

## **TONIGHT WE BEGIN AGAIN**

By John Lincoln

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### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

ALLISON

DENISE

LAYLA

SYD

CHLOE

ZACH

LENNY

STEVE

RYAN

NOTE: This play is intended for production by high school aged students (though anyone else is welcome to try it). As such, stage directions and prompted emotional cues are kept to a bare minimum as to encourage the exploration and discovery by the actors. Any character details which need to be changed for geography, age, or any other purpose decided upon by the production, is certainly valid in the eyes of this playwright.

### **PROLOGUE**

#### **MUSIC: POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE**

Montage shows several students graduating from Williamson High School. This is done in a way to elicit the feeling of watching a series of snap shots, with ALLISON taking each picture using a digital camera.

The nine students listed above represent the entire school. There is a sense that they are members of a crowd, not the entire crowd itself.

We see the parade, the seating, people getting their diplomas, the celebration, etc.

This ends with a blackout, as the entire cast takes seats in the dark along the back of the stage. The play is performed with the actors, in character, watching the performers play the scenes (or not, as selected by the director). They can remove cap and gown as is comfortable to present their more character motivated costumes beneath. Some may do so now, some may wait until their scenes start.

Some scene transitions come with a song snippet, basically anywhere it would not break the momentum between scenes in a bad way. Song selection is up to the collective production's discretion.

## SCENE 1

ALLISON steps forward and prepares a video camera, which faces a staged seating area. She checks her watch, and looks up to see ZACH enter. ZACH is reading a book, and barely looks up as he makes his way to his seat.

ALLISON: Okay, thanks for...

ZACH holds up a finger to stop her. He reads some more.

ALLISON: I have to do a bunch of these so...

ZACH holds up a finger again. There is a painful pause before he puts the book down.

ZACH: Sorry. Had to finish that chapter.

ALLISON: Thanks. Okay, so you ready?

ZACH: What exactly is this?

ALLISON: Didn't you read the fliers they passed out? There's been, like, seventeen of them this week alone.

ZACH: Sorry. Nope.

ALLISON: (sighs). The school wants everyone to reflect on their past, or about what they've learned... or their future. Really, just talk about whatever you're feeling.

ZACH: And we're doing this why?

ALLISON: Because the future generations matriculating through Williamson High School will reap the benefits of knowing the myriad issues which plagued previous graduates.

ZACH: Oh.

ALLISON: ... And because... the school is hoping to avoid the disaster they had last year, and they figured if they keep everyone here to do these interviews, they can avoid losing track of all the students before they bus everyone to the Rec Center tonight.

ZACH: ... I see....

ALLISON: ... And because I didn't have time to do a senior project, so I worked a deal with Principal Howard. Doing this will allow me to turn the temporary diploma I got today, into a real one.

ZACH: Gotchya.

ALLISON: Ok. Cool.

ZACH: ...So... what am I doing again?

ALLISON: We're already over time. I've only allotted three minutes per student!

ZACH: So, am I done?

ALLISON: No! I'm turning on this camera now. Just talk.

ALLISON hits a button on the camera.

ZACH: Oh... okay. Well. I'm Zach.... I'm graduating from WHS, well, I guess, I just graduated from WHS. I'm, um, 5'4. 130. I like long walks on the beach...

ALLISON: What about your future plans?

ZACH: Future plans? I don't... I don't really plan for the future. I just sort of, I dunno. I just let it come as it comes I guess...

## SCENE 2

LENNY and STEVE step forward. LENNY is carrying a letter, considering it carefully as he walks. On it, in ornate lettering, is written 'Layla'. STEVE sees LENNY, and signals a hello, which LENNY completely misses.

STEVE: You alright, man?

LENNY: What? Oh. Yeah. I'm okay.

STEVE: You sure?

(beat)

LENNY: I'm going to do it.

STEVE: Do what? Wait. Is that it?

LENNY: This is it.

STEVE: That is IT?

LENNY: Yep. This is it.

STEVE: The letter?

LENNY: THE. Letter.

(beat)

STEVE: You're an idiot.

LENNY: I know.

STEVE: Why do you want to ruin this perfect day?

LENNY: You're a glass-is-half-empty kind of guy, aren't you?

STEVE: No. I'm a 'the-glass-isn't-full-of-liquid-stupidity' kind of guy.

LENNY: Well. Fine. Maybe I've seen too many movies.

STEVE: I would agree with that assessment.

LENNY: Whatever.

STEVE: I'm not trying to be obtuse, Lenny. I'm telling you the facts. Giving a letter to the girl you've

been in love with for the last five years, on the night we've graduated, no less... Well, it isn't on the approved list of things a friend lets another friend do.

LENNY: No. I know.

STEVE: So do the right thing. Give me the letter.

LENNY: I never liked you that way Steve.

STEVE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is for your own good. Give me the letter.

LENNY: I can't do it.

STEVE: I'm not joking Lenny. Give me the letter.

LENNY: I can't. Besides. This isn't the only copy.

STEVE: You made COPIES?

LENNY: Sure. I have a few.

STEVE: Define 'a few'.

LENNY: Six.

STEVE: You have six copies of this letter?

LENNY: Of this draft of the letter, yes.

STEVE: There are drafts?

LENNY: Yeah.

STEVE: How many?

LENNY: Well. Six.

STEVE: Six?

LENNY: Six. But that's a coincidence. There isn't, like, six copies of every draft. It's just how it turned out with the last draft.

STEVE: Typed?

LENNY: God, no. You don't TYPE a letter like this.

STEVE: Sorry. I'm not up on the standard operating procedure for this sort of thing

LENNY: You're mocking me, but I'll tell you anyway. When you're writingh a letter like this, you buy a notebook, and then you write each draft down, very specifically, in that notebook. That way you have a point of reference...

STEVE: Plus, it makes the prosecution's case easier when they are convicting you of being psychotic.

LENNY: ...And when you're done, you write out the last version of the last draft on special paper. The kind of paper they used in Ancient Greece.

STEVE: Papyrus.

LENNY: What?

STEVE: The Greeks didn't have paper. They used Papyrus.

LENNY: You're killing my story.

STEVE: I sure hope so. You're not giving her that letter.

LENNY: I am.

STEVE: No, you're not.

LENNY: We'll see.

STEVE: Yeah. We'll see.

They return to their seats.

### SCENE 3

DENISE enters, she sits in the interview seat as ALLISON runs the camera. Off, on the other edge of the stage, sits ZACH reading.

DENISE: So, just go?

ALLISON: Just go.

DENISE: My name is Denise. My boyfriend is Zachery Brown, we've been together for two years. Well sort of. I mean, in total we've been together for two years. If you don't count last summer, when we took a break. And some of those other, smaller, sort of, you know... Breaks. But anyway, we've been in love for a year. (beat) At least, I have anyway. Zach has been in love with me since the beginning. (beat) We're both going to URI next year. We both applied to the same schools. I got in to UNH, which was my first choice, but I decided it would be better for our, you know, for our relationship if we went to the same school. He didn't get in to UNH. So, we're going to URI. But we're both majoring in Poly-Sci, so we'll have ALL our classes together. And we'll be in the same dorm, though they don't let guys and girls room together. But I'm sure by the end of the first week, we'll have things all worked out. (beat) Our entire future is laid out in front of us, and we're going to get through it all. Together.

