

Love

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A one-act play

By A.S. Freeman

A simple, Midwestern bedroom. CLAIRE, about 25, radiant, in the room preparing to leave for the church where she will be married. It is exactly 30 minutes before she must leave.

She's staring, shocked, at SCOTT. A year older, he is distinctly not dressed for a wedding in any capacity. He sort of looks like he's been out drinking for the past year. This might not be far from the truth.

Scott doesn't want to break the silence, but he knows his time is short.

SCOTT

Claire? Are you alright?

She stares.

SCOTT

It's just...you haven't said anything for two minutes. And I was hoping you might at least say "Hello," or something.

Still nothing from Claire.

SCOTT

I mean...I guess you did say "Scott?" In that shocked sort of way...not exactly the reaction I was hoping for...but definitely better than it could have been...

CLAIRE

Scott?

SCOTT

Yeah - you said it sort of like that.

CLAIRE

Scott?

SCOTT

I seem to remember you having a larger vocabulary...

CLAIRE  
What are you doing here?

SCOTT  
I needed to talk to you.

CLAIRE  
Today?

SCOTT  
Yes.

CLAIRE  
Right now?

SCOTT  
Yes.

CLAIRE  
This couldn't wait...I don't know...a week? When I'm back from my honeymoon?

SCOTT  
No.

CLAIRE  
A day? I'm just traveling tomorrow - I could/give you a call.

SCOTT  
Yeah - tomorrow might be too late...

CLAIRE  
I absolutely have to leave for the church in half an hour.

SCOTT  
I know.

CLAIRE  
This really can't wait?

SCOTT  
I need to talk to you before you go to your wedding.

CLAIRE

Why? Have some sage advice for me about how to make a marriage last?

SCOTT

That's not fair...

CLAIRE

How is Rebecca?

SCOTT

She's fine.

CLAIRE

And Katie? How about Kelley? That's all of them, right?

SCOTT

Why are you doing this?

CLAIRE

I'm just asking how they are.

SCOTT

You're being mean.

CLAIRE

I'm just asking a question!

SCOTT

They're all fine.

CLAIRE

You and Rebecca still together?

SCOTT

She prefers Becky.

CLAIRE

Seriously? Why?

SCOTT

I don't know.

CLAIRE

Rebecca is so much more...dignified.

(Crinkling her nose)

Becky...

SCOTT

Technically.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

Or I should say legally...

CLAIRE

Are you serious?

SCOTT

Yes.

CLAIRE

Can you commit to anyone?

SCOTT

I have committed to people. Three of them. Well, I only married two of them, to be fair.

CLAIRE

And then you run away...

SCOTT

I don't/run away...

CLAIRE

You really are the kind of self-delusion.

SCOTT

I got a degree in it.

CLAIRE

Your degree is in lying.

SCOTT

“Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth.”

CLAIRE

Oh, you and Camus.

SCOTT

He’s the only one who gets me.

CLAIRE

Are you sure it’s not the other way around?

SCOTT

I don’t think Camus has ever read my work.

CLAIRE

No, that’s not...are you sure he’s not the only one you get?

SCOTT

Oh, I understand a lot of writers. They just don’t plunge me into quite as satisfying a pit of despair as Camus.

Claire laughs. They’re finding their old rhythm.

CLAIRE

You look awful.

SCOTT

Hey, thanks.

CLAIRE

No, seriously, are you feeling okay?

SCOTT

I haven’t really slept for a while.

CLAIRE

Why not?

SCOTT

Stress, mostly. I don’t really want to dream.

CLAIRE  
Why?

SCOTT  
Because they're too painful.

CLAIRE  
Wouldn't that be a nightmare?

SCOTT  
No, those I could deal with. It's the waking up from the dream that's the hardest part.

Silence.

SCOTT  
You never wrote me back.

CLAIRE  
What?

SCOTT  
I sent you a letter. You never wrote back.

CLAIRE  
I sent you a text. And a Facebook message. Both acceptable forms of communication.

