

## ***Em and Web***

*By: Megan E. Tripaldi*

### **CHARACTERS:**

EM: She/Her/Hers

WEB: They/Them/Theirs

### **SCENES:**

A living room in an apartment

A family waiting room in a hospital

A small café

A park

### **TIME:**

Scenes flip back and forth from the present to the past. The scenes in the present go in chronological order while the scenes in the past go in reverse chronological order.

### **A NOTE ON SET/COSTUMES:**

The set should be as minimalistic as possible; each scene should be defined by the action happening within it rather than an elaborate set. Think of this as a group of memories; you only remember certain details. Those are the details that should really stick out.

Transitions should be **as seamless as possible**.

Costumes should be easy to change as well - pieces can be placed over a base that signify certain times (i.e. the horribly bright tie in the funeral scene), but nothing should take more than a few seconds to put on/take off.

## **PROLOGUE**

**SETTING:** An empty stage.

**AT RISE:** WEB stands center reading a note card.

**WEB:**

Pick the spot.

Pick the moment.

**DON'T FORGET THE BOX.**

Hope she says yes.

## SCENE I - The Present

SETTING: A park bench in Fall.

AT RISE: EM and WEB are sitting in silence, WEB is full of nerves, but EM doesn't really notice; she's reading a beat up book. WEB can't sit still, they are gearing up for something. WEB continues to mentally get themselves ready as EM peeks at them from the corner of her eye; she knows what they're about to do and she tries to hide her grin. WEB takes one last deep breath and starts to lower themselves down on one knee when suddenly EM's phone rings. They both jump. She answers.

EM:

Hello?

(We slowly see her face change. WEB is terribly concerned, but is afraid to push too hard. Something devastating has happened, that much is obvious. She slowly, without speaking hands the phone to WEB.)

WEB:

Hello? Carley? Oh god...yeah. Yeah we'll be right there. Yeah. Bye.

(They hang up and look at her for a long time as she slowly, painfully lets herself cry. They pull her into a hug as if they are trying to squeeze all of the pain out of her.)

## SCENE II - The Past

SETTING: A living room.

AT RISE: WEB is wearing a semi-formal suit and pacing. Occasionally they pull out note cards and reads them, muttering to themselves. She is very nervous. EM enters wearing a sundress. She looks positively perky. WEB doesn't see her, so she sneaks around and wraps her arms around their waist. They are caught off guard for a moment, but relaxes and turns to face her.

EM:

How are you doing?

WEB:

Truthfully? I'm terrified.

EM:

It's just my mom. She's not that scary.

WEB:

You've never met a girlfriend's mother, you have no idea how scary it really is.

EM:

I mean...

WEB:

It's true!

(A look.)

Well I'm your first, right?

EM:

Touché.

WEB:

Ok, so to me meeting a girl's mother is like...a knight facing a dragon.

EM:

So...in this analogy my mother is a dragon?

WEB:

Metaphorically! Metaphorically!

(Beat)

Ok, ok. I suppose that wasn't the best metaphor...

EM:

No.

WEB:

I'll work on that for next time.

EM:

Good.

(She notices the suit.)

Damn.

WEB:

(Instantly anxious.)

What? Oh, god what?

EM:

I just...that suit.

WEB:

Oh god, is it horrible?

EM:

No, just the opposite. I just...I've never seen you in a suit like that before. Or at all.

WEB:

Yeah I'm trying a new thing. It looks ok?

EM:

I repeat: *Damn*.

WEB:

Good. Ok, great. Awesome.

(EM stares at them, grinning suggestively. WEB is radiating nervous energy.)

So, uh...what is this thing exactly that we're going to?

EM:

Carly's graduate dance thesis.

WEB:

Oh...fun.

EM:

Oh no, it's going to be terrible.

WEB:

Well...yeah.

EM:

So boring.

WEB:

I mean...it's not that I don't love the arts, but -

EM:

I love my sister, and her chosen career, but I'm only going because my mom guilted me into it.

WEB:

So supportive.

(Beat. WEB is still a bit twitchy.)

EM:

Hey you know what I've been thinking about a lot lately? That barbecue? On Memorial Day weekend. Remember that?

WEB:

I do. It started raining, but we stayed outside because you like jumping in rain puddles.

EM:

Yes I do.

WEB:

And you like dragging me with you.

EM:

Yes I do.

WEB:

You know I like it, though.

EM:

Yes you do.

WEB:

It's cute.

EM:

No, I'm basically twelve.

WEB:

No, you're just cute.

EM:  
Stop it.

WEB:  
Never. Cute, cute, cute.

EM:  
Ech, shut up, I hate that word.

WEB:  
Ok, I'll find something better.

EM:  
That's not necessary -

WEB:  
My girlfriend is adorable. I'm shouting it from the rooftops!

EM:  
You will not!

WEB:  
Just the cutest gumdrop unicorn fart -

EM:  
Oh my god, ew!

WEB:  
I knew that would get you.

EM:  
Evil.

WEB:  
Hey, who was the one that made that chicken?



EM:

Which chicken?

WEB:

The one with the ham and the cheese stuffed inside...what's that called?

EM:

Chicken cordon bleu?

WEB:

Yes! That! Who made that?

EM:

My aunt Linda.

WEB:

God, that was good...

EM:

It really was. I'll have to get the recipe.

WEB:

Oh my god, please do. Yes.

(EM laughs. Beat.)

That was one chaotic dinner.

EM:

Mm! It was crazy.

WEB:

Didn't your sister throw a salad or something?

EM:

She claims she saw a spider, but I think she just wanted to recreate that scene from American Beauty, which she was watching obsessively at that point. You know the scene I'm talking about? The one where Kevin Spacey -

WEB:

Throws the plate at the wall. Yes. That's a great scene.

EM:

It is. Love that movie.

WEB:

Too bad he ruined everything by being horrible.