DENISE rises as the interview part of the stage darkens.

DENISE: Hey!

ZACH: (Distracted) Hey.

DENISE: Whatchya reading?

ZACH: Hmm?

DENISE: The book? What is it?

ZACH: Oh. On the Road.

DENISE: Still.

ZACH: Yeah.

DENISE: Is that... I mean, is it a serious book?

ZACH: It's Kerouac.

DENISE: Kerouac?

ZACH: Kerouac.

DENISE: Is that... a genre?

ZACH: Jack Kerouac. He's the author.

DENISE: Ohhhh. Sounds boring.

ZACH: Yeah. I like it.

DENISE: Cool.

Looooooong pause. He reads. She tries something else.

DENISE: So, where you taking me tonight?

ZACH: I thought everyone was going to Grad Night.

DENISE: Noone goes to Grad Night.

ZACH: Yesterday, on the phone, you said you wanted to go to Grad Night.

DENISE: Oh. Well, Syd and Layla and Chloe aren't going. So, you know. I don't want to go.

ZACH: (back to reading) Hmmmm.

DENISE: But Gilbert Hannahan is throwing a party, so I thought we could go to that. Everyone's going to be there. Should be a good time. He lives up in the woods, back behind the reservoir, so the cops never go back there. It should have a chance to be a pretty good party. (beat) God, I just want to celebrate! We've spent twelve years dealing with all this crap, we finally finish, we finally get a chance to enjoy ourselves for once, and they keep us couped up here waiting for buses most of us aren't even going to take! I mean, that's bordering on criminal isn't it?

ZACH: Mm-hmmm.

DENISE: They should be dragged to their deaths for doing this to us, right?

ZACH: Right.

DENISE: And then a dragon will fly in from a thunderhead in the north, take me back to his lair and threaten to eat me whole as his hungry dragon babies tear my flesh from my bones.

ZACH: Sure. Mm-hmm.

DENISE: But I'll survive the ordeal, and crawl back with one arm and no legs, down the mountain, over the bridge which will be guarded by an ugly troll of some sort, I mean, I'll have to outsmart the troll. You know what I mean?

ZACH: Yeah. I hear ya.

She knocks the book out of his hand.

ZACH: Hey!

DENISE: You aren't even listening to me!

ZACH: Yes I was!

DENISE: What did I say?

ZACH: Something about... I don't know. A party. You want to go to some party.

DENISE: And then?

ZACH: I don't know what then.

DENISE: What?

ZACH: I don't know.

DENISE: What do you MEAN you don't know?

ZACH: I don't know.

DENISE: Zachery Brown, I was nearly eaten by dragons. And you don't KNOW?

ZACH: What?

DENISE: I hate you!

ZACH: I was reading before you came over and started, you know...

DENISE: Started what.

ZACH: Blabbering. Or whatever.

DENISE: Blabbering?!?!

ZACH: Maybe I could have picked a better word.

DENISE: Zachery Brown. I am done. WE are done.

ZACH: Wait. What? Why?

DENISE: If you have to ask, then you don't deserve to know.

She stomps off. He watches her go, then returns to his book.

There is a primal yell, starting from off stage, ZACH doesn't seem to notice. RYAN comes rushing on stage, he full out tackles ZACH to the ground.

ZACH: Ow!

RYAN: Tackle point! You're it.

ZACH: I was reading.

RYAN: Are you kidding me? We've been playing Tackle Point since we were five. Unless we are in a truce, it's fair game.

ZACH: We ARE in a truce!

RYAN: No we're not.

ZACH: Last night... we said "Truce through graduation."

RYAN: Graduation ended like thirty minutes ago!

ZACH: You're ridiculous.

RYAN: Well, maybe. But you're it.

ZACH: Fine. I'm it.

RYAN: Who am I going to play Tackle Point with next year? I'm gonna have to get a plane from Michigan to URI one day, just to randomly win a tackle point in the middle of one of your classes.

ZACH: Whatever.

RYAN: You okay?

ZACH: Yeah. Denise broke up with me again.

RYAN: Well, it is Thursday, isn't it?

ZACH: You're funny.

RYAN: Oh, speaking of break ups, I need to go hunt down Syd. She wants to 'talk'.

ZACH: Uh oh.

RYAN: Yeah. You sure you're okay?

ZACH: Yeah, you know how it is.

RYAN: Well, good luck with that.

ZACH: Thanks.

RYAN: Man, I can't believe we did it. We're actually FORMER students now. This is crazy!

ZACH: Yeah.

RYAN: (after an awkward beat). Yeah. Okay. Well... Later.

ZACH: Later.

They go their separate ways, ZACH reading his book again.

#### SCENE 4

LAYLA, SYD, and CHLOE rise and take stage. They approach together, already in conversation.

CHLOE: ...My God, I'm so glad I am not going to have to deal with that. College is going to suck.

LAYLA: What? Which part?

CHLOE: ALL of it. The studying, the professors, the eight AM classes...

LAYLA: ....the parties, the guys, the fun.

CHLOE: Romanticize all you want. You're going to be begging for my life by Christmas. My life is going to be perfect.

SYD: Which part? Your 40 hours a week at Fat Mike's selling French Fries and Super Moo Shakes?

CHLOE: I'm quitting next week.

LAYLA (to SYD): Syd, she's quitting next week.

SYD: RIGHT! I forgot. (sidebar) Hey, Layla?

LAYLA: Yes?

SYD: Do you remember someone, we used to know her, she was this girl. Yeaaaaah tall. Brunette. Used to tell us every week she was quitting, moving to the city, making her fortune?

LAYLA: Yes! Yes! Annoying girl, right? Always talked about the big things she was going to do, but she never did any of it?

SYD: Right! That's her! Who the hell was that?

CHLOE: I hate you guys.

LAYLA: What was her NAME?

SYD: I can't remember. It's on the tip of my tongue.

CHOLE: Funny. I'm right here.

SYD: Was it Karen?



CHLOE: Eww. No.

SYD: Carmine?

CHLOE: SHUT UP! I get it.

LAYLA: Oh! Hey Chloe. Didn't see you there.

CHLOE: Alright, alright. Point taken. Geez. You are brutal.

SYD: Us?

CHLOE: I guess I'll just have to prove you wrong. You are going to be so jealous.

LAYLA: I'd loooooove that.

CHLOE: Look, college isn't for everyone, okay?

SYD: Hey, you don't have to tell me. My dad didn't finish high school, and he's practically running the freakin' city now. I don't care that you're not going to school, but I'm sick of you putting down Layla for getting accepted to Brown, and then pretending like you're somehow better off. I don't care what you do...

LAYLA: Syd you don't have to...

