

**You, Me, Together**  
**By Nicholas Madio**

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## **Characters:**

Ben: 16 years old, diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is always repetitive with his words and stutters most of the time. He is a bit skinny, but handsome. He is sweet and kind, but most of the time he does not know who he is. He does not know his own identity. He is very secretive about Hannah from Claire

Hannah: 16 years old, not autistic. She is the opposite of Ben, because she has self-control physically and speaks perfectly clear. She is understanding, determined, brave, warm-hearted, and pleasant, but she worries about hurting people cares for, especially Ben as well.

Claire: 38 years old. Mother of Ben. **She is very energetic with 80s/90s culture**, but tries to handle present time. She is trying to be understanding and wanting Ben to open up to her, but she always has assumptions about Ben's feelings towards Hannah and she wants him to realize it, even if Ben keeps denying it.

Joyce: 37 years old. Mother of Hannah. **She is a therapist**. She is open-minded, sympathetic, selfless, and bold as a therapist, but she is struggling a bit after her divorce from her husband. Like Claire, she always tries to get Hannah to understand about her feelings towards Ben and she doesn't want her to get hurt like she did.

**Time:** Present

**Set:** The set is divided in three different spaces. We see two living room sets, one on the left side of the stage with a sofa couch in the center left and a TV. The left living room has a few classic 80s music records such as Cyndi Lauper, Michael Jackson, New Kids On The Block. The living room also has 80s-90s movie posters such as Stand & Deliver, The Breakfast Club, ST. Elmo's Fire, Good Will Hunting, Goodfellas, The Little Rascals. The living room color is a dark green. Is it a mystery that the main character is into the 80s-90s?

The other on the right side of the stage with a sofa couch, TV and bookshelves filled with psychology books. The living room is filled with posters of famous psychologists such as Samuel Kirk, Beatrice Wright, Dan Goodley. There are also prizes named to Joyce Rendaldis for her famous autobiography books as well. The living room color is a light beige.

The place in the middle is a class room with only two desks side by side. The desk on the left is filled with books and pencils. It remains quiet for a beat or two. The other two settings such as the mountains and library will be seen later on.

As the lights go up, BEN enters stage left and introduces himself.

BEN

(To The Audience)

Hi. My name is Ben. I wanted to speak about my own life situation, because I faced the biggest challenge in my life. It was very big, it was deep impacting, I felt a lot of nerve, I kept thinking to myself if it's real, I needed to know if what I feel is real, I wanted to run and run as far away as I could, because I felt scared or shy, because I didn't want to get hurt emotionally. I fell in love with a girl.

BEN crosses to the right as he breathes in and out.

BEN (CONT.)

My reason for wanting to talk about being in love is that throughout my life, I wasn't really sure if I wanted to be loved, because I was loved by my mother, my father, my grandmother, my grandfather, my uncles, my aunts, all the people I am related to. But I wasn't sure if I was loved by the person I am not related to or if I am loved by somebody that I am not related to. For once, I wanted to know what it's like to love someone, and then I fell in love with a girl, but I wasn't sure if I was good for her, because she is different from me and I wasn't sure if she loved me or not, but I was the one who wasn't sure if I loved her or not which stirred up my insecurities and my mental health, which lead me to do something crazy, but I want to show it as I explain it to you. To everyone in the audience of how it all happened. It all started when I met Hannah.

Ben crosses to his desk on the left and sits on it. He takes out his ear plugs and puts them on his ears.

The loud noises from students come on very loud as BEN is writing on his notebook. BEN finds it hard to

focus when the noise keeps getting louder and louder. Then HANNAH enters stage right and sees a desk next to BEN's.

HANNAH walks over and sees BEN working.

HANNAH

Excuse me.

BEN does not hear HANNAH.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Excuse me.

BEN still doesn't hear her. HANNAH notices the ear plugs. She drags her right hand and shakes BEN.

BEN gets startled and breathes in and out. He sees HANNAH.

BEN

Oh, um, sorry, sorry. I was working and I didn't notice you were....

BEN gazes at HANNAH for six seconds, until HANNAH points out the ear plugs.

HANNAH

Um.... You, uh....

BEN notices her reaction and realizes what she is talking about.

BEN

Oh, right sorry.

BEN takes out his ear plugs.

BEN (CONT.)

Hi. I'm Ben.

HANNAH

Hannah.

HANNAH puts her right hand out in a handshake position. BEN notices her hand and does not know what to do next.

BEN

Um, so, um, you're new here?

HANNAH

Yeah. My first day. I just moved here to Mahopac since the school year started. Is anyone sitting here?

BEN

Well, I mean, A. Yes and B. No.

HANNAH

(Curious)

Really?

BEN

Yeah. I mean, there are some days that people want to sit here, then there are some days that people want to sit with their friends on the other side of the classroom, and there are some days that people want personal space, including the people who just want to look at your answers when they just needed a partner.

HANNAH

So no one has sat here with you?

BEN

No, no, I mean, I'm pretty sure there's some people who want to, but I guess there's people who don't want to.

HANNAH

Well I can sit with you if you like.

BEN

(Surprised)

Really? You sure?

HANNAH

Yeah. Why not? Mind if I sit with you?

BEN

Um, uh, no, no. Go ahead. I don't mind at all.

HANNAH

Thanks.

HANNAH is about to sit.

BEN

Wait!

HANNAH stops for a second. BEN reaches into his backpack and grabs a tub of wipes and wipes the seat and desk.

BEN

There you go. Just want to make sure it's clean. Can't be too careful.

HANNAH

Thanks.

HANNAH sits down next to BEN. BEN continues with his work.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Whatcha working on?

BEN

Um, nothing. Just getting my homework done.

HANNAH

On the first day? Um, okay. Need help?

BEN

It's okay. I got it.

HANNAH

Alright then.

BEN keeps working and HANNAH sits down in complete silence. BEN keeps looking at HANNAH for a few seconds until HANNAH turns to him.

BEN

So, um, what do you think of it?

HANNAH

What? School?

BEN

Mahopac.

HANNAH

I don't know. I mean, I just moved here. How about you?

BEN

Well I mean, it's fine. I live here my whole life. It's like asking someone, how's Albany.

HANNAH

So, you love it here?

BEN

Well, I mean, I guess. I just... I don't know. It's very complex. I mean, it's better than New York City.

HANNAH

What do you mean by that?



BEN stutters for a few seconds.  
HANNAH seems to get confused.

BEN

Well, it's just that, um...Well I mean... It's kinda...

BEN accidentally drops his pencil  
on the right floor.

BEN (CONT.)  
(Sighs)

Damn it.

BEN tries to pick up his pencil.  
HANNAH helps him. **Their hands touch.** BEN looks at his hand with  
HANNAH's hand. He starts to get  
nervous and afraid and lets go of  
HANNAH's hand in a mere second.  
HANNAH looks concerned/confused by  
what just happened. HANNAH gives  
BEN's pencil back to BEN.

BEN (CONT.)

Um, uh, um, thanks?

HANNAH

No problem. Pencils can be a real crapper sometimes.

BEN

Yeah, I guess.

HANNAH gets to work as the bell  
rings. BEN looks forward.

BEN (CONT.)

(To The Audience)

I was overwhelmed by Hannah's beauty and I didn't know what to  
say to her. I always feel a little tension inside of me when a  
girl like her is very sweet and adorable, but to tell you the

truth, I think this was like the first time a girl was paying attention to me, but not for academics or playing jokes or pranks, I am talking about friendship wise. Like the first time a girl actually touched me and I got nervous. But she's very social and I'm... I'm just me.

BEN gets up from his desk and walks on center stage as the stage goes dark and the light shines on BEN.

BEN (CONT.)

(To The Audience)

Meeting Hannah for the first time, it felt like maybe it was God who brought me something from heaven like he's looking down on me trying to help find a friend. But I started to wonder, is Hannah the answer? Is she the friend that I want?

BEN walks stage left. The stage lights up to a cafeteria table with HANNAH sitting by herself. BEN goes stage left and sees HANNAH. BEN thinks for a second and then walks past her to avoid, but HANNAH notices him.

HANNAH

Hi.

BEN stops and turns to HANNAH.

BEN

Hey.

HANNAH

How are you doing?

BEN

Um, fine I guess.

HANNAH

Are you looking for a place to sit?

BEN

Uh, no. I just walked in to get food. Just have work to do in the library.

HANNAH

On the first day of school?

BEN

I kinda like to get ahead on the syllabus for the school year. Just to get it out of the way.

HANNAH

Okay. I mean, the English homework is not that much, right?

BEN

I guess not. No.

HANNAH

You wanna join me?

BEN

Really?

HANNAH

Yeah. You know, I figured that since you let me sit with you during English class, I thought maybe I could return the favor.

BEN

Nah, it's okay. You don't have to. I appreciate it though. I'm just not sure. Sorry.

HANNAH

Okay. I understand.

BEN is about to walk away.

HANNAH (CONT.)

It's just that...I thought maybe I would like to ask someone what they think of Mahopac. I was kinda hoping I would like to get your perspective.

BEN

Really?

HANNAH

Yeah. I just kinda thought maybe I should ask you. But it's okay.

HANNAH continues to eat her lunch.  
BEN comes back to HANNAH and sits with her.

BEN

I'll stay.

HANNAH

Really?

BEN

Yeah. I guess I can take up on that favor you promised.

HANNAH

Okay.

BEN takes his lunch out of his bag.

HANNAH (CONT.)

So, uh, crazy lesson today with Mister Burgundy, huh?

BEN tries to catch what HANNAH is saying.

HANNAH (CONT.)

I mean, his history lesson was a bit over the top. I mean does he always add special effects in his presentation slides about 19th century Europe?

BEN

Um, well, no, I guess not. He also did this for the 20th century, WWI, WWII, and the Cold War back in the spring. It's kinda actually entertaining when you think about it.

HANNAH

You sure? He seems very flashy with details

BEN

If anything, he should make a movie on his lessons.

HANNAH laughs a bit. BEN notices it and smiles. BEN tries to think for a beat or two.

BEN (CONT.)

So, um, how are you liking Mahopac so far? Anything exciting?

HANNAH

Well, I mean, it's okay so far. Very quiet. Well not too quiet.

BEN

Yeah. The football games at Mahopac High School can get really crazy.

HANNAH

What about you? What do you love about this town?

BEN

Well, I, uh, I like to go to the boating dock. Only because my dad likes to go fishing. My dad lived here when he was a kid, went to the Bronx for important business, met my mom, fell in love with her, asked her to marry him and ended up having me. That's the whole story actually.

HANNAH

Really? I was hoping if there was still more.

BEN

There is. It's just that, I like to keep it short, before I go long.

HANNAH

Fair point. So, how are the people in Mahopac? Are they friendly?

BEN

I guess. I mean, here at school, they're just assholes or animals.

HANNAH

Hmmmm?

BEN

I'm not saying that they are, it's just that they sometimes need to know what their actions are doing to others, and then they don't know how to be respectful to others, when they are feeling hurt the most. Not that I'm saying that you're not respectful, I really do believe you are. I'm just... Sorry.

BEN awkwardly eats in silence.

HANNAH

You're a very odd man

BEN

I know. I'm sorry. It's just this thing I do when I try to make friends and stuff. It's just... You know.

HANNAH

But you do have a nice perspective about life. I really like it.

BEN

You do?

HANNAH

Yeah. You're alright.

BEN

Um (Blushes a bit) Thanks.

HANNAH

No problem.

HANNAH eats her lunch

BEN grabs a bottle of water and sips it as HANNAH keeps talking, but then suddenly he accidentally swallows it in the wrong pipe, which causes him to cough really hard.

