

LOVE LETTER

Written by

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INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

A wind-up ALARM CLOCK ticks on an end table. A man lies slumped on a couch wearing only a t-shirt and boxer shorts. The second hand reaches its mark, the clock shudders with an alarm. The man pushes himself into sitting position and scans the room. He stands and turns off the alarm as he stumbles by. Is this really where he sleeps?

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MORNING

Morning light pours in through a window into a spotless and tidy bedroom. A queen-sized bed sits made, untouched. The door opens. The man walks over to a closet, half-filled with professional attire. His finger hovers indecisively over three nearly identical SUITS before settling on white.

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MORNING

All put-together now, white shirt, tie, briefcase in hand, NEIL, 40, walks to the fridge. Inside are stacks upon stacks of food storage containers. Neil selects a handful and closes the door. He opens a LUNCHBOX and arranges them inside like Tetris. Just then, hearing a buzz, Neil checks his MOBILE.

TAYLOR (TEXT)

*Hi dad. I'll come by afterschool.
Favour? I forgot a stack of notes
on the kitchen counter at mom's.*

Neil checks his watch, sighs heavily, then responds...

NEIL (TEXT)

Can't your mom bring them for you?

TAYLOR (TEXT)

*I've been trying her at home and I
can't get through. Business as
usual. I owe you so big time.*

Neil looks around, weighing carefully his response. Finally,

NEIL (TEXT)

Sure Tay, see you later.

Neil shakes his head and gathers his things.

EXT. KATHY'S HOUSE - DAY

Neil's finger presses the doorbell. From within, high-heel footsteps, as a blurry figure approaches the sidelight.

The door opens. KATHY, 40, elegantly dressed, stands with a cordless phone in hand and a surprised look on her face.

KATHY
(to Neil)
Neil. Hi.

He pauses, taking a moment to examine her face.

KATHY (CONT'D)
(into receiver)
I'm sorry, just a moment.

NEIL
(remembering his purpose)
I'm - Tay forgot some notes on the counter.

KATHY
I swear that girl would forget her arms if they weren't attached.

Kathy turns and enters. Neil follows hesitantly.

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - DAY

Kathy walks quickly through the kitchen, pointing to a stack of binders as she moves.

KATHY
Over there.
(into receiver)
Midge? Hi. Sorry. Where were we?

Kathy walks to her desk. Neil looks down at the counter.

INSERT - STACK OF SCHOOLWORK, binders surrounded by a cluttered mess of other papers haphazardly organized.

KATHY (CONT'D)
(covers receiver with hand)
Neil...Neil! Have you had a chance to look for my guitar?

NEIL
(stopping, looks up)
Oh that, I forgot again.

As Neil speaks, his hands graze a HANDWRITTEN LETTER.

KATHY
(to receiver, eye roll)
Oh that's fine, that's fine!
(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)
(back to Neil)
Try to remember it for next time?

NEIL
(deflects the moment)
Yeah. Yeah, I'll remember.

KATHY
It should be in storage downstairs.
(back to receiver)
What's that? Oh no-no, it's fine.
It's just the mailman.

Kathy laughs. Neil gathers the letter amidst the stack of schoolwork and dashes away quickly. Just the mailman?

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (ENTRYWAY) - DAY

Neil stumbles through the front door with his briefcase, water bottle, lunchbox, and the stack of schoolwork. As he does, the letter falls to the ground. Neil expertly bends at the knees to retrieve it, and continues in with everything.

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (TAYLOR'S BEDROOM) - DAY

Neil walks into a bedroom, placing the stack down on a desk. He places the letter on top, but it catches his eye.

INSERT - LETTER

The slightly messy writing begins "My sweet."

Neil closes it, looks up and around as if he's been caught stealing. He takes a breath before inspecting further.

INSERT - LETTER

Cuts through the letter, phrases like "The night we spent together", "can't wait to see you again", and "Love, Rodney"

Neil closes the letter and scrambles to place it back in the stack. He pauses to consider next steps.

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

Neil stands in the kitchen. TAYLOR, 15, school uniform, sits opposite him on a barstool, speaking animatedly. As she does, Neil smiles, drinking his tea, awkwardly.

