who loves his food.) When Greenberg offers her a part in a new show, Nadine is extremely keen. They talk only about theatre. Nadine then says she has to get back for rehearsals. Greenberg is disappointed about his chances of seeing her again but resolves to follow up through her agent.

The same afternoon Nadine goes off to the doctor for the results of her tests and finds out she's pregnant. After the show that night, she's surprised to see her lover, Old Etonian Charles Langley, waiting for her outside the theatre. Naively thinking he'll be supportive, she gets a shock when Charles tells her - before she has a chance to say anything about the pregnancy - that he has to make a go of his marriage and that he's ending the relationship.

Nadine goes to bed that night in their Chelsea love-nest and has a disturbing dream about her mother Irene's traumatic wartime experiences; suffering a miscarriage while escaping from a concentration camp outside Paris. Like Greenberg himself, Nadine is Jewish. The next morning, Nadine rings her friend Sophie and asks if she can move back into the overcrowded studio flat in North London which they shared when she first came to London.

Charles then turns up and wants her to stay in the Chelsea apartment. Nadine refuses, saying that she is going back to France without any plans of returning to London. At this point, Nadine reflects on the lunch with Greenberg. He is a decent man and she feels remorseful that she'll be letting him down.

Paris

As soon as she arrives at the Bertrand family's large apartment on the uber-rich Avenue Foch, Nadine's mother Irene guesses that her only child is pregnant and offers her full support. Nadine is relieved. They joke about how Jacques, her errant father, will react when he finds out. Nadine discusses her dream with her mother, who is deeply moved when recalling her travails, and now appreciates why her daughter wants to keep the baby – Irene and Jacques' first grandchild.

Nadine puts herself through a rigorous exercise routine to remain in shape at the Conservatoire where she first studied dance. Here, she strikes up an intimate friendship with a female student named Beatrice.

At forty weeks – full term - Nadine panics because she can't feel the baby move. During an emergency caesarean, she gives birth to a son and names him Dominic. Unfortunately, Nadine now suffers a recurrence of the serious depression she endured through adolescence, aggravated by childbirth. The only relief comes from dance, and from the diaries she keeps to express her feelings. Unable to look after the child herself, or create a bond with him, she relies on her mother to nurse her son. Gradually, she feels better and takes over. Fearing that her agent will forget her, the young

woman knows it's time to get back to work.

Nadine is stunned when she comes home one day and sees Charles in the apartment, endearing himself to her mother. How had he got hold of her Paris address - and how had he somehow come into possession of her pregnancy scans? Charles tells her he found them when he was tidying up the flat and got a doctor friend to read them. Nadine is furious for the intrusion into her private life. Rejecting Charles's offer of fulfilling his parental responsibilities, she wants nothing more to do with him.

North London

Nadine returns to London with her son a few months later, worried about her mother's recovery from what turns out to be terminal cancer. Living in Sophie's cramped studio with the addition of a baby to look after, Nadine is unable to cope and falls back into depression. In no fit state to refuse, she accepts a proposal from Charles to move back to Chelsea on a no-commitment basis with an au pair in residence to help look after 'his' son.

Now on far-too-strong medication deliberately prescribed by Charles's doctor, Nadine feels more settled and starts looking around for work. Dumped by her former agent, she locates Greenberg's details and appears unannounced at his office. Despite her unexplained eighteen-month absence Greenberg is thrilled to see her again; however, he plays it cool towards the woman he hasn't managed to get out of his system. With the possibility of finding her a part in another producer's musical, Greenberg is determined never to allow the elusive dancer to slip through his fingers again . . .

1st episode ends

Main Characters

Peter Greenberg: Not so long ago, Greenberg was one of London's most colourful theatrical producers. He was a Wunderkind, raking in thousands of pounds even before the age of twenty-five. In later life, however, all that has changed. Greenberg has lost his Midas touch and now his latest show has closed early, leaving him facing financial ruin.

In appearance, he is overweight with greying curly hair, and as if suffering from palpitations wasn't enough to worry about, he doesn't know how to tell his much younger wife Suzanne, a sparky Welsh redhead with whom he never had much in common, that they are in danger of losing

their grand mock-Tudor home in North Lonon. How has it come to this? Greenberg is unaware that those he trusted most have consistently undermined him.

Recalling an unfulfilled obligation many years before, to the only woman he has truly loved - Nadine - brings temporary respite from his troubles and reminds him what's been missing in his life. An offer from an unexpected source connected with Nadine enables him to restore his reputation and self-esteem. When his task is fulfilled, Greenberg can move on and embrace life once more, with a clear conscience.