EM:

Yeah...

(Beat.)

WEB:

Wasn't that asparagus, though?

EM:

Hmm?

WEB:

He threw a plate of asparagus at Annette Benning. "Will somebody please pass the fucking - "

EM:

Right, right, it was! But you know. Anything to make a scene.

WEB:

Ha, yeah. Hey, it really was a tossed salad.

(Beat. EM stares at them.)

WEB (contd.):

What?

EM:

Web.

WEB:

What?

EM:

I'm not even gonna...

WEB:

It wasn't that bad.

EM:

Yes it was.

WEB:

Not really -

EM:

Seriously.

WEB:

Ah, well. You win some, you lose some.

EM:

Apparently.

(Beat. WEB realizes their innuendo.)

WEB:

That...oh I didn't mean -

EM:

There it is.

WEB:

I was just trying -

EM:

I know!

WEB:

Can we just forget - ?

EM:

It's forgotten.

WEB:

Oh boy. Ok. Wow...

EM:

You are so weird.

WEB:

Eh, yeah...

EM:

It's not a bad thing.

WEB:

You sure?

EM:

Trust me, it's not.

(Beat. WEB is still twitchy.)

Hey. I know you're nervous, but she's going to love you.

WEB:

Yeah...I mean I don't even have the best relationship with my own mother, so I'm just...

EM:

I know. She's going to love you.

WEB:

You don't know -

EM:

She's going. To love. You. Ok?

WEB:

Ok.

(EM hugs them, but feels something in their pocket. She finds the notecards and pulls them out.)

EM:

What are these?

WEB:

What?

EM:

What are these?

(They try to hide them, but she grabs them.)

WEB:

Oh...those. Um...

EM:

You brought note cards?

WEB:

Well...yeah, but -

I thought we were past this -

EM:

I - I'm just nervous -

WEB:

Web, we talked about this.

EM:

Yeah, ok I know we did, but can you just -

WEB:

(They grab for them and EM holds them away.)

What's going on?

EM:

Nothing -

WEB:

This isn't nothing.

EM:

I can't...you just...

WEB:

(WEB moves to grab them again and EM holds them away.)

Why don't you trust me?

EM:

What - trust you? This isn't -

WEB:

Lists only, remember?

EM:

They're lists!

WEB:

Oh, they are?

EM:

Y...yes?

WEB:

(EM moves to read them.)

No, wait!

EM:

Oh my god! See? This is what I was talking about before, you can't keep doing this! My mom is not interested in how much you know about random things. You are a smart, sweet person and you don't need this.

WEB:

But -

EM:

Making lists for like, the groceries, or to-dos, that's fine, but this -

WEB:

Em, I have, I have, I...

(They start to hyperventilate.)

EM:

Ok. Ok, breathe -

(They slump to the floor. She rubs their back. It's obvious this has happened before.)

Do you really think that having these will help?

WEB:

I don't ...I haven't...I really need those...

EM:

Why?

WEB:

Well, I...y'know I put my foot in my mouth and...oh god -

EM:

Ok, ok -

WEB:

If I don't...If I don't write it down I – I need stuff to say, I'm so bad at just talking.

EM:

Since when?

WEB:

Since...always.

EM:

Huh.

WEB:

What?

EM:

I've just never seen that side of you.

WEB:

Well, it's different with you.

EM:

How?



WEB:

With you I don't need to try so hard to just...be. You know? I really...I really...oh, god I really don't want to mess this up...

EM:

Why?

WEB:

I...I just...

(She's toying with them now.)

EM:

Why?

WEB:

I was going to...um...

EM:

Why?

WEB:

Well, I...

EM:

Why, why, why, why -

WEB:

I LOVE YOU!

(Pause.)

EM:

You love me?

WEB:

Um...yeah.

EM:  
Seriously?

WEB:  
Yeah...a lot actually.

EM:  
Wow...

WEB:  
Look, if you don't, I -

EM:  
Are you sure?

WEB:  
What?

EM:  
Are you absolutely sure, I mean you've never -

WEB:  
What do you mean?

EM:  
I mean I know I'm not the easiest person to be around and if you are just saying it to make me feel good then I will be so mad at you, Webster Nolan, I swear to -

WEB:  
I have never been so sure.

EM:  
Are you positive?

WEB:  
Em, I absolutely, positively, without-a-doubt -

(She kisses them.)

EM:

I love you, too.

(They bask in this for a moment. EM pulls WEB into a kiss which starts turning into much more. It escalates until -)

WEB:

Wait! Wait, hold on.

EM:

What's wrong?

WEB:

The thing?

(EM stares at them, confused.)

We're going to be late!

EM:

Oh!

WEB:

Yeah!

EM:

Oh, you're right!

WEB:

I know!

EM:

Almost forgot, there.

Yeah, um...we should go!

WEB:

Yes! Um...keys?

EM:

Got 'em.

WEB:

Wallet?

EM:

Got it.

WEB:

Fake smile?

EM:

(WEB smiles, a ridiculous toothy grin.)

How's this?

WEB:

Web!

EM:

(Still smiling)

WEB:

What?

Come on.

EM:

What? I'm smiling!

WEB:

EM:

That looks ridiculous.

WEB:

Well at least I have my keys and my wallet.

(EM pushes WEB out the door.)

### SCENE III - The Present

SETTING: A pretty generic café.

AT RISE: EM and WEB are eating and drinking casually. There is a wash of calm over everything.

WEB:  
Did you talk to your sister today?

EM:  
Yeah. She texted an hour ago.

WEB:  
Good. Sorry I couldn't be there last night, work was -

EM:  
No it wasn't. I snooped in your email, I know.

WEB:  
Ah...

(EM smiles at them and picks at her food.)

EM:  
It's ok. Really, you don't have to use work as - I get it.

(WEB half smiles at their plate.)