HANNAH gets up, in worries, and goes towards BEN and pats his back multiple times until he stops coughing. HANNAH places her hands on BEN's shoulders.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Ben, are you okay?

BEN notices HANNAH's hands on his shoulders. He starts to get a little nervous and kinda freaky and breathes in and out as he blushes pale white.

BEN

Um, I'm fine. Um, do you mind if you could, um, you know...

HANNAH

What?

BEN

Like, um, (postures HANNAH to get his hands off of him)

HANNAH

Um, okay?

HANNAH takes her hands off of BEN's shoulders. BEN gets up from the table and walks center stage.

HANNAH (CONT.)

You want me to take you to the nurse?

BEN

I'm fine!

HANNAH

You sure?

BEN

Gotta go!

The stage goes dark and the light  
shines on BEN.

BEN (CONT.)

The second her hands were placed on my shoulders, I felt like  
either scared, because I received contact from Hannah like I was  
worried she was either gonna hold me or try to attack me. From  
what I saw is that she was trying to help me. But the truth is  
that I don't know her very well. For what I know, I can admit  
that. I don't know a thing about her.

BEN enters stage left and sees  
CLAIRE watching her phone. BEN  
tries to sneak past her without  
making a sound. Unknowingly to  
him, CLAIRE notices BEN sneaking  
away from her. BEN is almost there  
to freedom, until CLAIRE gets from  
the couch, takes her headphones  
off and walks behind him.

CLAIRE

(Whispering)

Who are you walking away from?

BEN

(Not looking, whispering)



I'm trying to walk away from Mom so that she won't notice me and ask me about my day.

CLAIRE

(Whispering)

Okay. But what is she's already behind you and talking to you?

BEN becomes surprised and shocked.  
He turns towards CLAIRE. He  
screams.

BEN

(Nervous)

Oh, hey Mom. How was your day?

CLAIRE

It was good. Just finished paying up the bills and have been watching *Dirty Dancing* with Patrick Swayze. How about you?

BEN

It was good. Bye!

BEN tries to run, but CLAIRE  
blocks him.

BEN (CONT.)

Do you mind? I gotta go upstairs and do some homework.

CLAIRE

Why don't you do your homework down here and tell me about your day?

BEN

I'm good. I prefer to go upstairs in my room, complete silence, and do my homework.

BEN tries to go under, but CLAIRE  
blocks him with her hand.

BEN (CONT.)

Man you're good.

CLAIRE

I wouldn't be that good, if you told me about your day.

BEN

Nah. I prefer not.

BEN goes around the other way, but  
CLAIRE past by him and blocks him.

BEN (CONT.)

Talking about Speedy Gonzales. You sure blocked my path.

CLAIRE

Won't be doing it if you told me about it; "Did you meet someone today?", "Any girl caught your interest?", or "Have you invited a friend over from school?".

BEN

Mom, it was just a regular boring day. So can you please let me get by so that I can do my homework?

CLAIRE

Not until I get the whole story.

BEN

Okay. Here's a story, Patrick Swayze's dead. The End. Can I go now?

CLAIRE

Okay, I know that it's not a story, because I've already heard it like nine years ago about Patrick Swayze.

BEN

Look, it's none of your business of how my day was.

CLAIRE

Yes it is, because I deserve to know what's going on in my son's life.

BEN

Can't you have a little respect for a person's private life?

CLAIRE

Can't you have a little respect that I love you and I want to support and protect you?

BEN

Well played.

CLAIRE

Tell me what's going on.

BEN

Look, it's nothing. Okay? Just a regular boring day back in school. That's all. Now will you please let me pass by? I got a lot of homework.

CLAIRE

But it's only the first day.

BEN

Mom!

CLAIRE

Okay, okay.

CLAIRE lets BEN pass. BEN goes upstairs. CLAIRE puts back on her headphones and continues watching *Dirty Dancing*. The lights go down.

The lights go up. BEN is in his room, laying in his own bed. He starts to think to himself about his encounter with HANNAH. BEN gets up from his bed and walks towards the mirror and looks at himself.

BEN

Hey Hannah, how are you? You look nice. You got nice hair. Nah. She would think I am obsessed with her hair. Hey Hannah, how are you? You look nice. Have you watched any good shows lately? Nice shirt. Wait. What if she thinks I was staring at her cleavage. Hey Hannah, how are you? You look nice. Have you watched any good shows lately? Your eyes are beautiful. They remind me of the blue emeralds from Sonic the Hedgehog. Wait, she would think I'm too nerdy about video game characters. Hey Hannah, how are you? You look nice. Have you watched any good shows lately? Your eyes are beautiful. They remind me of the beautiful ocean at the beach. Are you into music? I sometimes like to listen to kids' music. Wait, she'll think I'm too immature. Hey Hannah, how are you? You look nice. Have you watched any good shows lately? Your eyes are beautiful. They remind me of the beautiful ocean at the beach. Are you into music? I like to listen to Pop, Country Pop and Pop Rock. Yes I know I like all pop. It is very diverse. I also like to...Ah, who I'm kidding?

BEN goes back to his bed and lay down.

BEN

It's hard to talk to a girl like Hannah if she's probably all cool, popular, beautiful, and female-like. She's like a beautiful white horse that came from heaven, swooping down to caress my face, telling me that she wants me. But I don't know if I'm that guy for her. I mean, look at me, I can barely even say words in a full sentence without repeating or stuttering. I can barely even say big words that people think sound easy, but really they sound like an industrial grinder about to break into pieces and getting ready to be set on fire. I mean, it's the 21st century and it's turning into hell. Not like Devil's hell, but more likely *Hell's Angels* hell.

BEN stays laying down on his bed.  
The lights go down

**A WEEK LATER**

The lights go on, there is a library table with a stack of books on there and Ben enters stage left, sits down on a chair, takes a book on his right side, takes out his ear plugs, puts them in his ears, opens the book and starts reading.

HANNAH enters stage left and sees BEN. HANNAH goes to BEN and this time she finger taps him on his shoulders. BEN notices HANNAH and takes off his ear plugs.

BEN (CONT.)

Hey.

HANNAH

Hey. Are you feeling better?

BEN

Uh, yeah. I guess.

HANNAH

You want me to join you?

BEN

Oh, I, um, don't know. I gotta finish this book for English.

HANNAH

Oh, don't worry, I can help you.

BEN

Nah, nah, it's okay. I got it.

HANNAH

You asked me if I can sit with you at lunch. At least let me return you a favor.

BEN

I guess I can't say no to that.

HANNAH sits down with BEN as he keeps reading the book. HANNAH stays completely silent for a beat or two.

HANNAH

So, um, whatcha reading?

BEN

Um, I'm just reading *Of Mice and Men*. Pretty good book.

HANNAH

Oh yeah. I read that book. It's really intense, yet very inspiring.

BEN

Really? How so?

HANNAH

Well I mean, you get Lenny, who is very strange, kinda dimwitted, but very good at heart. And then there's George, very stern, strict, yet very protective to Lenny. But then suddenly, Lenny accidentally kills a girl and then George tries everything he can to protect him, but instead he has to kill him.

BEN

I guess you can say that. I sometimes relate myself to Lenny, because well I mean, I'm not damaged, but just trying to figure myself out and I'm pretty sure Lenny was doing that too. If he doesn't get himself in tough situations And also I feel like you kinda spoiled the ending for me.

HANNAH

I'm sorry.

BEN

Nah, it's fine, at least you didn't tell me how he got killed.

BEN keeps still in silence as  
HANNAH keeps looking at BEN with  
flattering affection.

BEN (CONT.)

What?

HANNAH

Nothing.

BEN

You were looking at me.

HANNAH

(Lying)

No I wasn't. I was... Looking at the stack of books

BEN

Oh. Okay. I can pass you one. Here.

BEN takes a book from the stack  
and gives it to HANNAH.

HANNAH

(Flatly)

Thanks.

BEN

No problem.

HANNAH keeps looking at BEN. BEN  
notices again.

BEN

What?

HANNAH

Nothing.

BEN

I know you're looking at me.

HANNAH  
(Lying)

I wasn't.

BEN

Liar!

Then a shush noise goes off.

BEN (CONT.)  
(Quietly)

Sorry.

HANNAH  
Guess that librarian didn't like shouting or loud noises.

BEN  
That's because I was being stared at. By you.

HANNAH  
(Lying)

I wasn't staring.

BEN  
It looked like you were.

HANNAH  
(Lying)  
It looked like you're being paranoid.

BEN  
I would be paranoid if aliens or Bigfoot existed.

HANNAH  
Really?

BEN  
Nah. I would just be really excited.

HANNAH laughs a bit.



BEN (CONT.)

You really think that was funny.

HANNAH

(Lying)

No, it wasn't.

BEN

I say you're lying.

HANNAH

(Lying)

I say you're nuts.

Then another shush noise goes off again.

BEN

Sorry, again.

BEN goes back to reading as HANNAH keeps looking at him.

BEN (CONT.)

You're looking at me again.

HANNAH

Okay fine. I was looking at you.

BEN

Ha! I knew it.

Then a third shush noise goes off.

BEN (CONT.)

Ah, calm down. I was having a victory moment. Shush someone else please! (Realizing now) Sorry. You were saying.

HANNAH

Your hair's pretty nice.

BEN

Thank you.

HANNAH touches BEN's hair for a couple of seconds, but BEN starts to get nervous and accidentally slaps HANNAH's hand away from him. HANNAH looks at BEN with shock and dismay. BEN realizes what he has done.

BEN (CONT.)

I am so so sorry. I didn't mean to...

HANNAH

It's fine, it's fine. I didn't think you were sensitive about your hair.

BEN

No, no, no. It's not that, it's just that, well I sometimes get really nervous when people touch me.

HANNAH

Really? You mean like this?

HANNAH starts messing with BEN's hair jokefully.

BEN

(Laughs)

Hey! Stop!

BEN starts messing with HANNAH's hair as well.

HANNAH

(Laughs)

Hey, quit it.

BEN

I'll stop, if you stop.

HANNAH

Never!

BEN and HANNAH keep messing each other's hairs

HANNAH (CONT.)

Okay, okay, I call a truce.

BEN

Okay.

BEN and HANNAH stop messing with each other's hair for a moment. Both of their hands are on each other's faces. They keep on staring at each other for a beat or two.

BEN (CONT.)

Um, sorry about that.

HANNAH

It's okay.

BEN

I should probably let go now.

HANNAH

Yeah same.

BEN and HANNAH do not let go for ten seconds.

HANNAH (CONT.)

You can let go.

BEN

Nah. Ladies first.

HANNAH

Okay. On three then?

BEN

Okay. One...

HANNAH

Two...

BEN & HANNAH

(Simultaneously)

Three.

BEN and HANNAH let go of each other and face straight towards the audience. They look at each for a second, blushed.

BEN

I, um, better get going to class now.

HANNAH

Same.

BEN and HANNAH get up and walk away in different directions. He looks back at HANNAH for a minute and HANNAH does the same as well. The lights go down on stage except on BEN.

BEN

In that moment when I touched Hannah and got lost in her eyes, I was, like, completely zoned out like I kept witnessing her personality and looks. I wanted to let her go, but I couldn't do it, but I did in a force. I don't know what's going on in Hannah's mind.

BEN walks away stage right. The lights go up. HANNAH is sitting on

the couch by herself with JOYCE,  
her mother, wearing a blue sweater  
with blue jeans and black flat  
shoes.

JOYCE

So, yeah, my day at the office was good. I was giving my clients  
some guidance on how to handle their struggles and behaviors.  
How was your day sweetie?

HANNAH

My day was good. Um, Mom, can I ask you something?

JOYCE

Sure. What is it?

HANNAH

Well, um, there's this guy and he's nice and kind, but he's  
kinda super odd.