SCOTT  
I know. But I wanted a letter.

CLAIRE  
Then you should have asked for a letter.

SCOTT  
I wanted you to want me to have a letter.

CLAIRE  
You're ridiculous.

SCOTT  
I know.

A moment.

CLAIRE

Why did you want a letter?

SCOTT

I wanted something I knew you'd touch.

She starts to smile. Stops herself.

CLAIRE

No. No. You're not doing this. Not today. Not again. I have to go to the church in...28 minutes, where I am going to get married. I'm done with this. I've been done with this. Whatever this is.

SCOTT

We've said that before.

CLAIRE

No, I've said that before. And you've not really said anything. And then there we are again, a few years later. You get scared doing whatever you've turned your life into and you come flying back into my life hoping that you'll find something here. Well, there's nothing here. There's only me. I'm not here to fix everything for you. I've never fixed anything for you. You need to fix you.

SCOTT

Did you read the note?

CLAIRE

What note?

SCOTT

In the letter. The one marked, "Don't Open Until the Time is Right."

CLAIRE

No.

SCOTT

Really?



CLAIRE

Really.

SCOTT

You haven't had a bad day in eighteen months?

CLAIRE

Things have been going really great for me.

SCOTT

You have to be lying to me. 18 months. That's like, 540 days. All good? Not 539 good, 1 bad?

CLAIRE

The day I got your letter is the day I met Paul.

This punches him.

SCOTT

And you two haven't fought? He never had you frustrated? IN that entire time you've never said to yourself, "Hey, I could use a pick me up from an old friend"?

CLAIRE

I didn't read it, Scott.

He doesn't know what to do.

SCOTT

Why didn't you read it?

CLAIRE

The time was never right.

SCOTT

You don't even know what it says! How could you possibly know/ when the time would be right?

CLAIRE

When should I have read it?

SCOTT

I don't know. I guess...I thought...I thought that you'd be having a rough day, remember the note, think of me, and read it.

CLAIRE

If you really needed to tell me this then why not just put it in the letter?

SCOTT

Because words don't work that way.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

The words in the note were too important for the letter. The letter was to remind you I still think of you. The note was what I needed to tell you.

CLAIRE

Then why tell me to wait?

SCOTT

Because I wanted you to want to read it. To want, deep inside yourself, to know what I felt I needed to tell you. The thing that was too important for Facebook, or a text message, or an email. The thing that was too important to even put in an ordinary letter.

CLAIRE

There was nothing ordinary about that letter.

Silence.

CLAIRE

No one writes letters anymore.

(Beat)

But of course you do.

SCOTT

Three.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

Three. I've written three letters in my life. Not counting hard copy submissions of scripts and manuscripts, the letter to you was the third letter I've written in my adult life.

CLAIRE

That's more specific an answer than I was expecting.

SCOTT

Letters are important. Like you said, no one writes them anymore. So when I send one, I want it to be important. To mean something. And no matter what it means to the recipient, it means something to me. I remember the content of those letters as if I wrote them yesterday.

CLAIRE

So sending me the third letter of your life wasn't important enough for this message you put on a separate piece of paper, folded up, and stuck in the envelope?

SCOTT

No. It required active participation.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

It's easy enough for you to read the letter I send you. You almost have to. But if I separate out a message, then you have to choose to read it. Or ignore it.

CLAIRE

I didn't ignore it.

SCOTT

What do you mean?

CLAIRE

I was afraid of what it might say.

SCOTT

Why?

CLAIRE

Because you set it apart. You didn't ambush me with it. That's your style. So I was worried ...I was worried that this one might...be true.

SCOTT

This one might be true?

CLAIRE

How many things have you said to me in the years we've known each other that haven't been true?

SCOTT

They were true when I said them.

CLAIRE

No. That's not good enough.

SCOTT

They were true when I said them!

CLAIRE

(Almost laughing)

We've had this conversation so many times. And we've been a couple for so little time, it's ridiculous that I let you drag me into them time and time again.