WEB:  
It's hard to see her like that, you know?

EM:  
If anyone knows, I know.

WEB:  
Yeah. Thanks.

(Beat.)

WEB (contd.):

So any news?

EM:

They said nothing of note, but that everything looks good. I mean, it's looked good for the past week, so I'm going to take that as a win.

WEB:

As you should.

EM:

Yeah. I'm looking forward to sleeping again.

WEB:

So am I. When you don't sleep, I don't sleep.

EM:

I know.

(Beat. More eating.)

Hey, your mom called this morning.

WEB:

She did?

EM:

Yeah, just checking in.

WEB:

With you?

EM:

Yeah.

(WEB looks at their plate.)

WEB:

Nice of her to call.

EM:

Hey, I'm sure she just couldn't reach -

WEB:

No, I'm...progress, right?

(WEB picks at something on the table. EM takes their hand and smiles. They squeeze it. A silent 'thank you.')

So how did she seem?

EM:

I mean, fine I guess. Didn't really talk about much else -

WEB:

I meant *your* mom. I was going back to -

EM:

Oh! Yeah, right. Um...she's got her color back, which, you know doesn't seem like a lot, but the other night -

WEB:

I know.

EM:

They got her sitting up, so that's good.

WEB:

That seems fast.



EM:

Technological advancements. When Dad had his heart surgery he was walking the next day. Walking with so much help, but still walking.

WEB:

That's right, you told me about that.

EM:

I did? I don't remember telling you that.

WEB:

I remember it vividly because you usually spare me the medical stuff.

EM:

Well, that one time I saw you faint was traumatizing enough, thanks.

WEB:

Really? I can't imagine why...

EM:

No, seriously though you got all white and wiggly and then you just slumped out of your chair -

WEB:

I don't know why I thought I could handle watching you get your blood drawn...

EM:

I don't know, but if we ever have kids you are waiting until all the gross bits are covered up to see me.

WEB:

Kids.

(WEB smiles at this.)

EM:

What?

WEB:

Nah, it's just...first time you've ever brought it up.

EM:

Don't get any ideas. My biological clock isn't that loud yet.

WEB:

Fair enough.

(Beat.)

But we'd make some really cute kids.

EM:

Oh my god, the cutest. That was never even an issue.

(WEB just looks at her, smiling.)

So! If everything goes well I think they'll be sending her home at the end of the week.

WEB:

Oh, that's so great! It's such a relief.

EM:

Seriously.

WEB:

I really love your mom. I didn't really ever realize that – I mean, she's just really...having her in my life, having her as...I'm grateful for her. I hope she knows that.

EM:

She does. But you should totally tell her anyway.

WEB:

Will do.

EM:

God, after raising two girls basically alone, she's grateful to have another responsible adult around. You're her surrogate child that she didn't have to raise. This scores daughter points for me, too because I'm the one that brought you into the fold.

(WEB stares at their plate.)

Are you - ?

WEB:

Yeah, I'm – I'll come with you tonight, ok? When you see her?

EM:

She'd love that.

(We hear the phone ring. EM pulls it out of her pocket. She answers.)

Hey, what's up?

(She listens and her face falls. She looks up at WEB. They instantly grab her hand. She tries to speak, but can't. WEB takes the cue and takes the phone from her.)

WEB:

Hey. Yeah, it's Web, what's - ?

(They look up at EM and squeeze her hand.)

## **INTERLUDE**

**SETTING:** An empty stage.

**AT RISE:** EM stands center reading from a notecard.

**EM:**

Laundry

Trash day – DON'T FORGET THIS TIME.

Pick up Em's Prescription

Call insurance company – DON'T LET THEM PUT YOU ON HOLD AGAIN

Call the repair shop – get estimate

Make dinner

## SCENE IV - The Past

SETTING: A hospital waiting room.

AT RISE: WEB talks from the hallway on a cell phone. They sound frantic.

WEB:

No, I...Listen! She was driving on route...yes, yes I know it was, but she...she's in the Emergency room right now. Carley, just...just...ok! Yes! I'll call you if anything - Yes, fine. Thank - thank you! Ok. I'll -

(They have been hung up on.)

Ok.

(They take out their note cards and start writing on them. EM walks in on crutches with an air cast on her right foot, a little dazed from the medication. WEB looks up and goes straight to her, shoving the note cards in their pocket.)

I thought they were going to come and get me when you were done in there!

EM:

Well, it appears they didn't. Hospitals, right?

WEB:

So tell me again what happened? Who hit who? Is everything ok? Does it hurt?

EM:

(Giggling.)

I'm fiiiine!

WEB:

No you're not! You have to tell me everything!

EM:

Ugh. You're such a weenie. Heh. Weenie...

WEB:

Just answer a couple questions, Em, I just want to know if -

EM:

Weenie, weenie, weenie -

WEB:

Uh...if we have a case or...whatever it is insurance companies do.

EM:

Insurance companies?

WEB:

Yeah, like...you know if we get money out of this, or medical bills, or something.

EM:

Oh, yeah. I forgot about that!

WEB:

Well it's important, so you should tell me.

(Pulls notecards out of their coat.)

EM:

What the hell are those?

WEB:

Um...my notecards?

EM:

You carry those everywhere?

WEB:

Yeah?

(Beat.)

EM:

Huh.

WEB:

Well, what is important is the fact that you are in a cast.

EM:

Air cast.

WEB:

It's still a cast.

EM:

It's not that bad, Woob.

WEB:

Just tell me what happened!

EM:

Ok, fine! I was merging onto an exit...

WEB:

(Writing)

What exit?

EM:

What?

WEB:

What exit on what highway?

(EM groans.)

It's important!

EM:

Exit 46... on 95... north.

WEB:

Thank you.

EM:

Some truck came out of nowhere and cut 'n frunna me and I didn't see mm coming.