JOYCE

What's his name?

HANNAH

(Sighs)

His name's Ben.

JOYCE

Okay. Why do you think he's odd?

HANNAH

I don't think he's odd. It's just that...Nothing never mind.

JOYCE

Oh no, no, tell me, tell me what's wrong.

HANNAH

You sure?

JOYCE

Look, I just want you to know that I am here for you. For anything. I want to help you no matter what.

HANNAH

Okay. Um, it's gonna sound crazy and very insane, um, he, um, kind slapped me today.

JOYCE

WHAT?!

HANNAH

It was an accident! It was an accident! He didn't mean to do it.

JOYCE sighs in relief.

JOYCE

How did it happen?

HANNAH

I touched his hair. It freaked him out and he slapped my hand. But like I said, it was an accident. I swear.

JOYCE

Okay. Okay, calm down. I'm sorry.

HANNAH

It's okay. I just...I just don't know why he would do that.

JOYCE

Well, I would say that maybe he has boundaries from his personal self. Like whether he has trauma, haphephobia, autism...

HANNAH

W-w-w-wait? How do you mean by those?

JOYCE

Well, to be honest, maybe he would be feeling afraid.

HANNAH

I don't think he's afraid. Maybe he's just jumpy?

JOYCE

Do you know that?

HANNAH

I don't know. What should I do?

JOYCE

You talk to him. Maybe get him to open up to someone. Or open up about yourself to him.

HANNAH

Okay, I can do that.

JOYCE

Okay. But I really want you to go easy on the person. He can't just say it right away

HANNAH

I'll be fine.

JOYCE

But just out of curiosity, what does he look like?

HANNAH

Why do you need to know?

JOYCE

Just want to make sure. Um, just that, you know, whatever guy you really like with a good personality and whatever physical appearance it is, I'm okay with it.

HANNAH

Okay. Thanks. But I don't really know him that well and I don't think I like him. I just barely know him that's all.

JOYCE

Okay. Whatever you need to tell yourself. But if he is a good guy, I think you two would definitely be sweet together.

HANNAH

And I think you really need to stop watching romance movies, because not everything in life has a happy ending.

JOYCE

Okay.

The lights go down for 10 seconds. The lights go back up. BEN enters stage left and sees CLAIRE, his mother, wearing a green shirt with blue jeans and white flat shoes, dancing to *Livin' On The Prayer* with headphones on.

BEN

Okay. Mom's distracted on her phone again. So I gotta move fast.

BEN walks slowly towards the right, while CLAIRE keeps on dancing and starts singing a bit.

BEN (CONT.)

Almost there.

CLAIRE lifts her head up and sees BEN.

BEN (CONT.)

Sweet freedom.

BEN is close to the door. CLAIRE takes off her headphones.

CLAIRE

Hi honey!

BEN

Oh man! I was so close. SO CLOSE!

CLAIRE



So how was your day?

BEN

Usual. Bye!

CLAIRE

Not so fast. Day, story, now.

BEN

Okay. For lunch, they served meatloaf. Little too much spice in it. The End.

CLAIRE

Did you meet anyone today?

BEN

Why can't you just leave me alone Mom, okay? You know how my days are, why not just leave it there?

CLAIRE

Because I care about you and I want to be there for you.

BEN

You mean, so that you don't have to worry about me and just go back to your regular agenda, which is listening to Bon Jovi?

CLAIRE

Hey you called me out on Patrick Swayze, now you're coming in between me and Jon Bon Jovi?

BEN

How are you still married to Dad?

CLAIRE

I just love him as much as I love male celebrities.

BEN

Look, I just want to go to my room and do my homework.

CLAIRE

That's something about you Ben. You rather go to your room and do your homework rather than wanting to talk to your own mother.

BEN

Look, it was just a usual day. As always. So can I go to my room now.

CLAIRE

Fine. Go to your room, do your homework, whatever you want to do. But Ben, I just want you to know that I'm trying to help you, but I can't do that if you keep acting like this.

BEN thinks to himself as CLAIRE  
walks away stage left.

BEN

I want to tell my mom about Hannah, but I don't want her to get involved, because I want to handle this on my own.

The lights go down for 10 seconds.  
The lights go up as BEN walks onto  
the center stage and sees HANNAH  
sitting by herself reading a book.  
BEN feels hesitant to sit with  
her, but HANNAH notices him.

As BEN notices HANNAH noticing  
him, BEN walks over to her.

BEN (CONT.)

Hi.

HANNAH closes her book.

HANNAH

Hey.

BEN

How are you?

HANNAH

Fine. You?

BEN

The finest? I guess.

HANNAH

Okay then.

BEN

Is anyone joining you?

HANNAH

Nah. Just sitting alone, working.

BEN

Okay.

BEN is about to walk away, but stops.

BEN (CONT.)

Would it be okay if I join you?

HANNAH

You sure?

BEN

Yeah. I mean, I felt I avoided you for two weeks since the slap on your hand and messing your hair incident happened and I wanted to apologize for it. So I'm sorry and can I sit with you?

HANNAH

That depends. You're not gonna get handsy on me? (Chuckles)

BEN

In all fairness you kinda started it first.

HANNAH

Point taken.

BEN

So, can I sit with you?

HANNAH

I don't see why not. Go ahead.

BEN sits down next HANNAH.

BEN

Hannah, I just want to say that I'm sorry if I was distancing myself from you. It's nothing really personal.

HANNAH

(Weirdly)

Okay. All's forgiven.

BEN

It's just that, the other day when you touched me, I, um, got a little scared and I didn't mean to have an outburst on you and...

HANNAH

Ah, c'mon, I don't think it was an outburst or anything, it's just you have boundaries. That's all, I think.

BEN

Well, yeah, I guess. But the truth is that the whole touching me thing is pretty new in my life and I don't know how to react to that, which made me feel kinda scared and afraid, I think. Which was why I kinda got too physical in the first place.

HANNAH

Well, um, that is pretty accurate of how you described that feeling, but yeah I guess.

BEN

I just want to let you know that I am trying to keep that side of me undercontrol and I hope that maybe you would understand, right?

HANNAH

Yeah, of course. I believe you.

BEN

Okay. I am glad we can talk this out.

HANNAH

Same here.

BEN

Okay. Um, you know, um, I was wondering if maybe we can get to know each other more. Like, let's say, right now? Or if you don't want to, then I completely understand and...

HANNAH

No, no, no it's okay. I would love to know you more.

BEN

Okay, well, I, um...

The bells rings

HANNAH

Oh man, I gotta get to class. I'll see you later.

HANNAH gets up from the chair and walks away.

BEN

(Shocked)

Bye.

BEN is the only one left on stage.

BEN (CONT.)

I was close. So close. But not close enough and yet so far. But hopefully I'll try harder if that's what it takes.

BEN exits stage left. The lights go down. The lights go up and BEN enter stages left in the living room with his computer. He sits down on the couch and opens his computer. CLAIRE enters, listening

to *We've Got It Goin' On* by The Backstreet Boys. She notices BEN on his computer.

CLAIRE

Hey Ben. Getting homework done?

BEN

Um, yeah. I just thought I needed a place to work on.

CLAIRE

Not your bedroom?

BEN

Oh no. I just thought that I could sit with you.

CLAIRE

Okay then.

Then the lights go up on stage right. HANNAH enters her living room with her laptop. She sees something on her computer.

CLAIRE

So, um, do you want a snack or anything?

BEN's computer dings. BEN looks at his computer.

BEN

Um, sure, maybe check something in the fridge.

CLAIRE

Okay. I'll go check.

BEN

You go do that.

CLAIRE exits on the right of stage left. BEN starts typing.

BEN (CONT.)

(On Computer)

Hi Hannah, this is Ben. You know from English class, history class and the library.

BEN sends his message. HANNAH receives and reads it. Then starts to think. Then HANNAH starts typing as well.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Hi Ben. I know it's you. I could tell by your Facebook profile picture. So how are you?

HANNAH types and sends her message to BEN. BEN feels frantic of what to answer.

BEN

She said "how am I doing". What should I say back? Got it. (On Computer) I'm doing fine. How about you?

HANNAH

(On Computer)

I'm doing fine as well. Just getting my homework done.

BEN

(On Computer)

You know, kinda funny, actually, because I finished an hour ago.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Well lucky you with a winky face.

BEN

She sent me a winky face. What does that mean? Is it a compliment? Okay. Gotta keep going. (On Computer) So today I, um, never got a chance to know you, so I guess this is the only way, I think.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Okay. I guess we talk through Facebook.

BEN

(On Computer)

Perfect. Okay. So, um, what is your favorite type of music?

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Well I like Pop.

BEN

(On Computer)

Oh, that's nice. I usually like to listen to Pop, Country Pop, and Pop Rock.

HANNAH laughs a bit.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

So like three different kinds of Pop?

BEN

(On Computer)

Yeah.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

It's okay. There's no shame about the music you like.

BEN

(On Computer)

Okay, um, um, what is your kind of tv shows/movies?

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Well, I'm more into comedy/drama.

BEN



(On Computer)

Same for me as well. It's pretty cool.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

What is your kind of food?

BEN

(On Computer)

Well, um, to tell you the truth, I, um, can eat anything. But if I had to pick one, I say steak.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

Same for me as well. But sometimes I'm more towards chicken.

BEN

(On Computer)

Same with me as well. Wow! There is definitely a lot of stuff we have in common. Do you prefer loud space or quiet space?

HANNAH

(On Computer)

I say quiet. It's much more relaxing.

BEN

(On Computer)

Same. Well, usually I prefer quiet space to focus.

HANNAH

(On Computer)

That's cool.

JOYCE comes on the left side of stage right.

JOYCE

Hey Hannah.

HANNAH turns towards JOYCE.

HANNAH

Yeah Mom?

JOYCE

Dinner's ready. You coming?

HANNAH

Just a second.

JOYCE exits.

HANNAH

(on Computer)

Listen Ben, I gotta go. I'll talk to you later.

BEN

(on Computer)

Wait, wait, wait. Um, I know this is gonna sound a little bit more weirder, but I was wondering if maybe, you don't have to if you don't want to, but I was wondering if you want to hang out sometime? Just, maybe you and I?

HANNAH becomes speechless.

HANNAH

(on Computer)

Really? Just you and me? Like on a date-date?

BEN

(on Computer)

Or just good friends hanging out, if that's a thing.

HANNAH

(on Computer)

Of course, yeah, I, uh, would love to hang out with you.

BEN

(on Computer)

Um, okay. Sounds like a plan.

HANNAH

(on Computer)

I'll see you then.

BEN

(on Computer)

Okay.

HANNAH closes her laptop. The lights go down on stage right.

BEN (CONT.)

I did not know what I got myself in the hell into. It was either my head was rushing too fast or I just said it out of nowhere, but suddenly she said yes. Could it mean that she wants to know me more, she wants to be my friend? This is more intense than the time I was on a ferris wheel when I almost crapped my pants. (Realizing what he just said) Ignore that last part.

BEN closes his laptop as CLAIRE comes back in.

CLAIRE

I got cookies.

CLAIRE sits down on the couch.

BEN

Thanks. Hey Mom, can I ask you something?

CLAIRE

Um, sure. Wow. This is definitely the first time you want to ask me something. What is it?

BEN

What would you say that I asked a person to hang out with me?

CLAIRE

Well, I would say that's great, but....Wait did you become friends with someone?

BEN

Well, I mean...

CLAIRE

Oh my god! That's what you've been hiding this whole time. Why didn't you tell me?

BEN

Look, it's nothing, okay?

CLAIRE

Well, it's not nothing to me. I want some answers, now!