SCOTT

The last time we talked I did not ambush you.

CLAIRE

I know.

SCOTT

I wanted to.

CLAIRE

Oh, I know.

SCOTT

But I didn't.

An effect happens. We're in a coffee shop.  
Scott and Claire are just sitting down with their  
coffee.

SCOTT

It's still weird to come home and see people working the same jobs they had in high school.

CLAIRE

I mean, you only graduated college last year - so it shouldn't be too strange.

SCOTT

I guess it's only weird when it's someone I would have thought would have run away from here as fast as they could.

CLAIRE

How is Tennessee?

SCOTT

It's awesome.

CLAIRE

And what are you doing down there?

SCOTT

Writing, mostly.

CLAIRE

Then why Nashville?

SCOTT

I can live basically anywhere I want and work on achieving success as a writer - might as well be somewhere I love, right?

CLAIRE

That makes sense. I'm pretty jealous of you.

SCOTT

For what?

CLAIRE

My sister loves Nashville.

SCOTT

It's the greatest city in the world.

CLAIRE

What makes it that?

SCOTT

Live music always. Awesome bars. It's super chill. Plenty of places I can quietly sit in a corner and write while watching people.

CLAIRE

Creeper.

SCOTT

That's my life.

CLAIRE

You must be a blast at parties.

Scott smiles. A silence. Not awkward.

SCOTT

How's ummm...oh boy...I forgot his name.

CLAIRE

Mike?

SCOTT

The Army guy.

CLAIRE

My boyfriend.

SCOTT

Your boyfriend the army guy.

CLAIRE

Yes. He's good.

SCOTT

How often do you get to see him?

CLAIRE

Not as often as I'd like.

SCOTT

I can only imagine.

CLAIRE

Yeah - it's rough. But love finds a way, right?

They smile. They're re-learning each other.

SCOTT

What are you doing after this?

CLAIRE

I have work a little later - but nothing now, why?

SCOTT

My Mom would love it if you swung by the house.

Claire considers.

CLAIRE

Alright. I'll follow you.

SCOTT

Great.

An effect. We're back in the present.

SCOTT

All I wanted that day was the chance to kiss you.

CLAIRE

Why?

SCOTT

To know if my feelings were real, or just something I had been building up in my head.

CLAIRE

And a kiss would have told you that?

SCOTT

I don't know. But not kissing you didn't stop me from having the feelings.

A moment.

SCOTT

When was our first kiss?

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

When was our first kiss?

CLAIRE

I don't know...

SCOTT

I remember our first date. But I don't think we kissed.

CLAIRE

No. You held my hand in the movie, though.

SCOTT

Spider-Man 2.

CLAIRE

What a romantic.

SCOTT

We met at a lacrosse game! I figured you for a tom-boy!

CLAIRE

I am a tom-boy. Besides, you're the one who hadn't seen the first Spider-Man.

SCOTT

No. But you caught me up.

CLAIRE

But I don't think we kissed.



SCOTT

I can remember a lot of kisses. Kissing in the pool shed, in your parents basement, in my parents basement, in my room, your room - the kitchens of our parent's houses, each kiss so exciting and wonderful - but the first one...I couldn't tell you.

CLAIRE

I remember a lot of those kisses.

SCOTT

There's a playwright - probably my favorite playwright working today - Adam Szymkowicz, and I don't know how conscious this is in his work, but he's obsessed with kissing. It's all over his work. One of his short plays is all about the potential of a first kiss in a date. At least how I read it. And I don't remember our first kiss, but I remember the potential in each of the kisses. That something about each one of them felt right - and it never felt wrong, or forced, or unnatural for my lips to be meeting yours. It was always something I really wanted.

CLAIRE

You kiss when you don't want to?

SCOTT

Sure. I think everyone does. You never leave someone you're dating at the time, and you don't really want to kiss them but feel like you have to kiss them good bye?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I guess.

SCOTT

I never remember feeling that with you. Each kiss was as exciting as the last. I was always like, "SHE'S kissing ME?"