WEB:

So it wasn't your fault?

EM:

Nope.

WEB:

Awesome! That's great! Maybe we can get some money from them. Did you get the license plate number?

EM:

I was a lil' busy spinnin'to the guard rail.

WEB:

Right...

EM:

But there are witnesses, so we should be goooood.

WEB:

(Kissing her on the forehead.)

Brilliant.

EM:

Ow. I know.



WEB:

So how do you feel?

EM:

Groggy. They gave me some stuff for the pain so I'm a little loopy right now. Loopy. Looooopy. I like that word.

WEB:

So what did - ?

EM:

LOOP - EEEEEEE -

WEB:

...What did - ok, ok - what you say was wrong with your leg? It's broken?

EM:

No, not broken. 'Sjust a fracture.

WEB:

*Just* a fracture? Yeah. Well! What are we even doing here!?

EM:

Web, it's just a crack in my bone.

WEB:

Ah...

(Grabs a chair for support, swooning slightly.)

Just a crack. Great.

EM:

They said that it would be fine in three or four weeks - don't faint!

(WEB steadies themself.)

WEB:  
No, no I'm good – I'm fine.

EM:  
Don't need to see that again -

WEB:  
Yeah, yeah -

EM:  
They put that needle in and you just -

WEB:  
Yeah! Ok. Just...keep going.

EM:  
'Cha mean?

WEB:  
The doctor? What the doctor said? About your -

EM:  
Oh! Right. He said I should keep off of it for a few weeks. That's why they gave me this.

(Shows the air cast.)

WEB:  
So you don't need like, surgery or anything?

EM:  
Nah! Just don't sign me up for a 5k...10k...any k.

WEB:  
Ok...

EM:  
God, I hate running...

WEB:

You sure?

EM:

Yeah, it hurts my knees!

WEB:

No, I mean about - ? You don't need surgery? They told you that before they gave you the drugs?

EM:

Oh my god, yes Web!

WEB:

Ok. I just...you know how this stuff, uh...gets to me.

EM:

Yup.

WEB:

I mean I've been in the hospital a lot, don't forget.

EM:

Yes, I know, Web –

WEB:

Remember that story I told you? About the time I was eight –

EM:

With the sprinkler nozzle that got stuck in – ?

(WEB shudders and nods.)

I remember.

WEB:

Yup. And the time when I was pushing my cousin on the swings –

EM:

And she kicked you in the face.

WEB:

Broke my nose in two places! Oh! Did I ever tell you about when I had pneumonia?

EM:

Um –

WEB:

I was thirteen and I had this awful – well I was sick forever, I think like a month. My mom told me that it was nothing, that it would go away, but of course it didn't. Finally it got so bad that my dad drove me to the hospital herself. They gave me this disgusting – god it was awful – this cherry flavored liquid medicine, you know that stuff that you get when you - ? Well, anyway after about three doses I couldn't handle it anymore so I told the nurse when she came back with another dose, "If you give that to me again I'll throw up." And being a nurse she told me to suck it up and gave it to me anyway. Not one minute later I threw up neon cherry juice all over my pristine, white sheets. She came sprinting back in and was like, "Why did you do that!?" And I just looked at her, smug little thirteen-year-old me and said, "Told you so."

(EM stares at them for a long time.)

EM:

Sooo, you want to help me out of here then?

WEB:

Oh! Right. Don't we need to sign you out?

EM:

You can just do it on the way.

WEB:

Wait...weren't you supposed to be in a room or something?

EM:

I snuck out.

WEB:

Em!

EM:

What? It's fine, nobody cares.

WEB:

If you say so...

(They suddenly pick her up. She drops her crutches.)

EM:

What are you doing? You're going to drop me!

WEB:

I'm not going to drop you.

EM:

You're going to drop me!

WEB:

Stop wiggling or I will!

EM:

Wait, wait, wait! What about my crutches?

WEB:

We'll come back for them.

(They add lib on the way out "Don't drop me," "I won't!" etc. The lights fade.)

## SCENE V - The Present

SETTING:           The same waiting room.

AT RISE:           EM is sitting alone; she looks catatonic, unmoving. WEB enters carrying an armful of soda and snacks and sits next to her, putting the food and soda on a table. They sit in uncomfortable silence for a moment. EM remains still until WEB begins to speak.

WEB:

I got you something...you know, to tide you over.

(Beat.)

I wasn't sure if you wanted candy or chips so I got both...

(Beat.)

and...and I know you like diet so...I got you diet.

(Beat.)

You should at least drink something...I can get you water if you don't want soda...You want some water?

(Beat.)

Em, will you please talk to me? Please? Please?

EM:

I'm fine.

WEB:

You have to cut me a break, here. I just...I don't know how to deal with this, I –

EM:

This?

WEB:

This. All of it the...the hospital stuff. You know how I get about -

EM:

*I know.*

(Beat.)

WEB:

Do you know when we're going to know anything?

EM:

If I knew, don't you think I'd tell you?

WEB:

True...Yeah, sorry.

EM:

I'm trying not to think about it.

WEB:

I know you are...but I really hate hospitals.

EM:

I know.

(Beat.)

WEB:

Did I ever tell you about the time I stepped on a bee? I was nine and I was running barefoot in my yard and there was just...this bee. Just sitting on the ground. I stepped on him and naturally he stung me. Normally when this happens you just brush it off and deal with the fact that you have a horribly painful welt for a week or so. In my case, no. The stinger got stuck. So off to the emergency room I went, in just a sock and one shoe because my foot had swelled up so much that I couldn't fit it in any of my shoes. I guess it fell out eventually, because they couldn't find it, but they gave me antibiotics anyway. I

think about that a lot, that bee. He was doing this thing that was so out of the ordinary for, you know a bee. He wasn't on a flower, you know, he was just in this patch of dirt. And that one day...that one day that he decided to completely change his routine, that was the day he...I mean, what would have happened if he hadn't been there? Where would I be? Where would we *be*?