BEN

Okay. Um, there's this girl. Her name's Hannah. I think she's really cool and I asked her if she wants to hang out sometime and she said yes.

CLAIRE

Wow. Hannah. Such a nice name. I'm really happy that you found a friend, but I'm mad that you kept it from me.

BEN

I know and I'm sorry.

CLAIRE

Ben, I want you to know that I am here for you, always.

BEN

I know, I know, but I feel that maybe I should on my own.

CLAIRE huffs in and out.

CLAIRE

Look. Talking to people is one thing, but making connections is tougher than you know.

BEN

I'm aware. All I'm saying is that I can handle this.

CLAIRE

Okay, okay, fine. Since you're old enough to handle your own decision of who you want to be friends with is fine by me. But you gotta think of these choices carefully, Ben. It's not easy as 1, 2, 3.

BEN

Mom, I just don't want you to baby me for the rest of my life, okay? So please, let me handle my life?

CLAIRE

Fine. I guess I'm not wanted.

BEN

Well actually, do you mind if you chauffeur?

CLAIRE

Okay. I guess I don't mind driving you and your little girlfriend around town or wherever you want to take her.

BEN

She's not my girlfriend, she's just my friend.

CLAIRE

Okay. But are you sure?

BEN

Mom, I'll be fine, besides I told her it's just friends hanging out. It's not like she thinks it's a date.

CLAIRE

I guess you're right.

BEN

Besides, there's more stuff I want to know about her, like is she thinking about the future or is she into musicals.

CLAIRE

Okay, let's not get too crazy.

The lights go off. Then the lights go up JOYCE working on her laptop

on the couch. HANNAH enters stage right.

HANNAH

Hey Mom, can I talk to you?

JOYCE

Sure, of course.

JOYCE closes her laptop and sits down on a chair next to the table.

JOYCE (CONT.)

What's up?

HANNAH

Well, I want to ask you about a guy asking a girl out.

JOYCE's face lights up.

JOYCE

It's Ben, isn't it? Did he ask you out? On a date? Do you like him?

HANNAH

(Lying)

No, no, no. It's hypothetical. I just want to know that if a guy, who is very odd, but very kind, would ask a girl out, whether it is a date or just hanging out. I was wondering if you would know that.

JOYCE

Well, I mean, usually, if a guy asks a girl out, it could mean some things.

HANNAH

Like what?

JOYCE

Like, he is trying to get to know you, becomes very interested in you...

HANNAH

Really?

JOYCE

Well, it depends how well it goes and how it might end. Like your dad and I.

HANNAH

I don't think that's true.

JOYCE

I mean, I'm still heartbroken about your father, alright? After what he... Right, sorry this is about you, not me. All I'm saying is that a guy just wants to show that they're just being kind. Unlike your dad.

HANNAH

(Weirded out, yet relaxed)

Okay. Thanks for the advice. I'll tell that to a friend.

JOYCE

You mean Ben?

HANNAH

(Lying)

Yeah. Of course.

JOYCE

Well, um, if your friend Ben needs more guidance from me, you can tell him that I'm available for therapy sessions. Give him my card.

JOYCE takes her business card out of her pocket and gives it to HANNAH.

HANNAH

(Weirdly)

Thanks. I'm sure I'll pass it on to him.

HANNAH walks away stage right and JOYCE goes back to work on her computer. The lights go off.

The lights go up. There is a table with two booth chairs on opposite sides on center stage and a single table on stage right. BEN and HANNAH are sitting there with menus in their hands. CLAIRE is sitting at the single table.

BEN

So this is your first time eating here?

HANNAH

Yeah. Is the food alright?

BEN

Well, yeah, but I wouldn't necessarily recommend the chili. It's a bit too much.

HANNAH

(laughs a bit)

Okay. Want me to order first?

BEN

Yeah. Anything's fine by me.

HANNAH looks into her menu.

HANNAH

Are the mozzarella sticks fine?

BEN

Okay.

HANNAH

So, um, you here all the time?

BEN



Yeah. It's a really nice diner. I have come here all the time ever since I was little..

HANNAH

Really?

BEN

Yeah, I sometimes like to order two milkshakes for my meal.

HANNAH laughs again a little bit.

HANNAH

Oh my god! Really?

BEN

Nah, I just kinda thought it was worth a laugh.

BEN and HANNAH laugh

BEN (CONT.)

So, um, Hannah, what do you think of Mahopac here so far? I mean, I know you've been here for like almost three weeks already.

HANNAH

Well, I mean, it's been pretty good so far, I mean, it's definitely not like New York City.

BEN

That's true. Mahopac definitely is not like the Big Apple.

HANNAH

And, um, it was really nice of your mom to drive us around.

BEN

It's the least she could do. It's not weird that she's sitting across from us, right?

BEN and HANNAH look at CLAIRE.  
CLAIRE waves at them.

HANNAH

Not at all. As long as she doesn't keep looking at us.

BEN

She's just checking up on me. That's all.

HANNAH

Why's that?

BEN

I haven't really told her about you at first.

HANNAH

Why?

BEN

It's nothing. It's just that, she just wants me to be safe.

HANNAH

I believe you are, but sometimes your mom wants to know what's going on in your life. She wants you to know she's here for you.

BEN

I know. But sometimes I just she would just let me handle things on my own. I just want her to know that I'm a grown up. Even though I still watch cartoons all the time.

HANNAH laughs a little. BEN smiles a bit.

HANNAH

If it makes you feel any better, I still watch cartoons too.

BEN

At least there's a plus side.

HANNAH

And besides that, I really had fun. The good thing is that there was no traffic.

BEN

At least there's a bright side, you don't have to worry about heavy traffic in New York City, right?

BEN chuckles a bit while HANNAH smiles and chuckles too.

HANNAH

Yeah, traffic in the city can be a massacre.

BEN

I feel ya. I was once in a heavy traffic with my mom and I ended up playing One Direction on repeat.

HANNAH

What else happened?

BEN

Uh, you don't want to know.

HANNAH

You can tell me. I won't laugh.

BEN

You sure you want to know?

HANNAH

It's just between you and me.

BEN

(Breathes in and out)

My mom had a funny breakdown of how many One Direction songs I have and she begged me to turn it off or play something different, because I kept playing them over and over again. So I ended up switching to Luke Bryan on repeat and she screamed at the top of her lungs after hearing his songs over and over again.

BEN and HANNAH laugh while CLAIRE shakes her head from left to right.

CLAIRE

Not my fault you became a 1D fan and a Luke Bryan fan.

BEN

Sorry!

HANNAH

I'm sorry, I promised I wouldn't laugh.

BEN

It's okay. I realized that now I said it, it was pretty funny.

BEN and HANNAH laugh some more  
while CLAIRE nods her head again.

CLAIRE

Okay, I'm gonna go to the bathroom. Be right back.

CLAIRE exits stage right.

BEN

Now, I ended up apologizing and she forgave me, but she asked me to promise her to not play any more songs on repeat.

HANNAH

Just a little curiosity, do you always listen to music on repeat?

BEN

Yeah. I sometimes like to imagine where the song takes me in my mind.

HANNAH

Okay. Like what?

BEN

(Stutters)

Well, I guess, like I imagine myself like on a beach dancing or fighting in an action film.

HANNAH

(Chuckles a bit)

Okay.

BEN

Yeah, I know it sounds pretty weird.

HANNAH

No, no, it doesn't. I find it very interesting. It's very crazy, but it's kinda cool at the same time, because, well, I imagine where songs take me as well.

BEN

I guess I'm not the only weirdo.

HANNAH

Who says you're weirdo?

BEN

Um, I guess some people.

HANNAH

How so?

BEN

Um, well, I guess, I, um, sometimes feel silent inside, because I don't know how to talk to people. Kids kinda, like, stare at me whenever I sit by myself or just talk to myself, which how you might think of it probably sounds weird or odd.

HANNAH

No, no, I don't think that at all. I just think maybe you're adjusting to things in life, because it's challenging for you, I guess.

BEN

To tell you the truth, my life's basically a challenge.

HANNAH

Yeah. Same with mine.

BEN

How so?

HANNAH

Hmmmmmm?

BEN

Why is your life a challenge? Did something happen?

HANNAH

Oh, um, you probably don't want to know.

BEN

Why? You can tell me, it's just me here.

HANNAH

You sure you want to know? Because it's still a lot for me to take in. And it's already like a year since it happened. And I'm not sure if you can handle it.

BEN

You can tell me. I'm sure whatever it is, I'm sure it's not a big deal.

HANNAH

Well, I mean you think it's not a big deal, but to me, it's kinda personal.

BEN

What happened?

HANNAH

Well, um, my parents were divorced last year, my mom felt like the city was too much for her to work, it was too expensive for her and I to live in the city, because she cut ties with my dad financially from him. So she wanted a change. My mom was given primary custody to me and my mom lived here in Mahopac since her childhood. So she found a house next door to my grandma's and I've been living there with her ever since. I moved here before summer was over.

BEN

Oh my. What about your dad? Does he see you or...

HANNAH

My dad only sees me on weekends, but sometimes I'm not sure if I wanted to talk to him or want to see him, which makes it complicated for me. And he gave up trying.

BEN

Hannah, I'm really sorry. I'm so sorry for what your parents went through. I...

HANNAH

No, no, it's, it's fine. Besides, my dad was really an asshole for hurting my mom like that.

BEN becomes surprised at HANNAH.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Sorry. I didn't mean to like curse on you.

BEN

It's okay. I sometimes don't know what it means and I sometimes hear my mom curse all the time.

HANNAH chuckles a bit more.

BEN

Why were they divorced though?

HANNAH stays silent a bit.

BEN (CONT.)

Right sorry, probably shouldn't ask that.

HANNAH

Well, I mean A. Yes, you probably shouldn't have, but B. I know that you care very much. But since you're really kind, I guess I can tell you. My mom had issues with him.

BEN

Like what?

HANNAH

(Breathes in and out)

Well, my dad, he, he cheated on my mom with another woman.

BEN

Jesus. Hannah, I'm sorry.

HANNAH

When I found out, he begged me not to tell her, because he was trying to figure something out, but I told her anyway. Because I thought I was doing the right thing. But he was upset at me at first, but he realized his wrongdoing and he tried to apologize, but I couldn't forgive him, not just for cheating on my mom, but for hurting me emotionally as well.

BEN

I, I, I I'm so sorry. It must've been really horrible for you. You must really hate him so much.

HANNAH stays quiet for a beat or two.

HANNAH

I don't really hate him.

BEN looks at HANNAH with confusion.

HANNAH (CONT.)

I mean, I was pissed at him for how much he hurt her emotionally, but he said he didn't mean to do it, because he wasn't sure how he felt anymore. So yeah, I was pissed at him, but now, I feel bad for him for what he's going through right now and I feel like I'm responsible for how much my mom hates him now. Now I feel like I don't trust him anymore.

HANNAH starts to cry a bit. BEN gets up and sits next to HANNAH. CLAIRE comes back stage right and sees HANNAH and BEN.



BEN

Hey Hannah, Hannah, it's okay. I'm right here.

HANNAH hugs BEN very tightly. It lasts for 10 seconds. BEN starts to feel awkward, nervous, and scared, but calm at the same time. HANNAH, on the other hand, feels sad, but cared by BEN, who understands her completely.

BEN does not want to let go of HANNAH for a second, but he breaks away from her.

BEN (CONT.)

Sorry, I didn't mean to...

HANNAH

(Calm)

It's fine.

BEN

Shall we order?

HANNAH

Okay.

BEN gets up and sits back in his spot. CLAIRE goes back to her table and sits down.

The lights go down. BEN comes back on stage right and the light shines on him.