SYD: I do Layla, I do. I'm sick of this. Look. Chloe. Until you actually DO something, why don't you shut your mouth and keep the drama to yourself. I'm sick of it.

SYD exits hastily. CHLOE is trying to stay composed. LAYLA wants to make light of it.

LAYLA: Wow. She snapped!

CHLOE: I don't take it personally. She's just dreading talking to Ryan.

LAYLA: What do you mean?

CHLOE: She thinks they're done.

LAYLA: Well. Whatever. That doesn't give her the right to treat you like that.

CHLOE: No kidding. Why am I defending her?

LAYLA: (laughs) That's what I'M thinking.

CHLOE: She does that though. She's fine, fine, fine. Then she turns. I wouldn't be surprised if Ryan is done with her too.

LAYLA: You okay Chloe?

CHLOE: I'm okay. I just... I don't know what I'm going to do now that summer's here, you know?

LAYLA: You're full of it. I know we haven't exactly been close over the years, but even I know you've wanted to be in the fashion industry since the womb.

CHLOE: Yeah... I applied.

LAYLA: What?

CHLOE: To school. I applied. I haven't talked about it, because we weren't all that close before, and anyway, you're talking about Brown or Princeton. Syd's like, 'Gee, should I play basketball on a scholarship from UCONN or Stanford?' and I'm at home applying to, like, design schools.

LAYLA: Hey, you go where you want to go...

CHLOE: No, no, no. It's not like that. I bombed English the last two years. Barely passed. And I got a

C minus in art last year.

LAYLA: You? How?

CHLOE: (shrugs) I was going out with Steve back then. We had art together, and he hated it. So we skipped, like, every class. We went and got coffee, or we went to his house and made out in his parents bedroom.

LAYLA: He did that with YOU too?

CHLOE: Off topic! Forget I said anything. Anyway, moral of the story: Don't almost fail artsy classes if you want to be, you know, an artist.

LAYLA: I'm sorry Chloe.

CHLOE: It's my own fault.

LAYLA: Well, you can take a year off. Do some things you want, and recommit next year.

CHLOE: Yeah. We'll see.

LAYLA: Hey, at least you won't have to deal with eight AM classes, and professors, and studying.

CHLOE: (after a pause) But I really want to.

CHLOE goes back to her seat, LAYLA lingers.

## SCENE 5

RYAN and SYD are lounging around, looking bored.

SYD: Oh, you might not believe this. Chloe and Layla were having an actual conversation. I sort of flipped on Chloe, and Layla actually defended her.

RYAN: They've been that way all month, haven't they?

SYD: I guess so. I just can't believe it. I mean, they hated each other.

RYAN: That's what happens I guess. Everyone thinks it's unique to them. I remember Phil telling me, when he graduated a few years ago I mean, I remember him telling me how all the cliques broke down at the end of senior year. Everyone just sort of... forgot all their animosity.

SYD: Really?

RYAN: I guess it's normal.

SYD: I guess so. But, I kind of feel like it's nice that I don't have to pretend to like everyone anymore. Like Gilbert with his stupid party tonight? I had six years of Chem Labs and English projects where I was stuck with that kid. I'm done jpretending he doesn't smell bad. Don't you think?

RYAN: I don't know.

SYD: Yeah... I guess we're all sort of in the same boat.

RYAN: Are we?

SYD: What?

RYAN: In the same boat?

He kisses her sweetly.

SYD: What was that for?

RYAN: I thought you needed it.

SYD: Why?

RYAN: Because you're breaking up with me.

SYD: What?

RYAN: I'm not mad. I won't pretend that I don't care, but I understand.

SYD: Ryan...

RYAN: You always said, every time we had a good night, every time things got more serious, you always said "Once we graduate, I don't know what'll happen."

SYD: I did?

RYAN: EVERY time. I made bets with myself about it. You'd have a good game, we'd grab a bite at Antonio's afterwards, you'd get something without meat, and I would get something with only meat. You'd make fun of me for being a carnivore, and I'd tell you that you were too small. I'd offer you my burger, which you would promptly reject.

SYD: (laughs)

RYAN: So then we'd do that good thing, that fun night. And I'd wait for it. Sometimes it would be while we ate. Sometimes it would be while we drove home. Sometimes it would be that night on the phone, or on IM. Sometimes it would be a call the next day. But EVERY time we had a really good night, it would always be followed by: "Once we graduate, I don't know what'll happen."

SYD: I didn't even realize it.

RYAN: That's why it was a joke. That's what made it funny. You always said it with the same inflection too, "I don't know what'll happen."

SYD: Geez. I'm sorry.

RYAN: Don't be.

SYD: So you think I'm breaking up with you?

RYAN: Well, we just graduated, right?

SYD: Well, sure.

RYAN: Let's just say... I think I know what'll happen.

## SCENE 6

ZACH sits reading his book. DENISE approaches.

DENISE: Look. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have flipped out. I'm having a tough week. I know that you know that my Dad got laid off, but it's really stressing my Mom out. They've been fighting, and it's

really making things tough. They didn't even make it to graduation until halfway through the ceremony. I mean, obviously my last name is Young, so it's not like they missed me walking. But I spent the whole day having to wonder IF they were going to miss it. I think, I mean really, I think I'm just stressed out. But I shouldn't take it out on you. You're really, you know, the only bit of sanity I have left. If it wasn't for you, I'm not sure I'd be able to make it through the day. So, I guess, what I'm saying is that... I love you. I'm sorry. And we don't have to be broken up.

ZACH rises, kisses her. Hugs her. DENISE smiles at him.

ZACH: I love you too Denise.

DENISE: Good.

ZACH: But can you maybe start over. I was just finishing a chapter when you started, and I only heard like the last bit there.

DENISE: I HATE YOU!

She storms off.

## SCENE 7

RYAN is in the interview seat.

RYAN: I really don't want to be doing this right now. It isn't the best time. Look, yesterday I would have had words of wisdom and I probably would have misquoted Frost about woods diverging in the road. Today? All I have are questions without answers. I mean, I don't know what's going to happen with my girlfriend. My best friend is staying here while I go off to Michigan... I'm not sure how I'm going to deal with all this change. That's not to say I can't. I just don't know how I'm going to do it. And I don't know if I'm going to do it well. You know, I've never been away from my parents for more than a weekend. I've spent my entire life in Williamson. I've never been anywhere else. Heck, I couldn't even tell you what the capital of Michigan is! It's all so... intimidating. (beat) So if you want some sort of advice, some sort of, I don't know, words of wisdom... I guess I'd just say to enjoy it while it lasts. To appreciate what you've got. Because it can be sort of, I don't know. Fleeting. (beat) Am I good?

ALLISON: I'm good if you're good.

## SCENE 8

LENNY approaches LAYLA with his letter strategically hidden.

LENNY: (Singing) You got me on my knees, Layla.

LAYLA: There it is again. I can always count on you to sing that song to me. Not like I had to grow up with it, you know? Not like EVERY person who has ever met me hasn't sang it to me.