CLAIRE

Oh come on, it can't have been that exciting.

SCOTT

No, it was! I was constantly terrified that you would figure out who you were kissing and it would stop.

CLAIRE

You can't say that.

SCOTT

Why not?

CLAIRE

Because you're the one who left.

SCOTT

I know. And when I think that I'm the reason I don't get to kiss you anymore...that might be the worst part. If you had dumped me, then I would know that you weren't interested, but I did the dumping - I ended the relationship when you didn't want to, and so I know that I could have been with you. This could have been our wedding day if I hadn't been such an idiot.

CLAIRE

You really think we would have made it this long?

SCOTT

I know it.

CLAIRE

How? You would have gotten bored - you did get bored.

SCOTT

I'm still not bored of you.

CLAIRE

You've always had someone.

SCOTT

What?

CLAIRE

You've always had someone, even while you were chasing me. That had to help alleviate the boredom.

SCOTT

I suppose it might have. But I was always thinking of you. And I didn't always have someone.

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

SCOTT

I was definitely single when we got ice cream.

CLAIRE

I'm not sure you're making the point you think you are.

An effect. They're in the ice cream place. Claire is sitting at a table. She's 16.

SCOTT

It's weird that we both drive now.

CLAIRE

I know, right! All those miles our parents drove between our houses, and movies. I suppose it must be a bit of a parent's nightmare when their freshman and sophomore children decide to date someone that lives a few towns over.

SCOTT

Yeah. Unlucky for them that we met.

A laugh stifled by the elephant in the room.

CLAIRE

How's Bethany?

SCOTT

We broke up, actually.

CLAIRE

When?

SCOTT

A couple of days ago.

She considers.

CLAIRE

Thursday?

SCOTT  
(Caught)

Yeah.

CLAIRE  
That's not why you called me, is it?

SCOTT  
Not in as direct a way as that...no.

CLAIRE  
Scott...don't do this.

SCOTT  
I broke up with her because I wanted to call you.

CLAIRE  
Scott...I can't.

SCOTT  
What?

CLAIRE  
I can't do this again.

SCOTT  
Do what?

CLAIRE  
Whatever this is. This conversation. This relationship. Us.

SCOTT  
It will be different this time.

CLAIRE  
You can't just say that. Saying that doesn't make it true.

SCOTT  
I won't get restless.

CLAIRE  
Yes you will.

No.

SCOTT

How do you know?

CLAIRE

Because now I've seen it. Really seen things without you. And I don't like them.

SCOTT

She starts to protest.

SCOTT

No. I have. I think that we were just too young when we started. I was too young. I wasn't mature enough for what our relationship could be. For what it was.

CLAIRE

Scott. We're still really young.

SCOTT

I know.

CLAIRE

We're just in high school. There's a long life ahead of us.

SCOTT

I know.

CLAIRE

And I can't do this again. Not now.

SCOTT

Not now?

CLAIRE

Not while I'm still in high school.

SCOTT

Why not?

CLAIRE

I just can't let myself waste my high school years being on again, off again with you. There's this guy -

SCOTT

Oh. I didn't realize you had a boyfriend...

CLAIRE

Well, I don't. I don't know - we just started seeing each other. I really want to see where things go with him.

SCOTT

I see. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have -

CLAIRE

No. You didn't know. I took the call. I agreed to meet with you.

Silence.

SCOTT

Why did you?

CLAIRE

Why did I what?

SCOTT

Agree to meet with me.

CLAIRE

I don't know. Because I care about you.

SCOTT

Sure.

CLAIRE

Hey. That's not fair. Just because I can't date you right now doesn't mean that I don't care about you.

SCOTT

I know. I know. That wasn't fair of me. I'm sorry.

CLAIRE

It's alright.

SCOTT

Why do you keep saying “right now”? And “can’t”?

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

SCOTT

Why “can’t” you date me? Don’t you just not want to?

CLAIRE

No. I can’t. Because I made promises.