BEN

**The second that I hugged Hannah**, the second that I hold her for so long, I felt something, like, I started to feel warm inside, like, I couldn't tell I was on fire or if I was getting sweaty,

but I felt something with Hannah and I am starting think that maybe I feel her pain or something more from. But what?

BEN exits on stage left. The lights go up. CLAIRE and BEN enters stage left.

BEN (CONT.)

Hey Mom. Thanks for, um, driving me and Hannah around town today. It meant a lot.

CLAIRE

No problem.

CLAIRE sits down on the couch.

BEN

Can I ask you something?

CLAIRE

Sure.

BEN

Um, while you were in the bathroom, you know probably taking a...

CLAIRE

Just skip that part.

BEN

Hannah opened up to me about her parents.

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

BEN

Her parents are divorced.

CLAIRE

Jesus!

BEN

Yeah. I didn't know she was gonna tell me about it and she was gonna cry. I just felt bad for her for what she was going through.

CLAIRE

I can tell that you were trying to understand her.

BEN

Yeah. I really was.

CLAIRE

And you were hugging her.

BEN

Yeah. And... Wait how did you know that?

CLAIRE

I saw you two hugging after I took a shit.

BEN

Okay. I didn't need to know that part, but okay.

CLAIRE

And very surprising though, you didn't push her away.

BEN

Well, yeah, I just didn't want to freak out on her for touching me, because I was trying to comfort her.

CLAIRE

You made an excellent point.

BEN

You know, while I was hugging her, I did feel warm yet horrible inside.

CLAIRE

You didn't pised your pants again, did you?

BEN

What? Mom, no! I didn't really... Not the point. I just felt bad for her and I wanted to cheer her up.

CLAIRE smiles a bit.

CLAIRE

I think you empathize with her. You wanted to cheer her up about how she feels.

BEN

The craziest thing is that I kept thinking about wanting to keep holding her. Like I didn't want to let her go.

CLAIRE

I don't know if I have an answer for that honey, but, I could be thinking that you could be in love with her or something.

BEN

What? No, I'm not in love with Hannah, I'm just trying to be her friend. Besides, we just... get each other. That's it.

CLAIRE

Okay whatever you need to tell yourself, you can't hold back your feelings forever.

BEN

Thanks.

The lights go down for fifteen seconds. The lights go on JOYCE sitting on the sofa reading a book about how to handle kids with special needs. HANNAH walks in on stage left and sees JOYCE.

HANNAH

Hey Mom.

JOYCE looks away from her book and sees HANNAH.

JOYCE

Oh, hey Hannah. How was your day?

HANNAH

It was good. I got to explore around Mahopac more. Went to the library, then the pier, everywhere.

JOYCE

Was it fun?

HANNAH

Yeah. Um, Mom, can I ask you something?

JOYCE

Um, sure.

JOYCE places a bookmark on the page of the book and places it down. HANNAH sits down next to JOYCE.

HANNAH

When you and Dad were in love, did you ever worry about what was gonna happen?

JOYCE

Well, to tell you the truth, when I met him, I felt like I really loved him and he felt the same way as well, but he wasn't sure anymore, because he was with another woman. I felt like I don't know if love is real anymore. But I'm sure you know that love is real and true. Why did you want to ask about it?

HANNAH

(Lying)

Um, it's nothing really.

JOYCE

Is it Ben? I'm sensing something's up with you two.

HANNAH

(Lying)

No, no. I just want to know that's all. But how hurt were you feeling after the divorce?

JOYCE

I mean, to tell you the truth, I felt shattered. Like I don't if I can trust anyone. I mean, that's kinda my reason why I don't know if I should try to date again, because, well, people can fall out of love.

HANNAH starts thinking to herself  
as JOYCE keeps talking.

JOYCE (CONT.)

Hannah?

HANNAH

Hmmmm?

JOYCE

You okay?

HANNAH

Yeah, um, I'm just wondering that's all.

JOYCE

Look if it's about Ben, I just want you to know...

HANNAH

(Lying)

It's not about Ben, okay? Look, I just want to know if you would be okay after a heartbreak.

JOYCE

I always try to. I mean I talk about how I felt about your father and how much I lost him. Not to mention how angry I was at him, but now I felt bad for him. It always questions me if I still love him or not, I don't know.

HANNAH keeps on thinking for ten  
seconds.

JOYCE (CONT.)

Hannah, I just want to let you know if you really fall in love, if it's either a boy, a girl, if it's really Ben...

HANNAH

(Lying)

It's...

JOYCE

If you let me finish, I really want you to come to me. I just want to let you know that I'm here for you.

The lights go down for ten seconds. Then they go up again. BEN is in his seat, writing in his notebook. HANNAH enters center right and sees BEN. She gets a little nervous, but she walks towards BEN and taps on his shoulder. BEN gets a little startled, but he turns to HANNAH, which relieves him.

BEN

Hey.

HANNAH

Hey.

HANNAH sits down next to BEN.

HANNAH (CONT.)

So, um, I really had fun the other day. You made my first time in Mahopac really fun.

BEN

So, um, I guess you're loving Mahopac now?

HANNAH

Yeah. I think it's really going well. So I just want to say thank you. You're really a good friend Ben.

BEN smiles fully for a bit.

BEN

Thanks. Um, listen, I am really sorry about what your parents were going through and I didn't know how much it impacted you and I just, I just wish there was something I could do to cheer you up. I'm...I'm really sorry.

HANNAH

You were just there for me. That's all you could do.

BEN

Well, um, I am glad I showed up for you. I hope we can always try to show up for each other, right?

HANNAH

Of course yeah.

BEN nods up and down.

HANNAH (CONT.)

To tell you the truth, whenever I keep thinking about my dad, I sometimes feel like I am about to explode and sometimes I really don't want to do it in front of anybody. I just wish I could be somewhere to cool off.

BEN thinks for a second.

BEN

I think I know somewhere you can let your anger out and cool off. Wanna hangout again after school?

HANNAH

Sure.

The lights go down for twenty seconds. The lights go up the mountains where there is a tree stump on center stage.



BEN and HANNAH enter stage right at the mountains to see the overview of town. They sit down on the tree stump.

HANNAH

Wow, this place is beautiful. You come here, all the time?

BEN

Yeah. I prefer it as my quiet place, I hope you didn't mind this time that my mom's not here with us, right?

HANNAH

Not at all. So why do you prefer it as your quiet space?

BEN

Uh, well, I go here all the time, because I needed to get away from all of the tension going on with myself

HANNAH

Like what?

BEN feels hesitant to answer.

HANNAH (CONT.)

You can tell me Ben, I'm not here to judge.

BEN

Um, I don't know, I just don't want to unload all of this on you.

HANNAH

Ben, I'm the only person here with you right now, you can tell me anything that bothers you. Besides, we've just become friends.

BEN

(Breathes in and out)

The other day when you told me about your parents, I felt very similar to how I felt about mine.

HANNAH

Were your parents divorced too?

BEN

No, no. They're still together, happily married. It's just that they always fight over the one thing that matters to them in their lives.

HANNAH

Like what?

BEN

Me.

HANNAH becomes concerned, yet confused.

BEN (CONT.)

Ever since I was born, they always worried about me about my future, my life choices, my academic performances, things I might experience, everything.

HANNAH

They just want you to have the best life you can have.

BEN

I know, I know, it's just that...I sometimes wish that maybe they could just let me take breather to try to handle things by myself without their help, because I mean, I'm not like a kid, well I mean I sometimes still feel like a kid, but just want to have fun, but I always want to have a good life, but I don't know if my life's gonna be good or not.

HANNAH

You know, I've always felt that way too.

BEN

You do?

HANNAH

Yeah, before I moved here, I was known as the nerdy girl, who's very on top of her game of being an overachiever and having no time for friends or gatherings to have fun. But when I met you, I felt like I could still do that and have fun at the same time. You can still do that, right?

BEN

I believe so, yeah. But Hannah, you know you don't have to be different for anyone, right? All you can do is be the best you, you can be for yourself. What makes you happy inside and out.

HANNAH

And you don't have to be independent by yourself. There's people who love and care about you, who just want to help you and make sure that you're alive, healthy, and safe.

BEN

Do you think I'll ever be okay? Like if I can still make it through life while living?

HANNAH

I don't really have an answer to that. I can't certainly tell you if you're gonna be okay or not, but all I know is that I can be your friend and you can be mine. And so far, I think we're doing really good at that.

BEN

Same to you. One month and counting.

BEN and HANNAH both laugh.

BEN (CONT.)

So, yeah, um, feel free to scream at the top of your lungs right now about your dad.

HANNAH

You sure? I don't want to scare you or anything.

BEN

Don't worry. I came prepared.

BEN takes his ear plugs out of his pocket.

HANNAH

(Chuckles)

You're always attached with your ear plugs huh?

BEN

They kinda help me most of the time.

HANNAH laughs and so does BEN. BEN puts them on.

BEN (CONT.)

Whenever you're ready.

HANNAH

You sure?

BEN gives her the thumbs up.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Okay.

HANNAH breathes in and out. She screams for 10 seconds long. BEN becomes surprised.

HANNAH (CONT.)

I guess you're, uh, really surprised and amazed by it.

BEN takes off his ear plugs.

BEN

To tell you the truth, I screamed a little bit more crazy.

HANNAH

Oh really?

BEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

Show me.

BEN

Oh, um, you know it's probably a little too much and...

HANNAH

Is there a KFC around here? Because I smell chicken.

BEN

Alright, alright, fine. Want me to show you? I'll show you.

BEN breathes in and out. BEN screams as loud as he can for 10 seconds long. HANNAH becomes amused and laughs a bit.

HANNAH

Okay, I take it back, you weren't chicken.

BEN and HANNAH laugh for five seconds. And then they scream again and laugh again. They sit down on the tree stump.

HANNAH (CONT.)

You know? You don't have to worry about how your parents think of you. They just want you to be successful in life. And more importantly happy.

BEN

I kinda do imagine my life to be successful.

HANNAH

How do you mean?

BEN

To tell you the truth, I kinda dream about wanting to be an artist or something.

HANNAH

Like a painter, singer...

BEN

I'm more into writing.

HANNAH

Oh. That's interesting.

BEN

It really is, because I like to speak my words on paper rather than just saying them out loud, because I sometimes worry that they wouldn't make any sense or if they aren't that serious.

HANNAH

Like what?

BEN

Like how the world is. Sometimes people can be mean or they're just not raised properly or they're just completely messed up.

HANNAH

It kinda does make sense to that.

BEN

Yeah. I sometimes worried that I might feel messed up or something, because I don't know if I know myself.

HANNAH

That's not true. Ben, there's more to you than you don't realize.

BEN

Like what?

HANNAH

You're kind, thoughtful, and very understanding. Like for instance just now, you completely understood about my situation with my parents. You were very opened up about yours. I know the world can be unfair sometimes, but the world is trying to tell you to do better and be better for yourself.

HANNAH places her hand on BEN's hand. BEN notices, but stays calm for a bit.

BEN

Do you think I'll do better?

HANNAH

I know you can. Sometimes takes time and effort, but you should take one day at a time, before anything goes.

BEN

Thanks. You know, Hannah, you're not that bad than I thought.

HANNAH

You mean that?

BEN

Yeah. You're very caring, kind, and meaningful.

HANNAH

Thanks.

BEN and HANNAH face each other for ten seconds and suddenly HANNAH kisses BEN. The kiss lasts for fifteen seconds. BEN pulls away.

HANNAH

Sorry about that.

BEN

(Stutters a bit)

It's okay. It was kinda unexpected. Do friends usually do that?

HANNAH laughs a little.

HANNAH

No. I don't think so. I'm not sure why it happened.

HANNAH and BEN laugh a bit more.