LENNY: Right. Sorry

LAYLA: I'm just kidding.

LENNY: Oh. Right. Sorry.

LAYLA: Stop apologizing.

LENNY: Sorry. Crap. Sorry! No! Ok. I'm done.

LAYLA: (laughs)

LENNY: So. Hi. Nice ceremony, huh?

LAYLA: What, graduation?

LENNY: Right. Graduation.

LAYLA: Very nice. Regal even.

LENNY: Good word.

LAYLA: I'm so glad we all got stuck here doing Allison's project rather than being able to get out and actually enjoy the day we graduate. This has to be one of the all time bad ideas, don't you think?

LENNY: I dunno. It has it's advantages, I guess.

LAYLA: You okay Lenny? You're sweating.

LENNY: I, well, I mean. It's May.

LAYLA: Good observation.

LENNY: But that isn't why I'm sweating.

LAYLA: Oh?

LENNY: Should I tell you why I'm sweating?

LAYLA: If I had a nickle for every guy who asked me that...

LENNY: Do guys sweat a lot around you?

LAYLA: I was being funny.

LENNY: Oh! (bad laugh)

LAYLA: Can I do something for you Lenny?

LENNY: Sort of. Yes. You should take this. And you should read it. And you should, at some future juncture, let me know, how it, you know, how it touches you.

LAYLA: Lenny...

LENNY: Don't say anything now. You don't have to say anything. If you say anything, I'll just sweat more. Just read it.

LAYLA: But Lenny...

LENNY leaves quickly while LAYLA opens the letter, but returns to her seat.

## SCENE 9

SYD is in the interview seat. ALLISON is looking at her watch.

SYD: ....so, God, I just don't know.

ALLISON: These videos are supposed to be a little more... concise.

SYD: (ignoring her) Should I break up with him now? I completely thought that he would be heartbroken. I thought this was going to be the hardest thing I've ever done. I don't know how I feel about the fact that he WANTS to.

ALLISON: I'm already behind schedule...

SYD: (still ignoring) I just.... I feel like everything is somehow NEW again. I didn't expect to feel this. I didn't think he cared that much, or that he paid attention that much. Hell, he pays more attention than I do.

ALLISON: Good. Well, that pretty much wraps up what I need...

SYD: What am I going to do? What am I supposed to do?

## SCENE 10

ZACH enters as DENISE finishes a conversation with CHLOE.

CHLOE: The party should be better than going to the stupid Rec Center.

DENISE: I guess so. But, I dunno, haven't all the parties been sort of the same this year? At least the Rec Center has a pool, and actual food.

CHLOE: But it's what they WANT us to do.

DENISE: Yeah, whatever. I guess I'll go to the party. I mean, I'll do whatever you guys do.

CHLOE: Well, we'll see. But Zach is sort of stalking us, and I'm too lazy to make up some excuse for why I can't be here.

ZACH: Oh, you don't have to...

CHLOE: I'm sure you guys have some breaking up and getting back together to do anyway.

DENISE: Chloe!

CHLOE: (laughing) Don't bother. And don't tell me I'm wrong.

DENISE: It's complicated.

CHLOE: Calculus is complicated. Chemistry is complicated. You two? Pretty easy. See ya later.

ZACH: See ya.

There is a pause as CHLOE exits. DENISE and ZACH consider each other.

ZACH: So. Are we, technically speaking now, are we broken up, or are we together? I've lost track.

DENISE: Shut up Zach. Don't be stupid.

ZACH: I can't help stupid. But I'm serious about this. I mean, the whole thing is kind of silly.

DENISE: You think I'm silly?

ZACH: Don't do that.

DENISE: What?

ZACH: Put words in my mouth. Pretend like I said something I didn't. Or that I meant something I didn't.

DENISE: You're being very... serious.

ZACH: Yeah. I'm sorry if I've been distant. I know I've been reading, or whatever. Well, honestly, I haven't really been reading at all. I've been on the same chapter for months. (beat) There's something I'm going to tell you. And you're going to be really mad. And not just at me. But you have to promise something.

DENISE: I don't like this.

ZACH: I know. You don't have to. But you might eventually. I think that you WILL eventually. I love you so much Denise... But you can't go to URI.

DENISE: Wait. What?

ZACH: You have to go to UNH.

DENISE: What are you talking about? We're going to URI.

ZACH: No. I'm going to URI. Because I like it there, and because they have a good Bio major.

DENISE: You're going for Poly Sci!

ZACH: I'm not. You are. And I should have been honest about this awhile ago. But I just don't want to do Poly Sci anymore. I don't think I ever wanted to go for Poly Sci.

DENISE: This is stupid. We're going to URI. Even if I wanted to go to UNH...

ZACH: You do. You've said it a million times. You have a freaking UNH bumper sticker on your Jetta.

DENISE:... I like the colors.

ZACH: Stop.

DENISE: Look. I can't go to UNH. It's way past done.

ZACH: Yeah. That's where the part comes in about you being mad.

DENISE: Zach...

ZACH: The deadline for UNH was May first. I talked to your Dad that morning. I told him how I felt, and I told him how you REALLY felt. But you were so stubborn, you were so insistent. You wouldn't think about yourself for even five seconds. So I talked to your Dad. He put down a deposit. I know you're worried with your Dad getting laid off, but the deposit wasn't much. You have the money, the loans will follow you. But, none of that... that crap matters. The fact is, you have to go. And I have to stay here.

DENISE: Zach... I mean. That's not fair...

ZACH: ...I know...

DENISE: ...This is MY life...

ZACH: ...I know...

DENISE: ...This is my life Zach!...

ZACH: ...I know!...

DENISE:...You don't get to dictate...

ZACH: ...I KNOW! I'm not! If you really want to go to URI... By all means, go. But it's not what you want Denise.

DENISE: Who are you to say that?

ZACH: I'm just the guy who's been in love with you for the last two years. Who would do anything for you. Who would talk to your Dad, who never much liked me, to get him to put money down on something that may never happen.

DENISE: What about us.

ZACH: I don't know. I don't know. But I want to make it work.

DENISE: Do you?

ZACH: I do. (beat) Are you mad at me?

DENISE: Very.

ZACH: I knew you would be. I'm just glad we got through this without breaking up again.

DENISE: We were broken up when it started.

ZACH: Oh. I didn't realize that.

## SCENE 11

LENNY hangs out, LAYLA returns.

LAYLA: I read it.

LENNY: You read it? Already? You don't... you don't need more time?

LAYLA: No, it's pretty much all there.

LENNY: So what did you think?

LAYLA: Well I really...

LENNY: Before you answer. Just know that it took me a long time to write that, I really, I mean I considered every single word I put in there. Just, please, don't take it lightly.

LAYLA: Oh, no. I don't take it lightly. I definitely, I mean, I appreciate this.

LENNY: Ok...

LAYLA: I wish I could give you a better answer.

LENNY: Oh God.