(WEB looks at EM. She deliberately isn't looking at them. They move to her and she moves to the opposite side of the room.)

Em I, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry...I care about her, too, you know. This hurts me, too.

EM:

She's not your mother.

WEB:

She may as well be. You know that. What can I do for you? What do you need? Just tell me.

EM:

*I don't matter right now. I'm not the one who is living off tubes! I'm sitting out here waiting and if she...if she doesn't...if she...*

WEB:

Em -

EM:

That's my mother in there! My *mother*!

WEB:

I know, Em -

EM:

You don't know anything.

(Beat.)

You should go.



WEB:

What?

EM:

You should get out of here.

WEB:

Wait, why - ?

EM:

I'm not trying to be...I just think you should go home.

WEB:

Em -

EM:

Go home, eat something, take a shower, get some sleep in a real bed, and I'll call you if anything happens.

WEB:

Why would I do that?

EM:

Because you should.

WEB:

You don't want me to be here, do you?

EM:

Shut up, Web.

WEB:

Please don't tell me to shut up, I...I don't even understand why you're mad at me. Just talk to me. Tell me what you're thinking. Stop putting up walls.

I don't put up walls. EM:

Oh, you don't? WEB:

I *don't* put up *walls*. EM:

Then what is this? WEB:

This is me not wanting to talk about it. EM:

Wall. WEB:

Shut up. EM:

Wall. WEB:

Shut the fuck up, Web - EM:

Wall. WEB:

Are you serious right now? You want to do *this* now? EM:

Yes! Yes, I do! WEB:

EM:

Fine. Fine! I'm mad because you're selfish. You are making this whole thing about you and what you need. You got down on one fucking knee in a *hospital waiting room* - you couldn't even...She is in there alone and, and, and with tubes and wires and she doesn't even know what fucking day it is and you come in here and think she's going to be impressed with you or love you more if you fucking propose!? Who do you think you are? You tell these stupid stories to make yourself feel better or you try to do these grand gestures - this isn't about you! It's not even about me or, or, about us, it's about *her!* It's about her and you decided to make it about you!

WEB:

I -

EM:

*My mother is dying!*

(Beat.)

WEB:

Look, I didn't want it to be like this.

EM:

Then what did you want?

(They stare at each other for a long time.)

I don't think I can do this.

WEB:

This?

EM:

(Awkwardly gestures)

This.

WEB:

Em, wait -

EM:

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I can't. I just...can't.

(She leaves. WEB stands, still in shock. They take a long moment, slowly gather their things, shut off the light, and they leave.)

## **INTERLUDE**

**SETTING:** An empty stage.

**AT RISE:** WEB starts to take out a notecard, but crumples it and throws it across the room.

**SCENE VI - The Past**

SETTING:            The café.

AT RISE:            It is raining outside. There is a small table and two chairs. EM and WEB sit, looking in opposite directions. Every so often WEB secretly checks a note card, but EM doesn't notice. EM has a coffee and is stirring it with a spoon. WEB sips water. The both look up at each other and smile. It is slightly awkward.

It's raining.

WEB:

Yes it is.

EM:

The street is starting to flood.

WEB:

Mmm.

EM:

And you like the rain.

WEB:

I do, yes. Do you?

EM:

Sometimes. Depends on the situation.

WEB:

I like it all the time.

EM:

Wow.

WEB:

Oh yes, very much.

EM:

That's fascinating.

WEB:

Is it really?

EM:

What do you mean?

WEB:

I mean we're on a...would you call this a date?

EM:

Sure, I guess...if you want -

WEB:

So, we're on a date and we've already resorted to talking about the weather.

EM:

Is that bad?

WEB:

I don't know, is it?

EM:

I don't see the harm in it.

WEB:

You don't?

EM:

I love the weather. It's fascinating.

WEB:

EM:  
You sure do love that word, too...

WEB:  
Weather?

EM:  
Fascinating.

WEB:  
The weather?

EM:  
No, I mean the word -

WEB:  
Oh! I say that when I'm...trying to impress someone.

EM:  
Well, don't try so hard.

WEB:  
Oh...well, yeah. Sorry.

EM:  
It's ok.

WEB:  
Yeah?

EM:  
It's kind of adorable.

WEB:  
O...oh.



EM:

I mean, you haven't ruined the date yet.

WEB:

Yet?

EM:

I'm kidding.

WEB:

Oh, ha! Yeah...

EM:

That's kind of my style. Say something nice and then make it super awkward.

WEB:

It's not awkward.

EM:

Of course it is, it's a first date.

WEB:

Oh. Yeah, true. Can't really plan how these things are going to go, right?

EM:

True, true.

WEB:

I mean...this isn't an easy thing to plan...not like a wedding or, or, or...a prom...or a...dog show.

EM:

Yeah...

(Beat.)

EM:

You know planning a dog show sounds nice.

WEB:

Probably not as nice as you think...I mean we're talking about a hundred sum odd dogs in a confined area. That doesn't sound too pleasant.

EM:

Well, I mean...they're show dogs so...they'd be groom -

WEB:

Groomed! Right. Of course.

EM:

Yeah...

WEB:

But you know, still...a lot of dogs in one small space can get, um...chaotic.

EM:

Yeah, I guess, but at least they're perfumed and coiffed.

WEB:

Yeah, right.

(Beat.)

WEB (contd.):

I've never actually planned a dog show.

EM:

Oh, I didn't think -

WEB:

Just so you know, I don't actually know the mechanics of -

EM:  
It's ok –

WEB:  
Didn't want to give you the wrong idea or -

EM:  
(Touching her hand)

It's ok.

WEB:  
Oh. Oh, good. That's. Thanks.