HANNAH (CONT.)

I know this gonna sound weird of me asking you this, but um, have you ever talked to anyone else?

BEN

Um, well, I mean, I talked to you and my mom.

HANNAH

Well, um, my mom's a therapist and I think she can help you with anything. I have her business card. I was gonna give it to you last week, but I, um, kinda...

BEN

It's okay.

HANNAH

I'm just saying it would be good if you could talk to her.

BEN

I'll think about it.

HANNAH

Okay.

HANNAH looks at her watch.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Oh geez, I better get home.

BEN

Okay. Let's walk down.

HANNAH

Okay.

BEN and HANNAH exit stage right.

The lights go down. The light shines on BEN.



BEN

In that moment, she kissed me and it felt like violins were being played so well. My heart felt racing pretty fast like I didn't want to stop. There was still more to my story with Hannah as I talked to my mom about.

BEN walks away stage right. The lights go on with CLAIRE sitting and watching TV. BEN enters back in on stage right.

BEN (CONT.)

Hey Mom.

CLAIRE

Hey baby. How was your second hangout date with Hannah?

BEN

It was good. We talked some more about ourselves.

CLAIRE

That's nice. What did you two talk about?

BEN

She opened up to me about herself of who she wants to be, but I told her that all she can do is be the best she can be. I opened up to her about finding more about myself and you and Dad.

CLAIRE

I see that.

BEN

It was like, we were having a deep conversation about life and how we want to try to make it through it.

CLAIRE

That's good. I'm just really happy that you found someone to hangout with..

BEN

There's kind of another thing I should tell you. It's, uh, kinda weird, but kinda amazing, but kinda weird, but pretty sweet.

CLAIRE

What is it?

BEN

Um....

CLAIRE

Ben, it's okay. I can take it.

CLAIRE picks up a glass of water and sips.

BEN

Well, it's gonna sound intense and crazy, but very amazing. We kissed.

CLAIRE spits her water out pretty hard and coughs a bit

BEN (CONT.)

Mom, you okay?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I'm fine, I thought for a second there you sounded like you said that you two kissed.

CLAIRE sips on water again.

BEN

Well that's what we did. We kissed.

CLAIRE spits again.

CLAIRE

Hold it, hold it, hold it. You and Hannah kissed? Wow! You really are in love!

BEN

Woah, woah, it's not like that!

CLAIRE

Why not?

BEN

Because she kissed me! It happened when I said that she's not that bad and that after she kissed me, she apologized, but I told her I didn't mind.

CLAIRE

So you are in love with her?

BEN

I told her I didn't mind, because I was surprised.

CLAIRE laughs in humor.

BEN (CONT.)

Okay, I feel like you're making this conversation too much of a big deal.

CLAIRE

What, Ben, no. No. I'm sorry I was just... I just thought you wanted her as your friend but not as...

BEN

Mom, we've been over this. I'm not into Hannah like that. I'm just trying to be her friend. I'm not in love with her.

CLAIRE

Look I know, but I'm just saying that you and Hannah are pretty sweet together. And she's really a nice girl.

BEN

I know what you're saying, but I'm not in a rush for a girlfriend, alright? Besides, she gave me her mom's business card?

CLAIRE

What card?

BEN

Oh. Her mom's a therapist. Here.

BEN takes the card out of his pocket and gives it to CLAIRE.

CLAIRE

Joyce Reynolds. Therapist for Mental Health and Disabilities. You know this therapist might be good for you.

BEN

Okay. Think I should tell her about the kiss that happened between me and Hannah.

CLAIRE

Probably not a good idea, because she might ask Hannah that as well.

BEN

Good point. Besides, it's not like Hannah wants to keep it a secret.

The lights go down. The lights go up at HANNAH's living room. JOYCE is sitting on the couch reading her book on Autism. Then a knock sound goes off.

JOYCE

Come in!

BEN enters stage right

BEN

Hi, you must be Dr. Reynolds, right?

JOYCE

Yes, hi. You must be Ben.

BEN

That is correct.

BEN and JOYCE shake hands. BEN  
talks a seat as well as JOYCE.

JOYCE

What brings you by?

HANNAH comes on stage right and  
sees BEN as he is about to speak.

BEN

Well, I wanted to talk to you about....

HANNAH

Ben.

BEN turns his head and sees  
HANNAH.

BEN

Hannah, hi.

HANNAH

I see that you are...

BEN

Yeah. I thought about what you said and I like to talk to  
somebody.

JOYCE

Yeah, um, Hannah if you don't mind...

HANNAH

Mom, can you, um, go into the kitchen? I need to know if there's  
any milk.

JOYCE

Wait, why couldn't you...

HANNAH

I'm just in a hurry, so...

JOYCE

Okay, fine.

JOYCE goes center left and exits.

BEN

Okay. This became awkward.

HANNAH

Yeah. The truth is, I was gonna come to your house to talk to you. But I guess I didn't know you were gonna be here.

BEN

I thought about what you said and I needed to talk to somebody.

HANNAH

That's great. I'm happy for you.

BEN

Yeah. I thought about what you said and I think your mom would be helpful. Don't worry I won't tell her about the kiss.

HANNAH

Yeah. Ben about that. I, um...

HANNAH and BEN look at each other for a second. Then JOYCE comes back.

JOYCE

Um, we still got milk in the fridge.

HANNAH

Got it. I better get going. Food shopping again.

BEN

Wait, Hannah, did you want to tell me something?

HANNAH

Um, maybe later. Bye

HANNAH leaves stage right.

JOYCE

Alright. So where were we?

BEN

Yeah.

BEN and JOYCE sit down.

BEN (CONT.)

I wanted to talk to you about my life.

JOYCE

Okay. Where do you want to begin?

BEN

Well, um, my life is very complicated and kinda messy?

JOYCE

Why's that?

BEN

Well, I am diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and I sometimes worry that maybe I don't know if I'm okay or if I'm right. It's making me feel confused.

JOYCE

It's perfectly normal to feel that way, but you shouldn't feel doubtful about yourself. I bet Hannah feels that way about you.

BEN

She does?

JOYCE

Yeah.

BEN

To tell you more of the truth, she is kinda like my only friend so far. I never had any friends in my life, because I'm worried I'm too developmentally damaged.

JOYCE

I don't think you are. You're just figuring things out about yourself. And if we're gonna be honest here, Hannah said to me that you're her only friend so far as well. Ever since we moved here.

BEN

She means that?

JOYCE

Yeah. And I must say, you two have a good friendship going on.

BEN

Yeah. I guess we do.

JOYCE

Hmmmm. Why's that?

BEN

Well, when I first met her, I kinda always thought that she's probably just another person just trying to be nice and run off, like other people, but she stayed by my side. So she's not that bad. Sometimes I'm worried that I might be doing something wrong, but Hannah didn't judge me. She's really understanding and she is always with me. No matter what.

JOYCE

Pretty interesting. I don't think you're doing anything wrong Ben. You probably overthink too much and it's perfectly fine, it makes you who you are.

BEN

That's kinda the thing. I don't know who I am, what I am, or where I am right now.

JOYCE



I know who you are, where you are, and what you are. You're you. The best you, you could be. The question is, why are you doubting yourself?

BEN

I don't know. I don't know why. All I know is that I came here and asked you.

JOYCE

I don't have a direct answer for you, but all I know is that I can help you in any way I can, but I can't do that if you can't open up what is going on.

BEN

I really wish that was easy.

The lights go down. Then they go up again. BEN is in English class. The bell rings. HANNAH enters stage right and sees BEN and walk towards him

HANNAH

Hey.

BEN notices HANNAH.

BEN

Hey Hannah. How are you?

HANNAH

Pretty good. You?

BEN

Couldn't be better I guess?

HANNAH

Okay then.

HANNAH sits down.

HANNAH (CONT.)

So, um, the other day, I wanted to talk to you. Ben, the other day when we kinda...

BEN

It's okay. It's no big deal. And don't worry I didn't tell your mom.

HANNAH

Yeah, I know, I understand. I just...

BEN

What is it?

HANNAH

Nothing. Just nothing.

BEN

Hannah, you know who I am, right?

HANNAH

Of course I do. You're a good person.

BEN

Yeah, but anything specific?

HANNAH

You're very smart.

BEN

Anything else?

HANNAH

Okay. What is it about?

BEN

You sure you want to know?

HANNAH nods up and down.

BEN (CONT.)

I'm trying to know more about myself. Like I'm trying to know who I am. But I don't know, because I'm different.

HANNAH

I don't think you're that different. You're you. That's all you can be.

BEN

I know that. But I don't if it's really me or not, because well I mean, I know who you are. You're smart, brave, very badass most of the time, and very influential. I am just plain vanilla.

HANNAH

C'mon who says you're plain vanilla?

BEN

Well no one. I just don't know what other qualities I have.

HANNAH

Well, you're kind and sweet. You also have a good sense of humor.

BEN laughs a bit.

BEN

I guess that's true.

HANNAH

And you always have a bright smile to lighten up someone's mood. And let's not forget that you're like an artist, who writes with deep feelings and emotions, who wants to speak what is on his mind, who is very brave to step out of his comfort zone.

BEN

You think so?

HANNAH

I know so. That's who you are Ben.

HANNAH pats on BEN's shoulders.

BEN got a little surprised.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Sorry, I didn't mean to...I know how you are with the...

BEN

It's fine. I didn't mind about it this time.

HANNAH

Okay.

BEN and HANNAH look at each other  
in a flirtatious way for ten  
seconds until the bell rings.

HANNAH (CONT.)

I guess class has begun.

BEN

Yeah.

The lights go off.

The lights go on stage right.  
JOYCE is on the couch. The  
doorbell rings.

JOYCE

It's open!

BEN enters stage right.

BEN

Hi Dr. Rendallds.

JOYCE

Hi Ben. Nice to see you again.

BEN

Can I talk to you?

JOYCE

Sure, yeah. Take a seat.

BEN sits down.

JOYCE (CONT.)

So, what's your mind today?

BEN

The other day when you said why I'm doubting myself, I realized why.

JOYCE

And what's that?

BEN

I couldn't figure my certain qualities until Hannah pointed them out to me. And I realized that there's more of myself I didn't realize. I'm like a strong writer who wants to speak his words.

JOYCE

There you go. Now you're getting somewhere.

BEN

And there's another thing I want to ask you about.

JOYCE

What's that?

BEN

Can people with autism like someone? You know, like, like-like?

JOYCE

You mean having a crush on someone?

BEN

Yeah. I guess that's what they call it.

JOYCE

Well of course, yeah. Many autistic teens and adults are very passionate about a special interest. So, they invest an intense amount of time and energy into it. They can talk on and on about

it. Oftentimes, this extreme passion and interest extend to their relationship as well. Why?

BEN

Well, it's kinda crazy and unusual.

JOYCE

You can tell me. It's okay. It's a safe space.

BEN

I like this girl. I mean, at first, I like her as a friend, but since she is very understanding and confident and very sweet and supportive, I want to ask her out. But, the other thing is that, I worry about my autism. Any advice.

JOYCE

Well, There is more to asking someone out on a date than finding a person and asking them to go out with you. In particular, before asking someone on a date, it is a good idea to try to figure out if they have any interest in going on a date with you. It is also a good idea to think about good activities to do on the date - ones that both you and your potential date will enjoy.

BEN

Okay. Well I've known her for almost two months and she's very cool. She also likes One Direction. And we relate about our issues.

JOYCE

Okay that's good. But another thing is that body language is an important way to judge interest, whether it is through eye contact, body orientation, or a touch on the shoulder. It is just as important to be able to detect disinterest as it is to sense interest, but picking up on a sarcastic tone of voice or avoidance is often challenging.