LAYLA: Please, Lenny, please don't make this hard. I almost didn't come talk to you about this. It would have been a lot easier to just ignore it. A lot easier. But I'm trying to... I want to be fair.

LENNY: Sorry, ok. Sorry. What then?

LAYLA: I just, I don't feel the same way. We've always had fun, I think you're a great guy. But, I've just never thought of you that way.

LENNY: Yeah, I know that. I mean, that's the point of the letter. To make you feel like you could see me that way.

LAYLA: I'm sorry Lenny.

LENNY: It's okay. Thanks for talking to me. I mean, I know you didn't have to.



LENNY walks away.

RYAN walks by, in conversation with CHLOE. ZACH rushes in, tackles him.

ZACH: Tackle point. You're it.

## SCENE 12

STEVE is in the interview seat.

STEVE: So, I guess my advice is to have fun. I've enjoyed high school. I'm gonna miss my friends, I'm gonna miss seeing people I got to know so well. But I also feel like college is the next step in a lifelong process. Or working, or being a stay at home dad, or whatever you choose to do next. There's this Stephen King book called Everything's Eventual. That sort of sums up how I feel. I mean, I've never read the book. But I like the title. Everything is eventual. Life will happen, and the great thing about it is that we have all the time in the world to kick back and enjoy it.

ALLISON: Okay. All set. That was really good. I think that's the best one yet.

STEVE: Thanks.

ALLISON: You're funny. Your perspective on things, it's different. Like, most people seem to care about their boyfriend, or money, or their career twenty years from now. But you just, I dunno. You seem to be less... distracted.

STEVE: I'm sitting here, talking to a beautiful girl, I've graduated, I'm getting ready to go to a party. Life is great. I've never seen why things have to be so... dramatic all the time.

ALLISON: Some would say you just have it too easy.

STEVE: And hey, that's their right to say that.

ALLISON: (laughs) I like that attitude.

STEVE: Thanks for doing this. It's kind of cool.

ALLISON: You're the only one who has thanked me. Most everyone else hates me for keeping them here.

STEVE: Well, thanks. Again. You've been sitting here listening to everyone's crap, and noone has shown you any kind of consideration at all, so...

STEVE leans in to kiss her. She backs up, surprised.

ALLISON: Camera's still on.

STEVE goes, turns the camera away, then leans in to kiss her again. LENNY invades the set.

LENNY: I have to do this.

ALLISON: Excuse me...

LENNY: I'm sorry. I know my slot isn't for another thirty-three minutes. But I have to do this confessional thing.

ALLISON: It isn't really a...

LENNY: I need to do it. Now!

STEVE: You gave her the letter!

LENNY: I did.

STEVE: No!

LENNY: I'm sorry.

STEVE: Lenny, I know you want to do a video of you gloating about the presentation of your stupid letter, but you really should wait until she reads it.

ALLISON: I thought you were an optimist.

STEVE: I am. About things with a half a chance to succeed.

LENNY: I did give it to her. It was a disaster!

STEVE: (to Allison) See.

ALLISON: You wrote someone a letter?

LENNY: Layla.

ALLISON: You wrote LAYLA a letter?

LENNY: Look, can we do this or not?

ALLISON: That's a terrible idea.

LENNY: Where were you an hour ago?

STEVE: He wouldn't have listened.

LENNY: I want to do this thing.

ALLISON: Okay, okay. Let's go.

She gets things set up. LENNY waits impatiently.

LENNY: Alright. My advice to the next batch of students to suffer here at Williamson High School: Do not, under any circumstances, ever write anyone a letter. It may work in movies, but it doesn't work in real life. If your goal is ridicule and pain, or if you have some sort of unmedicated masochistic tendency, then by all means: write away. But if you are a normal, sane human being with hopes, feelings, dreams, and perhaps slightly above average looks, then do not write anyone a letter, ever. It will end in heartbreak and pain. You will bare the scars of shame for eternity, and a storm cloud of ridicule will hang over you like your own personal demonic albatross (beat. Then to Allison) Okay. That about cover it?

SCENE 13

DENISE is on her cell phone, not speaking for a moment.

DENISE: Hi Dad. It's me. Call me when you get this. Zach told me what you did. I'm pretty pissed.  
(beat) Well, I think I'm pissed. I don't know what I am.

CHLOE enters, DENISE sees her, tries to finish up her call.

DENISE (cont'd): Anyway, I gotta run. I'm not sure when I'll be home. But I'll call you. (beat) Love you. Bye.

CHLOE: You okay?

DENISE: Frustrated. You?

CHLOE: The buses are due to get here soon. I'll be better then.

DENISE: So you going to Grad Night?

CHLOE: I guess so. I'm just not in the mood to deal with a party-party. You know?

DENISE: Yeah. You okay?

CHLOE: I asked you first.

DENISE: I answered.

CHLOE: What did you say?

DENISE: Frustrated.

CHLOE: I'll pick that too. Frustrated works.

DENISE: What's wrong?

CHLOE: I'm trying to keep my head up about everything. About school and the lack thereof. But I keep having these conversations with people about that next step. I can't help but feel...

DENISE: Sad?

CHLOE: Less. I feel less than everyone else.

DENISE: You're not less than anyone.

CHLOE: Thanks. I know that. But it's sometimes hard to really KNOW that.

DENISE: I hear you.

CHLOE: So what's yours?

DENISE: Oh. It's complicated. (beat). Basically, Zach and my Dad conspired to make sure I go to UNH.

CHLOE: Is that even possible?

DENISE: Sort of. I mean, they sent in the paperwork and left the door open for me.

CHLOE: And where is the problem? That they didn't tell you?

DENISE: It should be. But all I care about is the fact that I won't be with Zach next year. If I go I mean. And that is stupid. I know we are a joke, with the way we always break up and whatever. But the idea of college is so scary. But the idea of college with him always by my side, it's a little less scary.

CHLOE: Isn't that the whole point of college?

DENISE: What?

CHLOE: To be scared.

DENISE: I don't know. Is it?

CHLOE: I don't know either. And maybe I'm the wrong person to ask. But I know why he did what he did.

DENISE: I do too.

CHLOE: What are you going to do?

DENISE: I don't know. But I don't have to decide today do I?

CHLOE: Of course not. Heck, I never make decisions about anything.

#### SCENE 14

LAYLA sits reading the letter. She is perturbed about the whole thing, clearly. STEVE enters. Sees what is happening.

STEVE: Oh no.

LAYLA: (as she hides the letter): What?

STEVE: Oh no. Please don't tell me that's it.

LAYLA: What is what?

STEVE: That's it!

LAYLA: What is it?

STEVE: The letter.

LAYLA: You KNOW about the letter?

STEVE: Oh. Um. No.

LAYLA: Steve!

STEVE: Yeah, okay. I know about the letter. Calm down.

LAYLA: How many other people know?

STEVE: None. As far as I know. I mean, he didn't start a Facebook group or anything. He's embarrassed about the whole thing.

LAYLA: I can't believe this.

STEVE: Is it... is it any good?