SCOTT

Promises? To who?

CLAIRE

Myself. My friends.

SCOTT

About me?

CLAIRE

About...us. I promised them I wouldn’t date you again while I was still in high school.

SCOTT

Why would you promise that?

CLAIRE

Because I think it’s a good idea.

SCOTT

Why would they make you promise that?

CLAIRE

Because they were there when you dumped me. Both times.

Pause.

SCOTT

I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have -

CLAIRE

Don't. We've been there. We've covered it. I'm here now. And you're here. And we're not going to date again. Not now, at least.

SCOTT

Then you might consider...

CLAIRE

I don't know. I can't say. All I can say is that I can't date you now. And I can't date you next year.

SCOTT

But after that?

CLAIRE

If it works out. If you still feel for me the way you feel now. If I feel that way.

SCOTT

I'll wait for you.

CLAIRE

That's sweet.

SCOTT

I'm serious.

CLAIRE

Scott, you shouldn't force yourself to wait for me.

SCOTT

I won't be forcing myself. I want to wait for you.

An effect. We're back in the present.

CLAIRE

How long did you wait?

SCOTT

I had a girlfriend within the week.

CLAIRE

Quite the wait.



SCOTT

Stop it.

CLAIRE

Stop what?

SCOTT

If you were dating, then why shouldn't I?

CLAIRE

I wasn't the one who said they'd wait.

SCOTT

So now you're holding it against me?

CLAIRE

I'm not holding anything against you, I'm just saying that we've been here before. You've said you'd wait, and you didn't. Things didn't work out for me and that guy, and I went looking for you. Hoping you'd waited, like you said you would.

SCOTT

But I was engaged.

CLAIRE

Yes.

Silence.

CLAIRE

Why couldn't you have just waited?

SCOTT

It was too painful to talk to you and not be with you. I was lonely without you. I was young and stupid.

CLAIRE

You're still young and stupid.

SCOTT

Until I'm old and stupid.

CLAIRE

Mind if I put on some music?

She starts some music.

SCOTT

You okay?

CLAIRE

Just...a lot happening today. Why?

SCOTT

Piano music.

She smiles. He remembered.

CLAIRE

It's just...you're here. For another one of our lovely conversations. And I'm getting married in 12 minutes.

SCOTT

No, you're not.

CLAIRE

I'm not?

SCOTT

Nope.

CLAIRE

What makes you so sure?

SCOTT

Because the ceremony isn't for another 57 minutes. You just have to leave for the church in 12 minutes.

CLAIRE

Oh. Right.

Scott smiles. He's getting somewhere.

SCOTT

Why do you hate these conversations so much?

CLAIRE

I don't hate them. I hate the aftermath.

He waits her out.

CLAIRE

You plant your little seed. That little tiny bit of doubt and hope and anger and frustration and nostalgia that you bring out in me. And it just sits back there, gnawing at me, every time I'm unhappy with my boyfriend, or a guy talks to me in a bar, or I see a cute guy across the room - it makes me think of you and what we were and what we are and what we could be, and then I just want a drink and to slap you and kiss you all at the same time.

It lands.

SCOTT

Can your fiancée dance?

CLAIRE

Yes, actually.

SCOTT

Is that how you met?

CLAIRE

Do you really want to know about him?

SCOTT

I'm asking, aren't I?

CLAIRE

Yes. We did meet dancing.

SCOTT

You're sure he's not...

CLAIRE

Says the theater major.

SCOTT

But I can't dance.

CLAIRE

No, that's true.

SCOTT

Never had time for that.

CLAIRE

Never had time for a lot of things. That probably didn't help us.

SCOTT

What's that?

CLAIRE

How busy we both were in high school. It was hard to find time for each other.

SCOTT

There was always time to sneak in a phone call if we wanted to.

CLAIRE

Even if we were broken up.

An effect. We're back in time. Scott is 16 and riding on a bus. He pulls out a cell phone.

SCOTT

(On phone)

Hi. Is Claire there?