BEN

Okay. Anything else?

JOYCE

Oh. And those with autism want love and affection as much as anyone else but are likely to want you to take control of initiating it. They may not have necessarily developed the social skills to know what to do in a relationship, so they may try to do what they want to do, and at times behave inappropriately or misread signals. At other times they may be so focused on their own interests that they forget to pay you attention. Some people with autism don't instinctively think to give kisses or hugs and tell you they love you, so their partner often has to be the one to initiate these things. As they learn, they'll get better at consciously deciding to do these things on their own. The important thing to keep in mind is that just because they don't show love in a typical way doesn't mean they don't love you. From their perspective, they have chosen to be with you and expect you to see this as evidence of their love.

BEN

Okay. I think I can do that. Thank you.

JOYCE

So, um, just out of curiosity, who's the girl you're thinking of?

BEN

I don't want you to violate client-patient confidentiality. It's very personal.

JOYCE

I just want to know. That's all.

BEN

It's fine. I gotta go. See you later.

BEN exits stage right. The lights go down.

The lights go up again in the library. HANNAH is sitting down in the chair. BEN enters stage right and sees HANNAH.

BEN

Okay. This is it. I'm about to ask her out.

HANNAH is about to leave, until  
BEN stops her.

BEN (CONT.)

Hey Hannah!

HANNAH notices BEN.

HANNAH

Hey Ben. How are you?

BEN

I'm okay. Um, just wanted to say hey. How about you?

HANNAH

I'm good. Just heading off to class.

BEN

Great, great, um, listen, I was wondering, I know that we've  
been hanging out for almost two months now and things are going  
well, I was wondering if maybe you want to, you know hang out  
more? Like go to movies, go for pizza...

HANNAH

(Surprised)

Wait you mean like on a date?

BEN

Um, well, I um, or something.

HANNAH

(Hesitate to speak)

Sounds like a plan.

BEN

Wait. Really?

HANNAH



Yeah. I would love for you to take me on a date.

BEN

Okay. Um, maybe Friday, I'll have my mom drive us?

HANNAH

Sure, yeah, of course. See you then

HANNAH walks away center right,  
leaving BEN standing.

BEN

I guess that went easier than I thought.

The lights go down. The lights go  
up on HANNAH in her room, with a  
bed with stuffed animals on stage  
right and a mirror on center stage  
with a desk/makeup table, getting  
ready by doing her hair. JOYCE  
enters stage left.

JOYCE

Hey Hannah. You look beautiful, you got a date tonight?

HANNAH

Yeah. I do.

JOYCE

Wow, two months and you finally met someone. Who's the lucky  
guy?

HANNAH

Um, you know, um, Ben?

JOYCE

Wait. You mean my patient?

HANNAH

Okay, one, he became my friend first before you took him as your  
patient.

JOYCE

Oh, so now it makes sense.

HANNAH

What is that supposed to mean?

JOYCE

Ben was talking about wanting to ask you out. It makes perfect sense now. You two get each other, understand each other. It's very accurate that you two are made for each other. I knew there's something between you two.

HANNAH

Woah, woah, I mean A. Yes, we really do get each other, but B. It's only because we're just friends.

JOYCE

Well, I'm just saying, you really like him as much as he likes you.

HANNAH

Look, I'm just going on a date with Ben til I know for sure if I do.

JOYCE

Know for sure about what?

HANNAH

To know if he's the guy I want.

JOYCE

Want?

HANNAH

I guess as boyfriend or just friend.

JOYCE

But don't you think it's not safe to toy with his emotions?

HANNAH

I'm not toying his emotions! I just want to know what's out there between me and him.

JOYCE

Okay. I just want to let you know I support you either way, but Hannah, let me ask you this, you don't want Ben as your boyfriend, because he's autistic or is it because you don't want to hurt him?

HANNAH starts to think to herself.  
The doorbell rings.

JOYCE (CONT.)

I guess your date's here. I'll get the door.

JOYCE exits stage left as HANNAH keeps thinking to herself. The lights go down.

The lights go up at a single table with BEN and HANNAH sitting together having pizza. BEN and HANNAH are laughing.

BEN

So wait, so your mom tried to get a kiss from a dolphin back in Florida....

HANNAH

And then she got squirted by water from his blowhole. I say that was a close encounter.

BEN and HANNAH laugh.

BEN

You know it's kinda crazier than the time when I almost had a close encounter with that parrot back in the Bronx Zoo.

HANNAH

Really? What happened?

BEN

Ah, well, I was eating gummy worms and then a parrot flew out of his cage when he thought the gummy worms were actual worms and he might've ended up attacking me.

HANNAH

Oh dear god.

BEN

But thankfully, I struck back at that parrot by grabbing a bat and I swung and hit it really hard. Thankfully, the zoo sued me for endangering an animal, it was the other way when my parents did the suing, but thankfully the zoo gave us free entrance and insurance money for it to make it all go away. So yeah, pretty crazy.

HANNAH

At least the important thing is that you're okay and alive.

BEN

True dat. And I think marks are gone, well the one on my...you know is still fading a bit.

HANNAH

Where is it?

BEN

You probably don't want to know.

HANNAH

Good point.

BEN and HANNAH laugh more.

BEN

You know, um, I'm really having fun tonight Hannah.

HANNAH

Same. You know, you made it very special for me. I really like it here in Mahopac.

BEN

I was kinda hoping you say that. Um, Hannah, I wanted to tell you something and it's kinda big, um, ever since I met you and I wasn't sure what I was getting into, but whenever I see you, I feel like I can be myself and I am really that you support and accept me for who I am and I wanted to say that

HANNAH becomes surprised and nervous.

BEN (CONT.)

You're very special to me and I think you're cool.

HANNAH becomes relieved, but then somewhat confused.

HANNAH

I feel the same way too. Um, Ben, listen, I...

Then a text ring goes off. HANNAH takes out her phone.

HANNAH (CONT.)

It's my mom. I guess it's getting late. We should probably go.

BEN

Yeah. Of course.

BEN and HANNAH get up from their chairs. HANNAH exits stage right, leaving BEN alone as the lights go down and a spotlight goes up on him.

BEN (CONT.)

I wanted to tell her I like her, but I don't know. Do I like her? Does Hannah like me? I don't want to mess it up.

BEN exits stage left as the lights go down. The lights go up as

HANNAH enters her room stage left.  
JOYCE enters as well

JOYCE

So how was your date?

HANNAH

It was fine. Had pizza and a couple of laughs.

JOYCE

So I guess you're gonna see him again more often.

HANNAH

Mom, can I ask you something?

JOYCE

Sure.

HANNAH

Is it perfectly normal for a guy who is autistic to like a girl,  
who is not autistic?

JOYCE

Of course it happens all the time, but who's judging, right?  
Why?

HANNAH

Ben said that I'm really special to him.

JOYCE

That's wonderful. I bet you feel the same way for him.

HANNAH stays silent.

JOYCE

Okay. I'm sensing something's up.

HANNAH

I do. But I think he was gonna say that he likes me.

JOYCE

Well, it's pretty obvious that he does. Do you like him?

HANNAH

As a friend, yes. But as a boyfriend, I don't know, I mean, I think I do, but...

JOYCE

But what? Hannah, please help me understand.

HANNAH

I'm scared I might hurt him or something, okay? I mean, he's autistic and the world is complicated for him. And I don't want him to feel I want to take care of him for the rest of his life, because he's trying to be more independent.

JOYCE

It's okay. It's always important to be honest with the person you love and care for, even if it means, they might get hurt along the way.

HANNAH

That's the problem Mom, I like him so much, I don't want to hurt him if I take things too far.

JOYCE

Well, you got a choice to make: be honest with him about your feelings or lose him forever. Sometimes the choice is gonna be right or wrong.

The lights go down for 10 seconds.  
The lights go on. BEN is sitting at the table, reading a book.  
HANNAH enters stage left and sees BEN. HANNAH stands there for ten seconds, thinking. She eventually comes over to BEN. BEN notices HANNAH.

HANNAH

Hey.

BEN

Hi.

BEN gets up and hugs HANNAH. But she does not hug him back.

BEN (CONT.)

How are you doing?

HANNAH

Okay. You?

BEN

I'm great. Do you want to sit?

HANNAH

Sure.

HANNAH sits down with BEN.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Listen Ben, I...

BEN

Hannah, before you say something, I just want to let you know that you're a good friend and I hope nothing gets too crazy between us, but I'm glad we became best friends and I hope it'll always be that way.

HANNAH

Yeah, but...

BEN

What's wrong? You can tell me.

HANNAH

Ben, you're a very sweet and lovable guy.

BEN

Well guilty as charged.



HANNAH

And we had a lot of fun together.

BEN

I can't really argue with that. I never had this much fun since my parents.

HANNAH

But I don't think I want to continue with this friendship that we have.

BEN

Wait, what?

HANNAH starts to become a bit upset and so does BEN

BEN (CONT.)

What are you talking about? This doesn't make any sense.

HANNAH

I'm sorry. But I don't think this is gonna work.

HANNAH gets up from her chair and grabs her books and backpack.

BEN

Wait, Hannah...

HANNAH

I gotta go. Bye.

HANNAH walks away on her left. BEN gets up and goes after her.

BEN

Hannah!

BEN grabs HANNAH by the hand.

HANNAH

Hey, don't touch me like that.

BEN

I'm sorry. What's going on?

HANNAH

Look, I don't want to upset you.

BEN

Well you kinda are by breaking my heart here.

HANNAH

Look I don't want to hurt you.

BEN

What do you want me to say? Hannah, I care about you very much. When you came into my life and felt pity for me, I didn't know what I was feeling or how I was feeling.

HANNAH

Okay. Then tell me this. How do you feel about me? Prove me wrong.

BEN

Hannah, I...I...

HANNAH

You what? You like me or something?

BEN

Hannah, it's...It's not that simple, okay? We knew each other for almost three months.

HANNAH

I deserve to know? Do you like me or not? Because I don't know if I want to go out with someone who is very developmentally confused or damaged.

BEN's face turns sad and is about to cry.

HANNAH's face drops, realizing what she said.

HANNAH (CONT.)

Ben, I didn't mean to...

BEN

You know what? I thought it was my insecurities that caused me to feel confused, but I think all this time, it was you.

HANNAH

No, Ben, of course not. I mean...It's just that...

BEN

It's just that what? I wasn't completely honest with you like your dad was to your mom? I became completely honest with you Hannah and now you think I'm damaged, because you think I don't really like you.

HANNAH

Ben, it's not that. I'm sorry.

BEN

Well here's my answer. I do like you. I really do like you and I wanted you to be my girlfriend, but now seeing you like this, I don't even know if I do want you as both my friend and girlfriend.

HANNAH

Ben, c'mon look it's not...

BEN

Just...Just leave me alone. I can't believe this is happening. I met your mom. I let you meet my mom. Then you kissed me which got me thinking and thinking that wow I think that's the girl I want to be with and marry someday, but now I think I got my hopes up and you really don't want to continue with this friendship or whatever this is that we have and suddenly you've turned into your dad. Tell me if I'm wrong too about it.

HANNAH becomes too upset to answer

BEN (CONT.)

Just what I thought.

HANNAH walks away stage right,  
crying.

BEN stands alone, upset, angry and  
crying, as the lights go down.

The lights go on HANNAH, upset, as  
she enters stage right and sees  
JOYCE typing on her laptop on the  
couch and coffee table. JOYCE  
notices HANNAH.

JOYCE

Hannah. How was your day?

HANNAH

It was good. Thanks. (Walks around a bit on by the couch and  
coffee table)

JOYCE

You okay?

HANNAH

Hmmm? (Lying) Yeah, I'm fine.