LAYLA: (beat) Yes.

STEVE: Did it work? you can be honest with me.

LAYLA: You're his best friend!

STEVE: You can tell me.

LAYLA: It's good.

STEVE: It's good. And?

LAYLA: It's good. And I don't know.

STEVE: It IS good...

LAYLA: Look. I'm not about to go make out with him over this letter.

STEVE: Good. If you tried that, Lenny would die of heart failure.

LAYLA: Shut up!

STEVE: If I had written you a letter like this last year, back when we had that little, you know, when you had a thing for me. Would we have lasted longer?

LAYLA: No.

STEVE: Good. I hate to waste opportunity. (beat) What's the best part?

LAYLA: It's personal!

STEVE: I'll track down one of his eighty-one drafts eventually.

LAYLA: There are drafts?

STEVE: Better to not know. What's the best part?

LAYLA: Okay. Okay. Let me find it. Okay, here. "I'm not looking for you to say you love me. I'm not looking for you to change your entire life, or to denounce anyone else you may have a thing for. All I ask is that you look at me, then you drop what you thought you used to know. Then look at me again. And ignore the dumb way my nostrils flare when I laugh. Just look at me again, and ask yourself what exactly it is that you know about me. If there is a question there, any question at all, then just give me a chance. Just let me take you out once, as something more than friends. If I fail, or if no sparks ignite, then we've both learned something, and I will walk away satisfied. But, if something happens, some small thing, then all we thought we knew changes. And then? Who knows. But we'll have learned a little bit. And we'll see what we see."

STEVE: Wow. That is good.

LAYLA: Tell me about it.

STEVE: I didn't know he had it in him.

LAYLA: Me either. I guess that's the point. But, I don't know Steve. I'm not sure I'm THAT girl. I feel like he's imputing these ideals onto me, and I'm not sure that I can live up to them.

STEVE: So what are you going to do?

LAYLA: Good question.

## SCENE 15

LENNY throws a football around with RYAN and ZACH.

RYAN: I might do a little music here and there. I've always wanted to be in a band.

LENNY: What kind of band?

RYAN: Whatever. I mean, I like to play the classics like Floyd and the Stones and whatever. But I'd do anything. I think it would just be cool to do a show. To be up on the stage and just... play.

ZACH: Sounds pretty epic.

LENNY: What does that even mean? Epic?

ZACH: Grand. Awesome. Amazing. It's not exactly a vocab word.

STEVE jumps into the game as well.

LENNY: I know. But it's such a cultural thing now. We call everything epic. If everything is so 'epic' then what do we call something truly... you know... epic?

ZACH: Don't be so negative just because you were spurned by the love of your life.

RYAN: (to Lenny) You throw like a woman.

LENNY: Sports were never my strong suit.

STEVE: Common sense is a lacking quality as well.

LENNY: You really like to kick me when I'm down, huh?

STEVE: My Dad says it builds character.

ZACH: Fantasmagoric?

STEVE: Excuse me?

ZACH: We could go with fanatasmagoric. Instead of epic.

LENNY: Doesn't really roll off the tongue.

ZACH catches a pass from STEVE through this past exchange, as RYAN has gotten in position. RYAN attempts to tackle ZACH, but fails in that ZACH is able to avoid going to the ground.

RYAN: Tackle point! You're it!

ZACH: Not even close! You didn't get me to the ground!

RYAN: Your knee touched.

ZACH: Not even a little.

RYAN: Can I get a ruling?

STEVE: Looked like he stayed up to me.

ZACH: I am victorious! I call a ten minute reprieve in light of your failed attempt.

RYAN: Ten minutes! What are you afraid of?

LENNY: You two are so... immature.

RYAN: Oh I'm sorry. Do we offend you Lenny?

LENNY: No. It's not that. It's just... stupid. I mean, you've been playing that dumb game since you were, what, six?

ZACH: Five.

LENNY: And you're, what, eighteen?

ZACH: Seventeen.

LENNY: Well, whatever. But, I mean, you're high school graduates. Maybe you should act like it.

STEVE: I read a book like that once. It was called 'Now You Are a Man' or something.

LENNY: You did?

STEVE: Yeah. But I'm not sure if I remember the chapter about writing a letter to your dream girl.

RYAN: Ouch.

STEVE: I must have just missed it.

LENNY: That is completely different. That letter could change my life!

ZACH: So can Tackle Point!

LENNY: No, that's just dumb Zach.

RYAN: Yeah! Zach!

LENNY: You're talking about a stupid game.

ZACH: We'll have to just agree to disagree. But if you can't handle that, and you don't want to tell me to my face, you could always write me a letter. That would be pretty epic.

LENNY: I hate you.

SYD enters. She makes a couple of nice catches, throws a couple of balls.

SYD: Are you talking about that stupid game again?

ZACH: There is nothing even remotely stupid about Tackle Point. You insult us.

SYD: Oh you boys...

ZACH: You've got a better spiral than Lenny.

RYAN: That's not saying much.

LENNY: Why is throwing a ball suddenly the benchmark of success?

SYD: And why is it that a girl throwing a ball threatens your masculinity?

LENNY: My masculinity is already in question.

SYD: You mean the letter?

LENNY: You heard about the letter?

STEVE: Everyone's heard about the letter.

SYD: Oh, that isn't supposed to be common knowledge?

LENNY: What do you think?

ZACH: I think it's Allison. She got word, told the next unlucky senior who graced her little video project, and bam! The entire school knows.

LENNY: Man! Nothing happens around here that isn't on public display!

RYAN: I'll take 'Definitions of High School' for twelve hundred Alex.

ZACH: Let's see the clue!

SYD: I think it's kind of sweet.

RYAN: Is that all I need to do? Write you a letter Syd?

SYD: I thought you didn't care.

RYAN: I care. I was just pre-emptively breaking the ice to avoid the heartache.

SYD: You're full of crap! You were breaking up with me!

RYAN: I never said that!

ZACH: Gee. Look at the time.

LENNY: I don't know what you're talking about Zach. You're experienced enough in this stuff to give them some pointers.

ZACH: Thanks Lenny.

LENNY: Anytime buddy.

RYAN: You guys want to take your witty banter elsewhere?

LENNY: Done, and done.

ZACH: See you guys.

STEVE: Good luck.

They go, leaving SYD and RYAN.

SYD: Glad to see you're taking our problems so seriously.

RYAN: What?

SYD: You and Zach, you're like four year olds.

RYAN: (Shrugs) It is what it is.

SYD: So. Where are we?

RYAN: I don't know Syd. That's sort of your call. I didn't mean to be a jerk earlier, I wasn't trying to ruin your day or anything like that.

SYD: Look. I don't know what to say here. I was thinking we should spend some time apart. I mean, we won't even be in the same region of the country, let alone the same state. It's, well, I mean it's destined for failure. Right?

RYAN: If you want to look at it like that, sure.

SYD: Don't do that. Don't you dare do that Ryan. The reason I liked you in the first place was because you weren't afraid to tell me what you thought.