(On the line: She's asleep. May I ask who's calling?)

Oh. It's Scott.

(On the line: Scott? What can I tell her this is about?)

Well, I'd heard she had surgery...so I just wanted to call and see how she was doing.

(On the line: She's doing alright. Resting. I'll let her know you called.)

Thanks.

Claire is now 15. Recovering from surgery, she calls Scott. The following conversation occurs on phones.

SCOTT  
Hello?

CLAIRE  
Scott?

SCOTT  
Hi.

CLAIRE  
Hi.

SCOTT  
How are you?

CLAIRE  
I'm okay. Resting.

SCOTT  
That's what your Dad said. What was the surgery for?

CLAIRE  
You heard I had surgery but you didn't hear what kind?

SCOTT  
My source wasn't great.

CLAIRE  
They found a cyst on my ovary. They removed it.

SCOTT  
Oh, wow. Scary stuff.

CLAIRE  
Not too bad. More of an annoyance, really. Where are you right now?

SCOTT  
I'm actually on my way to a lacross game.

CLAIRE

You have a game today?

SCOTT

No, my team is going to South Bend to watch Notre Dame vs Air Force.

CLAIRE

Oh, cool!

SCOTT

Yeah.

(A moment)

I miss you.

CLAIRE

What's that?

SCOTT

I miss you.

CLAIRE

Scott...

SCOTT

I do. Can we talk about it sometime?

CLAIRE

Sure. Call me when you get home from the game.

SCOTT

I will. Feel better.

CLAIRE

Thanks. Have fun.

An effect. We're back in the present.

SCOTT

That time we got back together.

CLAIRE

That's the anomaly of the bunch.

SCOTT

Not my choice.

CLAIRE

That we got back together or that that was the only time?

SCOTT

That that was the only time.

CLAIRE

Yeah. It was definitely your choice.

SCOTT

What does that mean?

CLAIRE

You know exactly what it means.

SCOTT

No, I don't.

CLAIRE

If you hadn't jerked me around for a second time, then maybe you would have stood a better shot one of the other times you wanted to get back together when things fell apart around you.

SCOTT

What do you want me to say? I was an idiot when I was a teenage boy?

CLAIRE

I don't want you to say anything because you've already said it. We keep having this same conversation. Over and over and over. Meanwhile, nothing changes between us!

SCOTT

Because you never let them!

CLAIRE

Because I turn you down and you run out and start dating the next available girl, no matter what you may have said to me!

SCOTT  
What are you talking about?

CLAIRE  
You were supposed to wait for me!

SCOTT  
What?

CLAIRE  
You were supposed to wait for me. But you just planted a seed and ran away.

Silence.

SCOTT  
I know.

CLAIRE  
You know this can't happen.

SCOTT  
Why not?

CLAIRE  
You broke my heart twice, Scott. You've been jerking me around for over a decade and now I'm suddenly supposed to realize that we're meant to be? You destroyed me when you dumped me - the second time was easier because a part of me expected it, but the first time...

An effect. She is 14. They're on the phone with each other.

They're pretty quiet.

SCOTT  
I just...don't know...

CLAIRE  
What do you mean?



SCOTT

It's...just weird...you dancing with someone else...

CLAIRE

Professional dancers do it all the time.

SCOTT

That's good for them...that doesn't really make it less weird for me.

CLAIRE

I'm sure it feels weird now, but it's really no different than having a teammate.

SCOTT

Yes it is! First you don't make the same kind of contact with a teammate -

CLAIRE

What does that matter? The contact is only intimate if it's being done with intimate emotion - otherwise it's just choreography.

SCOTT

I don't think that's true.

CLAIRE

I'm telling you it is.

SCOTT

It's just weird.

CLAIRE

I'm sure you'll get used to it.

SCOTT

I'm not sure I will.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

Maybe we should just...I don't know...

CLAIRE

What?

Break up?

SCOTT

Silence.

Is that what you want?

CLAIRE

He takes a long time.

Yes.