Nadine Bertrand: For a solitary only child growing up in 1960s Paris, musicals presented an escape into a world of fantasy. Free-spirited and extraordinarily gifted, there was never any doubt in her mind that she would be a dancer. Blessed with stunning looks and Parisian chic, Nadine takes the London stage by storm with a lightness of movement that makes other dancers look cumbersome in comparison. However, burdened with a dark side, she knows that the adrenalin 'high' she gets from a live performance is the only thing that can lift her depressions and temporarily banish the self-doubt from which she has suffered since adolescence. She also gets a therapeutic release from writing about her feelings in the diaries which she keeps religiously.

Ignored by her father, who chooses work and women over his own wife and child, Nadine seeks love wherever she can find it. In London, she falls for a suave married man, Charles Langley, whom she naively believes will leave his wife for her. Finding herself compromised between her career and the child they have together, she suffers further anguish learning that Charles and best friend Sophie had kept the death of her beloved mother from her while she was away on tour. But worse is to come when her lover takes advantage of her delicate mental state to prove her incompetence as a mother and deprives her of her son, Dominic. When nothing is left, there's only one solution.

Dominic Langley: Bullied by his father, Charles, for not living up to his expectations, Dominic is able to call on financial support from his mother to go to acting school in London and then to America, where he develops a career in theatre. Dangerously handsome but uncompromising in his pursuit of excellence, Dominic is the most in-demand director on Broadway. The resultant success, however, fails to bring happiness and masks an identity crisis that years of therapy have been unable to resolve. It takes a showdown with London producer well past his prime, Peter Greenberg, for Dominic to discover the painful truth about his childhood and to come to terms with who he really is.

Supporting Characters

Charles Langley: Liar, snob and aspiring socialite. A cad. This man is charming and manipulative. He has no qualms about preying on the vulnerability and emotions of the women in his life in order to get his hands on the inheritance to which he thinks he's entitled.

Mikey Nicolau: An unscrupulous accountant and long-term enemy of Greenberg since their schooldays, this jealous man is determined to bring him down, taking Greenberg's wife, his luxurious house and - worst of all - his theatre.

*Other small parts include people in the theatrical world in the UK, as well as a gang of Eastern European people-smugglers who are closely connected with a board of investors - who in turn are linked to Mikey Nicolau and to a bent police officer called **Inspector Brian Morley**.

In the New York scenes, there is **Arlene Davidson**, Greenberg's future love-interest, as well as Dominic's lover **Alejandro**, Dom's analyst and other members of his entourage.

Character List ends

FILM TREATMENT

London 2012

Theatre owner and impresario Peter Greenberg, 62, is a man in decline. Once upon a time, he was young and kidded himself that he resembled a plumper version of the actor Danny Kaye. These days, when he's forced to look in the mirror, he sees Orson Welles.

Until a few years ago, Greenberg was a big name in Theatreland. He couldn't put a foot wrong. But now another show has closed early, leaving his reputation in tatters and Greenberg himself teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Seriously overweight and suffering heart palpitations, his natural exuberance has begun to desert him. *How could it all have gone so wrong?* he asks himself. And how the hell is he going to break the news to Suzanne, his uber-materialistic younger wife, that they are in danger of losing their plush Georgian house in North London? The reality is

that he can barely muster up enough money to pay the rent on his Central London office.

Skimming through the Arts section of the morning papers, brought to him by a young PA already seeking new employment, Greenberg is jolted out of his malaise by a profile of the award-winning Broadway director, Dominic Langley. The article reminds Greenberg of an unfulfilled obligation to a very special woman: to tell her son Dominic Langley the truth about his mother.

The name of that special woman was Nadine.

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London 1974

Peter Greenberg is riding high. Every play he puts on is a hit and the money is rolling in, thanks to his magic touch. And he's only twenty-two. Driving around town in a luxury car, with his loyal girlfriend Melissa at his side, his empire feels secure. Then one evening, he calls in to see a rival's musical - and falls in love.

The Paris-born dancer who catches his eye is a star in the making. She looks rather like Mia Farrow, and her blonde gamine-style elegance makes her the opposite of Melissa, who resembles a female version of Greenberg with her comfortably plump figure, homely good-natured face and curly black hair.

Even when the stage manager informs Greenberg that Nadine is spoken for, he is not put off the chase. He invites Nadine for lunch but it's not a success. Nadine is unwell, exhibiting (unbeknownst to Greenberg) the classic signs of early pregnancy. Desperate to see the girl again, he offers her a part in his new show before they go their separate ways.

Meanwhile, Nadine is bracing herself to tell her lover, Old Etonian Charles Langley, that she is expecting his child. Before she can open her mouth, however, Charles heartlessly tells her that he has decided to make a go of his marriage and is ending their relationship.