RYAN: I don't know what you're talking about.

SYD: Stop making me the bad guy here.

RYAN: You're not the bad guy, Syd.

SYD: Stop it!

RYAN: What do you want me to say?

SYD: Yell at me! Tell me the truth, damn it!

RYAN: Fine. I think you're a scared little girl, who is afraid to be happy. You're afraid, so you justify every good thing with a counterweight of something bad. Hey, I'm a great athlete, but I suck at science. Hey, I killed on my SATs, but my drawing teacher said I can't draw three dimensions as well as the other kids. Hey, my boyfriend loves me, I better keep my distance.

SYD: That's not fair.

RYAN: But it's the truth. You're afraid Syd. And that's fine, I don't hold that against you. But I wasn't about to let you turn this into something it's not. Because it's not about distance, it's not about wanting to 'see other people'. This is about you realizing that if your boyfriend is two thousand miles away, you don't know if you're strong enough to always do the right thing.

SYD: So what? And what if it's not just that, but that I maybe sometimes want to be able to make the choice to NOT do the right thing? What if I don't want to feel trapped



RYAN: That's your right. So don't feel trapped on my account.

He leaves.

## SCENE 16

CHLOE and STEVE are hanging out.

STEVE: You look so sad. I thought you were the sane and happy one around here.

CHLOE: I'm not sad.

STEVE: You look like someone ran over your dog.

CHLOE: No I don't.

STEVE: You can't tell me that my subjective opinion is wrong.

CHLOE: Whatever. Thanks, by the way, for saying I look terrible.

STEVE: I said you look like someone ran over your dog. There's a difference.

CHLOE: Is there?

STEVE: If it means anything, not sure it does, but if it means anything... I think you look lovely tonight.

CHLOE: I'm swooning.

STEVE: That wasn't a line. I mean, I'm not trying to make a move or anything. I mean it. You look good tonight.

CHLOE: You're not trying to make a move? I don't buy it.

STEVE: Hey, we had a good time, didn't we?

CHLOE: We did.

STEVE: Can I tell you that I think I found the one?

CHLOE: The one what?

STEVE: THE. ONE.

CHLOE: A girl? She must be perfect.

STEVE: Allison.

CHLOE: The testimonial girl? Is it because she moved here a month and a half ago? New conquest?

STEVE: I think I like that she doesn't have any preconceived notions about me.

CHLOE: You mean, she doesn't know you've dated every girl in school?

STEVE: Precisely.

CHLOE: Fair enough.

STEVE: I think I might ask her out.

CHLOE: You should.

STEVE: But I'm nervous.

CHLOE: You? Never.

STEVE: I know. I'm good at telling others what to do, but I don't know what to do myself. What does that mean?

CHLOE: I don't know Steve. I'm not good at that stuff.

STEVE: That's why I like you. There is nothing false. Nothing artificial. Your identity is your own, it's not wrapped up in some guy, or some other thing.

CHLOE: Guys? No. I've never needed a guy. I'm not like Denise. But don't make me out to be some kind of ideal. I'm falling apart. I feel like I'm the only one not going to school next year.

STEVE: That's not true.

CHLOE: It doesn't have to be. It's how I feel. Weren't you just lecturing me about the difference between objectivity and subjectivity?

STEVE: It was hardly a lecture.

CHLOE: Maybe not.

STEVE: Want my opinion?

CHLOE: Sure.

STEVE: Are you sure?

CHLOE: Yeah.

STEVE: Okay. (beat) Just do what you want.

CHLOE: (laughs)

STEVE: No, I mean it. Sit here for a few minutes with me while I silently try and muster up the courage to ask Allison out, and think about what you want. Don't think about your parents, or societal expectations, or even silly things like money. Just think about what you want. Then do it. Boom. Done.

CHLOE: If only it were that easy.

STEVE: Why isn't it?

CHLOE gets up and heads to the interview seat, as ALLISON waits.

CHLOE: Ready for me?

ALLISON: Yep. We're recording.

CHLOE: I keep reminding myself that this isn't supposed to matter. Every adult I talk to tells me that my problems aren't important, that I'll have REAL problems when I'm older. (beat) But then I think of my grandmother. She died last year. I mean, she lived a good long life. She was eighty-seven when she died. Lung cancer. But she wasn't a smoker or anything. Just, you know, she just got old. (beat) But I remember visiting her three days before she died. It was the last time I saw her. Alive anyway. But she said to me, she had the tube in and everything, but she said that she wished she hadn't spent so much time worrying about little things. And I asked her what she meant. I asked her what, you know, what the little things were. She said... "everything." (beat) That didn't make sense at first. I had to really stop and think about it. But then, sitting at the funeral, thinking on what she said... it occurred to me. When you're ten, the things you care about seem crazy to a seventeen year old. When you're seventeen the big dramas of life, you know, boys and college and cheer-leading practice or whatever, well those things seem nonsensical to a thirty year old. Then, at thirty, your new mortgage and whether or not your little baby is going to grow up to be a druggie or a famous artist or a banker... that stuff all seems crazy

to a forty year old. And so on, and so on. Then you get to be eighty, or ninety, or a hundred or whatever it is. And all the stuff you think you care about... it's still crap. And only when you're faced with something really serious, something really dire, do you stop and look around and say "my God, it's all crap. It's all just noise." (beat) So I try to live my life blocking out the noise, and just maintaining as much happiness as I can. I try to believe it will all be okay, and that it will all work out. (beat) But it's so, so hard.

## SCENE 17

This climax is slightly different in tone. We will have the resolving couples revolving in rapid fire, with freezes creating focus.

LENNY sits, a bit depressed. LAYLA approaches.

LAYLA: Hey.

LENNY: Oh. Hi.

LAYLA: How are you?

LENNY: I'm ok. You know, I'm ok. You?

LAYLA: I'm good, Lenny.

LENNY: Good.

LAYLA: So. Can we talk?

LENNY: I don't know. Can we talk?

Somewhere else on stage are DENISE and ZACH.

ZACH: Of course. We can always talk.

DENISE: Good. Look, I'm sorry if I overreacted. I understand that you were trying to help.

ZACH: Do you? Are you sure.

DENISE: Yes. I may not LIKE it, but I understand it.

ZACH: Fair enough.

DENISE: But I need to ask you a question.

In a third spot: RYAN and SYD

RYAN: Go ahead. Ask away.

SYD: What does it do if we split up?

RYAN: In what sense?

SYD: I mean, I love you. I think I always will. But I don't know if we should be together. And if we're in love, but we split up... Is there, maybe, a chance we would get back together?

RYAN: There's always a chance.

SYD: And if we stay together, but we... I don't know... falter. If one of screws up. What happens then?  
Can we stay together?

RYAN: That depends.

#### LAYLA and LENNY

LAYLA: On what?

LENNY: Are you going to try and explain further why you don't feel anything for me? Because if that's what you want to talk about, I'm not sure I can handle it.

LAYLA: Well aren't you just sunshine and happiness.