EM:  
Ha, no problem.

(Beat.)

So, Web. Is that like...a family name, or - ?

WEB:  
Oh, um, no. Sort of. The full version is.

EM:  
What's the full version?

WEB:  
Eh...you don't need to know that.

EM:  
Then you shouldn't have brought it up.

WEB:  
What – I didn't, you did!

EM:  
Just tell me!

WEB:  
Uh...Webster.

EM:  
Webster what?

WEB:  
(Sighs)

Webster Nolan Carmichael.

EM:  
Oh wow.

WEB:  
My mom wanted a boy.

EM:  
That's adorable. And kind of sad. But I like it.

WEB:  
It's nerdy.

EM:  
I like nerdy.

WEB:  
Oh...I like that you're...blunt.

EM:  
Well, good. Sometimes it can be a bit much for people.

WEB:  
Well, I like it.

EM:

You said.

(Beat.)

Emmaline Elizabeth Muriel Shea.

WEB:

Wow, two middle names.

EM:

Yup.

WEB:

That's a lot to remember.

EM:

It's why I go by 'Em.'

WEB:

Makes sense.

EM:

Totally.

WEB:

Rebelling against the four names. I get it.

EM:

You understand nothing, Miss I have only three names.

WEB:

I'm...sympathetic.

EM:

Empathetic?

WEB:  
Yes?

EM:  
Either way works, I guess.

WEB:  
I'm pretty sure you're right, but English wasn't my strongest subject in high school

EM:  
Mine was and I still can't remember.

WEB:  
Fair enough.

EM:  
I mean it was high school, so...

WEB:  
It's easier to just pretend it never happened.

EM:  
Well, I don't know about that.

WEB:  
Why not? High School is terrible.

EM:  
Mine was ok.

WEB:  
Well, that's good. Mine was not. Classic bully target right here.

EM:  
Ah. After school special grade drama, was it?

WEB:

Absolutely. Swirlies are stupid and clichéd, but they are real and they are horrible.

EM:

Oh god, they swirled you?

WEB:

Yup. I'm pretty sure it's high school grade waterboarding. One time I almost drowned. The water went up my nose and I passed out.

EM:

I am so sorry...

WEB:

Well, I'm sure you never experienced that kind of stuff.

EM:

High school was not without its issues, but yeah...no swirlies.

WEB:

Well it's easier for people that have confidence like you. I never had that. I still don't.

EM:

You think I'm confident?

WEB:

Well, yeah. You exude it. You just seem so sure of yourself, I've never met anyone - you're kind of an enigma. I mean, it's a good thing, but it's just so rare these days.

(Beat.)

EM:

Really? You think that...all of that?

WEB:

Yeah. Really.

EM:

Good. Nobody's ever...good.

WEB:

Nobody's ever?

EM:

I, yeah you know, I guess I'm a good actor or something because...none of that is true.

WEB:

What do you mean?

EM:

I mean...talking to people terrifies me. I'm really not a confident person, Web, I...actually kind of hate myself. And I realize that telling you this is – but I don't care! I don't care because I can't keep...so you saying that, it – it's funny because it's just so, so, so false. Sorry if that was too much, but you know...yeah.

(Beat.)

WEB:

I don't like my mother.

EM:

What?

WEB:

My mother. She and I just...it's not good.

EM:

That was random.

WEB:

I just...isn't this the thing we do where one of us says a deep thing and then the other - ?

EM:

I suppose it is, yeah.



WEB:

Ok. So, I don't like my mother.

EM:

Why not?

WEB:

She's always been...unsupportive isn't a strong enough word. She and my dad split up when I was twelve and I spent most of my time with him after that. She just...it's like she didn't even care afterwards. Nothing I did was right. If my grades weren't great, she'd be upset. I'd work really hard, I'd study for hours a day, and I fixed them and then she'd say, "There's more to life than school." It was the same with everything. One time when she was drunk she said I "came out wrong." I guess that's why I have my name. She never...wow, sorry I never talk about this. I guess I just feel -

(EM suddenly leans forward and kisses them. WEB stares at her, unable to move.)

- safe.

EM:

Sorry.

WEB:

No, no, don't be – why would you be - ?

EM:

I told you. Blunt.

(WEB smiles at her.)

WEB:

It's still raining.

EM:

Yeah.

WEB:

Really coming down out there.

EM:

It is.

(Beat.)

WEB:

Wanna go jump in some puddles?

EM:

Hell yes.

(They smile at each other. All the beautiful awkward first-date glow lies in this moment. They run off to go jump in some puddles.)

## **INTERLUDE**

**SETTING:** An empty stage.

**AT RISE:** WEB reads a notecard.

**WEB:**

Thursday:

Get suit dry cleaned

Prepare apology speech

Try not to make a complete ass of yourself

## SCENE VII - The Present

SETTING:           The same living room.

AT RISE:           EM enters in funeral clothes and looks around the room. She makes herself a plate of food, sits down to eat it, then can't. She begins straightening cushions, moving them, moving flowers, etc. Finally she gives up and sits on the sofa. She is obviously flustered and exhausted. WEB enters dressed in a nice black suit with a horribly bright tie and carries a bag which they stash behind the couch. The following exchange is very tense.

WEB:

Em - You look nice.

EM:

Nice suit.

WEB:

Thanks.

EM:

You're welcome.

WEB:

It's Italian.

EM:

Oh, good...Italian suits are nice.

WEB:

Yes.

EM:

Good quality.

(Beat.)

EM:

Why are you wearing that tie?

WEB:

Huh?

EM:

The tie.

WEB:

Uh... I don't know...

EM:

You don't know?

WEB:

No, I mean I lost my other one. I didn't want to look like a slob, but I realize this just makes me look like an idiot so no tie would have been better and I'm...sorry. I shouldn't have worn - never mind, it doesn't matter.

EM:

I mean, it's fine.