TAYLOR

And then Andrew says, Mr. Jeffries, there's ink on your butt. And Mr. Jeffries totally freaks out. It - was - hilarious.

Neil smiles and nods slowly.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Dad, that smile's wearing *you*, what's up?

Neil takes a deep breath, then begins to speak.

NEIL

Sweetheart - growing up - pretty fast, I know this transition, uh-

TAYLOR

Dad?

NEIL

Okay, boys can be pretty special sometimes, and when boys are really special, they try to tell you how-

TAYLOR

Dad? Are you trying to have 'the talk' with me?

NEIL

It's obvious, huh?

TAYLOR

Mom had that talk with me a long time ago. You're off the hook.

NEIL

Ah, well, I just saw your letter, I wasn't snooping, it was there and-

TAYLOR

What letter, dad?

Neil reveals the letter and hands it over, apologetically.

She looks at it. Taylor's face falls into one of concern.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

You weren't supposed to see this.

NEIL

I know, I shouldn't have read it.

Taylor stares at Neil. A confused beat.

TAYLOR
Dad, that letter belongs to mom.

A moment passes. Neil turns inward, suddenly aware.

NEIL
Oh.

TAYLOR
It must've gotten mixed up with my-

NEIL
No problem, it's fine, fine.
Say, you want some ice cream?

Neil stands and walks to the fridge. Taylor folds up the letter, and watches Neil, who just stares into the fridge. There is no way that Neil is fine with this.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Neil lies on the couch, eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling. Restless, he turns on his side.

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (TAYLOR'S BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Taylor is asleep in her bed. Ambient light streams in from the window. Taylor stirs and opens her eyes to reveal Neil sitting on her bedside.

TAYLOR
Dad?

Taylor pulls herself up into sitting position and turns on the light. She looks at the clock.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Dad, it's so late.

NEIL
Sorry. I'm just - sorry.

Neil gets up and starts to leave.

TAYLOR
Dad.

NEIL
It's fine. It's...not, but it's
okay, I mean, it is - it's -

TAYLOR
Dad.

Neil stops in the doorway.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Is this about the letter?

Neil swallows.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
I knew it.

NEIL
I thought I was past this.

TAYLOR
Well, you need to let it go, Dad.

NEIL
(shouting)
I don't want to let go!

Neil turns to see Taylor staring at him silently. Neil looks away, then sits down. They both sit silently. Then...

NEIL (CONT'D)
No. Wait - I just want her to be
happy.

Taylor looks away for a moment, pauses, turns back to him.

TAYLOR
She is. She's happy dad.

Neil wipes a tear, smiles, and nods his head. As he stands to leave, he catches her eye.

NEIL
Goodnight T-bug.

INT. NEIL'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Neil walks into his bedroom and kneels down next to the bed. From under the bed, he pulls out a case which opens to reveal a beautiful ACOUSTIC GUITAR. As Neil examines the guitar in its case, he notices something tucked along the edge - an old envelope, wrinkled and dogeared from being in the case.

Neil opens it and finds a PHOTO of a much younger Kathy, and a HANDWRITTEN LETTER, weathered by time, that reads:

"Dearest. May your song continue
always. With all my heart, Neil."

Neil smiles and softly strums the strings. Suddenly, a string snaps and Neil pulls away, shocked. For a moment, he is silent, then a surprised look breaks into a laugh. Neil replaces the letter next to the guitar and closes the case.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. KATHY'S HOUSE - DAY

The doorbell rings. Kathy opens the door. Neil stands in front of her holding the guitar case. Kathy smiles warmly.

NEIL
Special delivery!

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

Neil leans the case against the couch, then turns to leave. Kathy opens the case, then pauses, admiring the guitar.

KATHY
Remember when you gave this to me?

Neil stops, turns back to Kathy, then to the guitar.

NEIL
Every time I look at it.

Kathy turns to Neil, touched. She looks at the guitar.

KATHY
I'm giving it to Tay.

Neil turns back to look at Kathy. He smiles, amazed.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Next week on her birthday.
(she pauses, looks at Neil)
Maybe you could be there too. It
could be from both of us.

A moment passes as Neil considers. He turns to look at the guitar, then back to Kathy. Kathy smiles at Neil. She looks happy. And so does Neil.

FADE TO BLACK