LENNY: Are you kidding me?

LAYLA: I read your letter again. And again. And again.

LENNY: You did?

LAYLA: I did.

LENNY: And?

LAYLA: It grows on you.

LENNY: Like, in a good happy way, or like a fungus?

LAYLA: (laughs) No. In a good way.

#### ZACH and DENISE

ZACH: Well that's good. Because I have some questions for you too.

DENISE: Oh. Well let me ask first. Don't steal my thunder.

ZACH: Your thunder is yours, and yours alone.

DENISE: Do you need space? Is this at all about feeling, I don't know, claustrophobic.

ZACH: Denise, you drive me crazy. Some days, I want to jump off the 95 overpass. But I come back. And I keep coming back. If I didn't care, if I didn't want to be with you, it would be really easy. I'd just take you seriously when you break up with me, and I'd walk away. But I don't want to. I want to be with you. Doing this thing had nothing to do with being claustrophobic, and everything to do with ensuring that you didn't make a choice you would regret for the rest of your life, especially if that choice was made on my behalf.

DENISE: So, am I worth it? do you want to be with me?

#### SYD and RYAN

SYD: I don't KNOW if I want to be with you. So you need to be less ambiguous. Or this has no chance.

RYAN: But I can't Sydney. I wish I could, but I can't. You are asking me hypotheticals with no sure

answers. What do you want me to say?

SYD: I want you to make me feel better.

RYAN: I can't. I can tell you that I want to be with you, I can tell you how much I care about you, but I can't predict the future for you.

SYD: But I want you to!

RYAN: (laughs) If only life were that easy, right?

SYD: Right. So, okay. I need to just say this...

ALLISON is putting a tape in the camera, she is surprised by STEVE.

ALLISON: You scared me! You need to say what?

STEVE: I'm not like Lenny. I'm not up on the whole 'express your feelings' concept. But I think you are pretty cool. I felt a bit of a chemistry when we did the whole video thing before. And I want to take you out to a really expensive dinner, which I have no real means of affording. But hopefully buying you some overpriced seabass, or whatever, will create a good impression and you will think I'm the coolest guy you ever met. We'll date for three years and I will propose to you on a vacation to Los Angeles, probably at the top of the ferris wheel on the pier they always show on those travel shows. Then we will have two and a half kids, a dog, a turtle, two ferns, and a great house. We will live a long life together, then die of old age holding hands in our bed. What do you say?

ALLISON: Oh. I'm sorry. I have a boyfriend.

STEVE: You do?

ALLISON: No. I'm screwing with you.

STEVE: Oh that's okay. Because I've used that happily-ever-after story on, like, thirty girls.

ALLISON: At least we're starting off honestly.

STEVE: So. Dinner?

ALLISON: Yeah. Saturday?

STEVE: By the way, you are the prettiest girl, I've ever met. Just so you know.

LENNY and LAYLA

LENNY: You have no idea how happy I am to hear you say that!

LAYLA: So.. what now?

LENNY: Oh. God. I have no idea. I'm not really good at this. What do guys usually do when they ask you out?

LAYLA: What do they DO, or what would I like them to do?

LENNY: That second thing sounded better.

LAYLA: Well, they'd take my hand.... They'd look me in the eye.... They'd smile some arresting smile... and they would ask me if I'd like to go to Waterfire on Saturday, and maybe bring a little picnic so that we can be one of those adorable couples who spend all evening on the river bank eating and

drinking and laughing.

LENNY: Want to go to Waterfire with me, and do all the stuff you just said?

LAYLA: I'd love to.

LENNY: Thanks for giving me a shot.

LAYLA: Thanks for thinking I'm worth it.

They hug.

DENISE and ZACH

ZACH: Of course you're worth it. And of course I want to be with you. Distance is of the mind. When you're snowed in some December night, I'll send that song to you. The Delilah song. The one about the girl he's been waiting to see again.

DENISE: Delilah was in New York, not New Hampshire.

ZACH: It's a metaphor. Use your imagination.

DENISE: (laughs) I think I can do that.

ZACH: So are we good?

DENISE: I hope so. I THINK so.

ZACH: Good. You're not breaking up with me this time?

DENISE: No. Not today anyway.

ZACH: You're going to UNH! You've been wanting to say that for so long. I've been wanting to say that for so long!

They kiss.

RYAN and SYD

RYAN: Then go ahead and say it.

SYD: I want to stay with you all summer. And I want to take each day as it comes. And I don't want to think about Fall. Then, the day before we go, we can see where we are. I don't know if I'll want to be with you come September. But I know I want to be with you right now. Is that okay to say out loud?

RYAN: It is. And we can try that, though I'm sure it won't be easy.

SYD: I'm not asking for easy. I'm just asking that we take it day by day, and enjoy it day by day.

RYAN: One condition.

SYD: Okay...

RYAN: If you say 'I don't know what will happen' even once, it's over.

SYD: I can try, but...

RYAN: Don't do it, don't do it!

SYD: I don't know what'll happen.

They kiss.

CHLOE is on her phone.

CHLOE: ...I do know. I'll run out of money, and maybe have to crawl back to you for my job. But I have to do this. I have to quit. I have to get out of Williamson and see what I can find, and I have to do it now. It may not be all I want it to be, and I may regret it. But if I stay stagnated, if I don't try anything, then I won't ever have a chance to make any choices, or to have any regrets. Regrets mean you've lived life, it means you've done something. I think it's about time I do something.

## SCENE 18

LAYLA is in the chair, ALLISON is at the camera.

ALLISON: This is it. You're my last one! Then we can get on those buses and go party!

LAYLA: (laughs) Okay, I'll be quick (beat) Okay. Hi, I'm Layla. Recent graduate of WHS. I have a simple, easy to follow, piece of advice for you: Let life surprise you. We all think we know everything, we all think we can see the path so clearly. But sometimes something, or someone, steps onto that path and tries to slow you down, or move you elsewhere. Off your path. You may react instinctively, automatically assuming that their diversion is a bad thing. And sometimes it may be. But at least listen. You never know where it may take you. In my case, it's taking me on my dream date this Saturday. I have no idea if it will work out or not. But before today, I probably wouldn't have stopped to find out.

ALLISON: Good! All done! That was awesome!

LENNY barges in.

LENNY: Wait, wait, wait! Don't shut off that camera!

ALLISON: What?

LENNY: I have to redo mine!

ALLISON: It's not that big of a deal...

LENNY: Not a big deal? NOT a big deal? I don't think you understand the ramifications of...

ALLISON: Okay, okay. The tape is in. Go ahead.

LENNY: Okay. Hi, I'm Lenny. My advice? Write the letter. Just write her (or him) the damn letter. Even if the chance seems small, you don't want to spend your whole life wondering what would have happened if you didn't. And no one wants to live their life asking what if. Right?

LAYLA takes his hand.

LAYLA: Right.

LENNY: But anyway. Be good to each other. Laugh a lot. And... I don't know... Live long and prosper.

They kiss.

THE END