WEB:

I couldn't find my favorite one, I really looked for it everywhere. It's darker so I wear it for nice occasions.

EM:

The dark blue one with the maroon stripes?

WEB:

Yeah! That one.

EM:

I think I have it.

WEB:

You do? Oh that's right...I left it at your – when we went to see your sister's recital. That was an interesting day.

EM:

It was.

(Beat.)

WEB:

Lovely day today.

EM:

I hear it's supposed to be like this all week.

WEB:

You don't say?

EM:

Yep.

WEB:

Glad it's not raining.

EM:

No that would be...bad.

WEB:

Muddy.

EM:

Unpleasant.

BOTH:

Yeah.

(Beat)

But you like the rain.

WEB:

True.

EM:

So it would be fine either way.

WEB:

Yeah.

EM:

Right?

WEB:

Yes. Yeah. That's true.

EM:

Good.

WEB:

Definitely.

EM:

Yes.

WEB:

(Agonizing pause.)

I didn't think you'd show up.

EM:

Really?

WEB:

Or say hi... EM:

Oh. Well...hi. WEB:

Hi. EM:

Hi. WEB:

Hi. EM:

You said that already. WEB:

Yeah...weird day. EM:

I'm sure. WEB:

It really is. EM:

That was a nice service, by the way. WEB:

Yeah. EM:

I liked your eulogy. WEB:



Thanks.

EM:

You have...a way with words.

WEB:

Thanks...again.

EM:

She would have liked it.

WEB:

What do you mean?

EM:

Your mom, I mean...if she was here to hear you say that...she would have liked it.

WEB:

That's a weird thing to say.

EM:

How?

WEB:

Well, it's her funeral, so...

EM:

Oh, right. Sorry.

WEB:

It's fine it's just -

EM:

Yeah, I know...Sorry.

WEB:

EM:

It's fine, I said.

WEB:

Right. Ok.

EM:

Ok...

WEB:

Yes.

(Beat.)

Em, I...I'm so sorry for your loss.

(They stare at each other for a moment, then WEB looks away.)

EM:

You know, I've been getting condolences all week...like literally every day someone comes up to Carley and I saying how sorry they are and if there's anything they can do...Normally one thinks that's generous, right? No. It's selfish. Like...thanks for the constant reminder that my mother is dead. I can't really stand it anymore. "I'm sorry for your loss" never seemed so...empty. It's a horrible phrase. They should have a better phrase than, "I'm sorry for your loss." Or even...come up with something creative like... "Gosh it sucks that your mom died."

(She starts crying. WEB has no idea if they should even breathe on her too much. Again, so cripplingly awkward.)

WEB:

Oh...oh hey...

EM:

You just left -

WEB:

What?

EM:

You left me there alone! I have been sitting here all week thinking about how much I hate you for that. How you...abandoned me after – and you didn't even call? You didn't even have the decency to -

WEB:

What was I supposed to do, Em? Your mom died, our problems, what happened...I didn't want to burden you with -

EM:

Burden me! Please, burden me! Yell, scream, tell me I'm horrible, but don't abandon me!

WEB:

I didn't...

EM:

Yes, you did!

WEB:

You told me to leave -

EM:

Yeah, but I didn't expect you to actually - !

(Long pause. She looks down and sighs.)

WEB:

I don't know what to say.

EM:

You proposed to me in a hospital waiting room while my mother was on life support. And then you left. It doesn't matter if I - Who the fuck does that?

(Beat.)

WEB:

You know what, you're right. I am dumb. I'm the most stupid, asinine, piece of –

EM:

Web, stop it -

WEB:

No, I am! How can I ever have...do you know why I did it?

EM:

No, because you haven't told me!

WEB:

Because you won't let me!

EM:

Well I'm letting you now!

WEB:

Em, I...it's not like I didn't have it planned before, things just got all – it wasn't the right time.

EM:

So why couldn't you just wait? I would have waited.

WEB:

Well I couldn't.

EM:

Why not?

WEB:

I...because I panicked.

EM:

Oh and as we all know that is a great reason to propose.

WEB:

It's not like I went into this lightly! I swear, Em I have never thought about anything more. The second we got that phone call, the second that we heard about your mom...I have thought about my life with you and I've thought about what it would be like without you. I have never lost anyone like you lost your mom. And to think about that...that loss? I couldn't wait. That's why I did it. Because I can't...I can't.

(Beat.)

EM:

Why couldn't you just talk to me?

WEB:

Because I was afraid.

EM:

Of what?

WEB:

Of everything.

EM:

You just needed to wait. Why couldn't you just - Doing it like that...it makes me think you're not serious.

WEB:

I was - am. I am serious.

EM:

I don't believe you.

WEB:

Really. Really?

EM:

No! You haven't given me a reason to!

WEB:

You want to see serious? Ok! Here you go.

(They pull out the bag and dump it out. It is full of notecards.)

This is how serious I am!

EM:

Holy shit, Web...you need help. I mean this, this, this...this is clinically insane.

WEB:

It is not insane.

EM:

All of this – you said you wouldn't do this anymore, Web, you said you could stop -

WEB:

If you let me explain, then -

EM:

I can't believe this -

(They pick up a notecard and read, almost yelling.)

WEB:

"I shouldn't have done it that way. I'm so sorry, Em."

EM:

What are you doing?

(They pick up another one.)

WEB:

“Your mom means so much to me and I panicked.”

EM:

Web, what is this - ?

(They keep going. One after another.)

WEB:

“I had no idea what I was saying. When things get tense I try to diffuse the tension by telling stupid stories to make you feel better.” “I never meant to hurt you.” “I love you more than anything.” “Take out the trash, vacuum, call Em.” “Wash counter, clean out fridge, call Em.” “Call Em.” “Call Em.”

(Beat.)