SCOTT

A long silence. She hangs up. He does as well.

An effect. We're back in the present.

There's still a lot of silence.

Scott spots something on her bookcase.

My book.

SCOTT

What?

CLAIRE

You bought my book.

SCOTT

Of course I bought your book! How could I not?

CLAIRE

I don't know. You never said anything about it.

SCOTT

I never read it.

CLAIRE  
(After a moment)

You never read it?

SCOTT

CLAIRE  
No.

SCOTT  
Why not?

CLAIRE  
I don't know. It looked good. I read the back cover.

SCOTT  
Hey, that's something.

CLAIRE  
Did you write the jacket copy?

SCOTT  
No. The publisher has someone who does that.

CLAIRE  
Well, it sounded like a great book. A lot of people liked it.

SCOTT  
Did you see the movie?

CLAIRE  
They made it into a movie?

SCOTT  
No. My movie, "AA are for Lovers".

CLAIRE  
No.

SCOTT  
Oh.

CLAIRE  
That's not proper english, you know.

SCOTT  
I know. I've written a book, remember?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

SCOTT

I just liked the way it sounds. At least, I liked it better than “AA is for Lovers”.

CLAIRE

Hm.

SCOTT

What?

CLAIRE

You’re right. It definitely makes it stick in your head more.

SCOTT

That’s how I got the studio to keep it.

CLAIRE

You’ve really been working, huh?

SCOTT

I’m doing pretty well. I finally feel like I have some traction. That I’m not just spinning my wheels. I can even pay the bills. Crazy, huh?

They share a smile. She’s proud of him.

CLAIRE

Do the critics like you?

SCOTT

I couldn’t tell you, honestly. I think so. I haven’t gotten wildly great reviews for anything. I haven’t been declared the next great American writer or anything. But there haven’t been any, “This guy has no idea what he’s doing” reviews, either.

CLAIRE

Good.

SCOTT

Yeah.

Silence. Comfortable.

CLAIRE

Why don't you have any kids?

SCOTT

What?

CLAIRE

You've been married twice - why no kids?

SCOTT

Probably for the same reason I've been married twice.

CLAIRE

You don't want kids?

SCOTT

What? I want kids. I desperately want kids. To play catch with them, teach them to ride a bike, play lacrosse, how to get beat by a girl in a game of pool lacrosse with dignity.

CLAIRE

You never lost with dignity.

SCOTT

I know - but that doesn't mean that I can't teach them how to do it.

CLAIRE

So why no kids?

SCOTT

Because it's you, Claire. It's always been you. I mean, god damnet, this seed you keep talking about me planting in your head is a full grown watermelon in mine. I can't get you out, I can't suppress you, I can't move on from you - and there are at least two divorce attorney's richer for me trying. What else do you want me to do? There are five minutes before you have to leave for your wedding and I'm standing here, knowing that this is literally my last chance to have some calm in my life. To maybe start having nights of restless sleep about money or work like a normal person. So that for just one more night in my life I can sleep the whole night through because I know that I'm yours. So spurn me, shun me, or be with me - but know that I know this is it.

That if you go to that church and take those vows that I'm done for, that we're done for, and that I'm never getting married again. Because it's you, Claire, it's always been you. And if it can't be you, then it can't be anyone. I know, I've tried.

CLAIRE

That's not fair.

SCOTT

You keep saying that, but I don't know what you're trying to get at. None of this is fair, it just is what it is.

CLAIRE

You've told me that this would be it before.

SCOTT

No, you've told me.

CLAIRE

You've said you'd wait.

SCOTT

I'm not saying I'll wait. I'm saying I won't get married again if it's not you.

CLAIRE

Then you'll be waiting?

SCOTT

No. I know you won't be expecting me.

CLAIRE

Then what will you do?

SCOTT

Not sleep. Write. Maybe you'll finally see or read some of my work.

CLAIRE

You don't care if I do or not.

SCOTT

You're the only one I want to see my work. You're the reason I work. I thought that if maybe I made something worthwhile - that maybe then you'd notice me. Remember me.