Deeply shaken, Nadine leaves their Chelsea love-nest and moves back into the tiny apartment she once shared with her French friend Sophie. During a visit to her family home in Paris, her mother Irene, to whom she is extremely close, has guessed about her condition and offers the distraught girl her full support.

Following the traumatic birth of her son, Nadine descends into bouts of clinical depression – the illness that plagued her teenage years, when the scant medical advice she received was that she would grow out of it and should keep a diary to record her feelings. Eventually, she starts to feel better and is able to resume control of her life. This is when she accepts that she needs to get fit and get back to work. From bitter experience, Nadine has learned that only dance can relieve her dark moods.

Meanwhile, Charles - aided surreptitiously by Nadine's flat-mate, Sophie - appears unexpectedly at the Paris apartment, full of charm and saying that he's only just learned about the

pregnancy and is prepared to take full responsibility for his child. Nadine, however, remains unforgiving of the way he treated her, and Irene confides that she senses something underhand about him.

Nadine returns to London with her baby son Dominic, worried about her mother who has been diagnosed with cancer. Irene had wanted to come and live with her and help with the baby, but that is now impossible. Unable to cope on her own, the young woman reluctantly accepts Charles's offer for her to move back into the flat in Chelsea, with a resident au pair. Nadine's mother was right: the suave young man does have a secret agenda. His barren wife Clare is sick to death of Charles's infidelities and her wealthy father wants an heir. If Charles can't comply, it's 'game over' and with it, his comfortable standard of life.

Dominic's birth came along at just the right time. Together, he and his wife begin to plot how to get hold of the child for good.

Nadine cannot get work after her 18-month absence, but is rescued by Greenberg, who offers her a leading part in a tour. Despite her disappearing act, he hasn't been able to get her out of his system, is thrilled to see her again, and now decides that this is the woman he wants to marry. Their friendship develops, as Nadine genuinely likes him, but not in the way he would have wished for because she is still in love with Charles.

As Dominic grows into a toddler, Nadine is torn between caring for her child and her career. The medication prescribed for her by an unscrupulous doctor friend of Charles only makes her feel worse. In true *Gaslight* fashion, Charles takes full advantage of her delicate mental state, as well as her prolonged absences on tour, to gradually prise the little boy away from her.

Things come to a head when Nadine turns up at Charles's home to reclaim her son and is told by Clare Langley that, having accumulated sufficient proof of her unsuitability as a mother, she and Charles have no intention of ever returning her son. This marks the beginning of the end for Nadine. In an act of desperation, after writing her last diary, she decides that the only way out of her agony is to end her life. It's her final, tragic performance.

During the opening of the show that Nadine was due to star in, Greenberg has an emotional meeting with Nadine's friend Sophie, who has come to confess to Greenberg about her deception. It is then he learns, for the first time, that Nadine had a child and that she also left a number of diaries.

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London 2012

Greenberg's financial predicament is dire. However, he's unaware that his longtime accountant, Mikey Nicolau, has been working against him behind the scenes. Mikey has always loathed Greenberg, ever since they were in school together. His resentment of the way Greenberg discarded

Melissa, Mikey's younger sister, is just a part of it. Over the years, Mikey has ruthlessly lined his own pockets at Greenberg's expense – but that's still not enough. He wants to bring Greenberg down to zero. And for a while, it almost seems to work. Greenberg loses his wife and his home but also his beloved Duke's Theatre.

As Greenberg adjusts to his new lowly status, out of the blue comes a lifeline from Nadine's rich elderly father. Jacques Bertrand is seeking absolution for his years of neglecting his only child, and he entrusts Greenberg with a commission to put on a musical about his daughter's life. Money is no object.

The project takes Greenberg to New York to track down Nadine's stolen son Dominic Langley, for both Greenberg and Jacques regard him as the only director able to do the show justice. With the help of well-connected showbiz agent Arlene Davidson, Greenberg eventually manages to get to Dominic and leaves him the script to read. The younger man has always accepted Clare Langley as his mother – he has never even heard of Nadine!

Believing the script to be a work of fantasy and a random vicious attempt to discredit his family, Dominic goes looking for Greenberg to warn him off bringing the show to the stage. Having regained his theatre, which he'd been deprived of illegally, Greenberg begins to give Dominic the proof he's been seeking to authenticate the tale. After suffering a mental breakdown in the process, it eventually becomes clear to Dominic that everything Greenberg has told him is true. Making his amends to Greenberg, Dominic reclaims his mother's diaries and agrees to direct the show that is simply called *Nadine*.

The production becomes a huge financial success. Greenberg's reputation is restored, he has fulfilled the obligation to Nadine and is finally free to move on with his life. Whilst attending the premiere on Broadway, Greenberg rekindles the romantic relationship he began with Arlene two years previously. It is not too late to be find happiness.

End of Treatment