I did try to call you so many times, but you didn't answer me. I wrote all this down because I needed you to know that I really do care and that I didn't mean to come off as selfish and I am so, so, so sorry for how things happened. And this...this is a weeks worth of things I've needed to tell you. And I did it this way because...well, I'm not good at words.

(They look at each other for a really long time. Suddenly EM sits down, picks up one of the cards and reads. She picks up another, and another and keeps reading. She occasionally looks up at them. WEB sits and watches her read.)

**INTERLUDE:**

SETTING: An empty stage.

AT RISE: EM stands center and writes a notecard.

EM:

Clean the kitchen  
Send thank you cards  
Follow up with insurance.  
Tell them everything.



## SCENE VIII - The Past

SETTING: A park bench. It is early spring.

AT RISE: WEB is sitting on the bench reading a book. EM comes on holding an umbrella and stands next to the bench for a few moments. She glances over at WEB. They look up and look away quickly. She nonchalantly starts whistling and sits next to them. She looks at WEB again and they look back. They look away again. They sit in silence for a moment before EM sneaks herself over so she is closer to WEB and looks over at the book. She leans over and begins reading along with them. WEB looks up at her and EM smiles.

EM:  
Hello.

WEB:  
Hi...um...do I - ?

EM:  
It's nice.

WEB:  
Huh?

EM:  
The book. I've read it about twelve times.

WEB:  
Oh, wow.

EM:  
Yeah, it's my feel-good book.

WEB:  
Really?

Mm-hmm.

EM:

But it's so depressing.

WEB:

It makes me feel better about my life.

EM:

Ah.

WEB:

Yep. Downers usually do that for me.

EM:

I can understand that.

WEB:

Yeah?

EM:

Yeah. Actually, it makes perfect sense.

WEB:

Great!

EM:

Yeah.

WEB:

(Beat)

So, I um...see you here a lot.

EM:

Yeah?

WEB:

Yeah. You usually just...walk around, but...you always have your head up.

EM:

I do?

WEB:

Yeah. That's how I noticed you before...you were just...looking up and smiling.

EM:

Yeah, I...guess it's just because I like to look at something besides my feet.

WEB:

It just seemed so much deeper than that.

EM:

Sometimes. It helps me think, you know?

WEB:

Yeah.

EM:

It just helps to look up when you think...like everything slides to that part of your brain or something and mashes together. My mom taught me to do that.

WEB:

She seems wise.

EM:

I like to think so.

WEB:

She certainly sounds like it.

EM:

Thanks. I see you a lot, too, you know.

Yeah?

WEB:

Yeah...you read a lot.

EM:

Oh, yeah. It's relaxing. My life is so hectic it's nice to just...read how crazy other people's lives can get, you know?

WEB:

Yeah, totally. You like any one author?

EM:

I don't follow authors, really. I just like reading.

WEB:

Nice.

EM:

Yeah...it's pretty cool.

WEB:

Good.

EM:

(Beat)

It's going to rain.

WEB:

How can you tell?

EM:

I can smell it. Like snow.

WEB:

You smell precipitation?

EM:  
It's not uncommon.

WEB:  
Huh.

EM:  
What?

WEB:  
Well, I don't come across it often.

EM:  
Just smell for a second. Take a deep breath, close your eyes, and see if you can smell it.

WEB:  
Seriously?

EM:  
Just try.

WEB:  
(Smelling the air)

Um...ok...well...yeah, kind of?

EM:  
You smell it?

WEB:  
Kind of.

EM:  
You can also feel it...humidity.

Sure.

WEB:

Well, snow is easier to smell.

EM:

Is it?

WEB:

It's nice. Fire places, Christmas, things like that...

EM:

Mm.

WEB:

It's, like...I don't know, comforting.

EM:

No, I get it.

WEB:

Good.

EM:

You're interesting.

WEB:

Oh...am I?

EM:

Don't worry, it's a good thing.

WEB:

Oh, good. You're interesting, too. Also in a good way.

EM:

WEB:

Good.

(They stare at each other for a moment. An instant connection.)

EM:

Hey...you?

WEB:

Yes?

EM:

I, um...have to go.

WEB:

Oh...I -

EM:

I have an appointment.

WEB:

Right.

EM:

Dentist.

WEB:

Gotta keep those teeth clean.

EM:

Filling, actually.

WEB:

Ah...

EM:

Yeah...I really don't want to go.

I don't blame you. But...you have to.

WEB:

Yes.

EM:

Well, nobody likes the dentist.

WEB:

It's gross.

EM:

It is.

WEB:

Listen, um... I'd like to see you again.

EM:

Really?

WEB:

I want to hear more interesting things about you.

EM:

Wow, um...great! I'd like that, too.

WEB:

Great. Meet here later, say, um...seven-ish?

EM:

Seven-ish it is.

WEB:

Great!

EM:



Great.

WEB:

Well...bye then.

EM:

(Starts to exit)

Hey, one second.

WEB:

Yeah?

EM:

You don't know my name.

WEB:

Oh, of course, sorry. I suppose you don't know mine, either.

EM:

Well...My name is Web.

WEB:

My name is Em.

EM:

Nice meeting you, Em.

WEB:

Nice meeting you, too, Web.

EM:

(They are both left onstage staring at each other.)

## **EPILOGUE**

**SETTING:** An empty stage.

**AT RISE:** EM and WEB enter from opposite sides of the stage. They slowly meet in the middle. Music underscores.

**WEB:**

Hi.

**EM:**

Hi.

(All the things they want to say to each other, all the apologies, all the anger, all the hurt, and all the love lies in this silence. Suddenly WEB pulls out a notecard. EM laughs and does the same. They read the cards to each other, but we can't hear. Suddenly EM drops her card and hugs them. WEB hugs her back. It's the beginning of the next chapter, whatever that may be. Lights slowly fade. The music swells. End of play.)