Be impressed with me, and feel like I feel about you. That maybe I'd start to drive you as crazy as you've driven me without even trying. By just being you. The most perfect, wonderful, crazy, flawed human I know.

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

Inside and out, you are the most beautiful woman I've ever known.

CLAIRE

You don't mean that.

SCOTT

I do. I've meant it for years.

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

SCOTT

Open the note.

CLAIRE

Now?

SCOTT

I'm telling you the time is right.

CLAIRE

I don't think it is.

SCOTT

Because it's your wedding day.

Silence.

SCOTT

If I could go back in time - do you know what I'd do?

CLAIRE

What's that?

SCOTT

I'd go back to before our first date.

CLAIRE

And tell yourself not to go?

SCOTT

No. I'd tell myself to cherish every second with you. Maybe if I'd done that from the start, then everything would be different now.

An effect. Scott is waiting outside a movie theatre. Claire approaches. She's 14.

SCOTT

Hey!

CLAIRE

Hi.

They're not sure what to do. It's new for both of them.

SCOTT

Have you seen the first Spider-Man?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

SCOTT

I haven't.

CLAIRE

Seriously?

SCOTT

I don't think so.

CLAIRE

Are you sure this is the movie you want to see?



SCOTT

Yeah! Should still be a good movie - unless there's something else you want to see...

CLAIRE

Is there anything else out?

SCOTT

Nothing that looks good.

CLAIRE

Then no.

SCOTT

Then Spider-Man 2 it is. Will you explain anything I might need to know from the first?

CLAIRE

Sure.

SCOTT

Let's get tickets.

He holds out his hand. She takes it.

An effect. We're back in the present. They retrain each others hands as music plays. It's something you might hear as the first dance at a wedding.

SCOTT

Dance with me?

CLAIRE

What?

SCOTT

Dance with me.

CLAIRE

You can't dance.

SCOTT

I can fake it.

CLAIRE  
Not with me you can't.

SCOTT  
Then teach me.

They start to dance. Probably a waltz. It starts out awkward as she teaches him the steps. As the dance goes on, we see him transform from awkward and unsure to a supremely confident and beautiful partner.

As they dance, we watch them fall for each other again. Their bodies get closer, and closer. As the dance ends - they kiss.

Claire breaks the kiss.

CLAIRE  
Why did you send that letter?

SCOTT  
Because it was something I needed to tell you.

CLAIRE  
You changed the rules on me.

SCOTT  
What rules?

CLAIRE  
The rules of how this has worked. You're the one who's single and confused when we have these conversations. Not me. But that time...

SCOTT  
You were single.

CLAIRE  
Yes.

SCOTT  
And I wasn't.

CLAIRE  
No.

SCOTT  
That wasn't fair of me.

CLAIRE  
No. And you always do this - you plant these seeds at just the wrong time, and I'm just...tortured by it.

Silence.

CLAIRE  
I'm sorry, Scott.

SCOTT  
Why are you sorry? It's your wedding day.

CLAIRE  
Because, you -

SCOTT  
Don't worry about me. I don't worry about me. I only worry about you.

A moment.

SCOTT  
Will he make you happy?

CLAIRE  
We'll have a good life together.

SCOTT  
Will he make you happy?

CLAIRE  
He won't drive me crazy.

Silence. He knows he should leave. He lingers.

He starts to say something, but he can't find the words.

Scott drifts out of the room.

An effect. We're on the sideline of a lacrosse field. Claire is 14, waiting for the game to start.

Scott, 15, approaches her.

SCOTT

Alright, I have to ask - how do you say your last name?

CLAIRE

Pacella. It's Italian, so the c is more a "-ch".

SCOTT

I was trying to sound it out and probably never would have gotten there.

Claire smiles. Scott returns it.

SCOTT

I'm Scott.

CLAIRE

I'm Claire.

SCOTT

Claire Pacella. I like that.

They share a smile.

Blackout.