JOYCE

You sure? You look upset.

HANNAH

(Lying)

I'm fine.

JOYCE

Okay. Just trying to help.

HANNAH

Well you helped alright. You helped by getting Ben to hate me.

JOYCE

What? What happened?

HANNAH

Nothing.

JOYCE

You sure? Didn't sound like nothing.

HANNAH

I'm fine.

JOYCE

Look Hannah, if something happened, and if you were the one who caused it, I'm worried that I'm gonna get upset.

HANNAH

"Upset", of course, You want to be upset? I'll give you upset.

JOYCE

Hannah, what happened?

HANNAH

I broke Ben's heart, alright?! I broke his sweet little heart, because I didn't want to hurt him emotionally because of his autism, but I did! There, you happy?

JOYCE

Hannah, you broke Ben's heart?

HANNAH feels hesitant to answer.

HANNAH

(Crying)

Yes. I broke Ben's heart. I realized that you were right. I do like Ben, but I feel reluctant to let him be my boyfriend, because he's autistic, he is very vulnerable, and I didn't want to hurt him really bad. You know when I first met him, I thought he was kind and wonderful. He was like the one guy I truly care about and he was great to me and I felt like I ruined it by

ending our friendship and he didn't deserve this pain I caused him. He deserved better, but now he's hurt and it's all because of me!

JOYCE

Jesus. Hannah.

HANNAH

(Still crying)

I know. I'm sorry that I hurt your patient, but I didn't know that he really liked me as more than a friend, but I ended up hurting him, because I was scared to hurt him in the relationship.

JOYCE

Hannah, it's okay. It's okay, come here.

JOYCE and HANNAH hug each other, tightly. HANNAH keeps on crying hard. They keep on hugging for 10 seconds. Then they break away.

JOYCE (CONT.)

Listen to me, it's not your fault here. And it's not Ben's either. Look, you gotta give Ben some time to figure it out, if he does want you as his girlfriend, then he'll come to you. But if he doesn't, then you have to let him go and let him move on to someone new.

HANNAH

I can't just let him go, Mom. I think I love him.

HANNAH tears up a bit and hugs JOYCE again, tightly. The lights go down.

BEN enters stage right and the lights shine on him. He stands on center stage.

BEN

I was completely honest with Hannah about my feelings and then she walked away. She broke my heart by ending our friendship. I wished I could've reassured her that we can do it. But she left and now I'm alone.. All of that really doesn't matter anymore, because I think I lost the girl I really love. For that moment I think I do love her, but the truth is, I was afraid to love her, because that my disability would get too much for me and for her. And now four months has flown along the way. I kept thinking about Hannah of what happened, but now I feel like I have nothing. Nothing to say. I ended up turning to the one person who helped me.

The lights turn up completely in the living room with CLAIRE sitting on the couch watching TV.

BEN (CONT.)

Mom.

CLAIRE

Hey honey, how are you? You okay?

BEN

Yeah. Actually no. I think I'm not okay.

BEN stays silent for a bit

CLAIRE

What's wrong? (Turns off the TV)

BEN

Mom, I've, um, been thinking.

CLAIRE

About what?

BEN

I think I messed up.

CLAIRE

What's wrong?

BEN

Mom, I think I screwed it up big time.

CLAIRE

What happened?

BEN

I pushed Hannah away.

CLAIRE

What do you mean? What happened?

BEN

Four months ago, I told her I like her, but she didn't want to continue with our friendship, because she was afraid that she'd hurt me.

CLAIRE

Oh Jesus. Ben.

BEN

But she did hurt me. She broke my heart.

CLAIRE

Jesus. Did anything else happen?

BEN

I ended up comparing her to her dad.

CLAIRE

Why would you do that?

BEN

(Crying)

I don't know, okay? I just...I was hurt that she didn't want to be my friend or my girlfriend and now I screwed it big time by firing back at her about her dad and...I think I hurt her.

BEN continues to cry. CLAIRE comes up to him and hugs him tightly.



CLAIRE

Ben, I don't think it was your fault. You were hurt just as she was.

BEN

I know. I just wish I was different.

CLAIRE

Ben, you don't have to be different, you're wonderful just the way you are, you...you know that, right?

BEN

Yes.

CLAIRE

Look, let's point out the variables here. Does she make you feel comfortable?

BEN

Yeah. She was okay about me opening about my life and she really relates to me on that.

CLAIRE

Does she make you feel special?

BEN

I mean, she always tells me that I'm not that weird inside and out and she told me that life is amazing and I should go forward with it.

CLAIRE

And does she ever judge you?

BEN

No. Never.

CLAIRE

Then there's nothing with you. Hannah likes you just the way you are.

BEN

Okay. Then why did she want to stop? I just don't understand.

CLAIRE

Maybe she's afraid. But maybe you're holding yourself back too much.

BEN

I'm scared my autism would get in between me and Hannah. I don't want to be too damaging to her. But I feel like I really hurt her. Do you think she'll forgive me?

CLAIRE

You won't know if you don't see her.

BEN

I better go see her. Thanks Mom. You really came through for me.

BEN and CLAIRE get up from the couch and hug. BEN is about to walk away stage left, but CLAIRE stops him for a second.

CLAIRE

Ben.

BEN

Yeah?

CLAIRE

Don't go too hard on yourself. Including her. Tell what's in your heart.

BEN

I will. And Mom?

CLAIRE

Yeah?

BEN

I'm sorry for pushing you away too. I thought I was ready, but I realize I need you more than I thought.

CLAIRE

It's okay. It's not always easy with you growing up, but I got to come to realize that you are. And you've grown on me.

BEN

Thanks Mom.

BEN exits stage left and the lights shut down on CLAIRE.

The lights go up in HANNAH and JOYCE's living room. JOYCE is sitting on the couch reading a book.

A knock on the door sound goes on.

JOYCE

It's open!

BEN comes in on stage right and walks towards JOYCE.

BEN

Hi.

JOYCE

Ben. Hi, how are you?

BEN

I'm okay. I'm sorry I didn't come to you for the past four months, I just...

JOYCE

It's okay. Have a seat.

BEN

Yeah, um, is Hannah home by any chance?

HANNAH enters center stage left and sees BEN. She turns away quickly and exits. JOYCE notices the whole thing.

JOYCE

Um, you know I'm sure she's around somewhere. Um, you want something to drink? Tea, coffee,.....

BEN

I could take water.

JOYCE

Sure, um, just be right back.

BEN

Okay.

JOYCE

Make yourself comfortable.

BEN

Thanks.

JOYCE walks off stage left. BEN sits down on the couch and turns to his right and sees a book. BEN picks it up and sees the title Overcoming Autism and reads it a bit.

JOYCE walks back in with two glasses of water in her hand and notices BEN reading the book.

JOYCE

So I guess you're familiar with Autism?

BEN

Yeah. Like I said I've been diagnosed with it my whole life.

JOYCE

I see that.

JOYCE walks towards BEN and gives him the glass of water.

JOYCE (CONT.)

So, um, what brings you by?

BEN

I came here to see Hannah. Um, listen I wasn't sure what Hannah might've told you, but I am sorry if I hurt her. I didn't mean to, it's just that, I was trying to figure it out and I realized how much she means to me and...I never meant to break her heart, it's just that I was feeling confused about the whole....

JOYCE

I can see that. Sounds to me you really do care for her.

BEN

I really do. The truth was I was scared to like her or love her, because I didn't want to get hurt or get my hopes up. But I realized how truthful and loyal she is to me and I felt like I pushed her away. I just want you to know that she's everything to me. And I understand if you want me to give her space or to leave her alone, I fully respect that, I just want her to know I am really sorry.

JOYCE

I understand and it's okay. You know, Hannah is a very kind special girl and I can tell that she's very special to you.

BEN

I was also most likely scared that I might screw it up like I might've sorta did.

JOYCE

I don't think you did. You were just being honest from out here than in there (Waves her hands arms out and points with her right hand to her heart)

BEN

Think she'll forgive me?

JOYCE

I'm not the one who needs to answer that.

BEN

What do you mean?

JOYCE

Be right back.

JOYCE gets up from the couch and exits stage left.

HANNAH (OFFSTAGE)

You sure?

JOYCE (OFFSTAGE)

Yeah.

HANNAH (OFFSTAGE)

Okay.

HANNAH enters the living room and sees BEN. BEN looks up and notices her. BEN gets up.

BEN

Hi.

HANNAH stays silent for a moment and does not say anything.

BEN (CONT.)

Look Hannah, I know I'm probably the last guy you want to talk to right now, but I don't want this to be the end of us.

HANNAH still does not say anything.

BEN (CONT.)

Wait, hang on.

BEN takes out his phone from his right pocket and starts typing.

BEN (CONT.)

(On his phone)

I never meant what I said. I just....I just didn't mean to hurt or blow you off like that. You're the one girl I really care for and whenever I see you, I feel warm and happy inside. When I'm with you all the time, I feel like I can understand life more better now, because of you.

HANNAH takes her phone from her pocket as well and looks at it.

BEN (CONT.)

What I am trying to say is that, I am really lucky and grateful to have you in my life. You are the one good thing I have in my life and I don't want to lose you. And I just felt guilty for what I have said and I want to take it all back. Can we please talk? Please?

BEN sends his message. HANNAH looks at her phone with a smile.

HANNAH

I don't want things between us to end either. But how would I know if things go south and we start arguing again?

BEN

Then I'll let you talk and I'll listen this time. Well at least I'll try, but....I just want to keep things on a good level between us. But I don't know if I could do it if you don't want to talk to me.

HANNAH

Okay. Let's talk.

BEN

Okay. And just for the record, I wasn't really like creeping on you. I...I just wanted to see you.

HANNAH

Okay. Don't need to worry or freak out.

BEN

Thanks

HANNAH

But I wasn't really that pleasant to see you at my house like that.

BEN

I know. And I'm sorry. Can we just...

HANNAH

Proceed.

BEN sits down. HANNAH walks towards the couch and sits down as well. They stay silent for 10 seconds.

BEN

So, um, how you've been doing?

HANNAH

I'm okay. You?

BEN

Same.

HANNAH

You sure?

BEN

Well yeah. But, I mean, you know the rest, right?

HANNAH



You mean like four months ago when I broke your heart or when you compared me to my dad?

BEN

I wanna say both, but given on how you might react, I think it's best if I didn't say it.

HANNAH

I can take it. Don't worry.

BEN

It was both.

HANNAH

(Sarcastically)

Well, this conversation just got interesting.

BEN

Look, I'm just trying to...

HANNAH

What happened to I'll talk and you'll listen?

BEN

Okay, fine. Sorry. Go on.

HANNAH

Ben, when I wanted to end our friendship, it wasn't right. I wanted our friendship to keep going, because I realized how much I value it and it wasn't fair.

BEN

I know and it's...

HANNAH

Let me finish. When you compared me to my dad, it really hurt me inside. But I'm not like him. But I realized you were right. I was becoming like my dad.

BEN

Look, I know...

HANNAH

Let me finish. I just thought that you were the only one who understood and maybe you do want me.

BEN

I do want you. Hannah, there are a lot of things about you that drive me crazy and I couldn't stop thinking about it. The way you helped me, how beautiful you are, your personality, the way you laugh whenever I tickle you just like...

BEN tickles HANNAH in the ribs or stomach and HANNAH laughs a bit as BEN does the same. HANNAH could not stop laughing and when BEN stops, HANNAH and BEN look at each other, realizing the feelings are coming back.

BEN (CONT.)

And given of what has happened, I just want you to know that I am really sorry for everything that I have said.

HANNAH

Well, seeing how you came here and talked to my mom, I guess I'm sorry too.

BEN

Hannah, when you asked me if I like you, I felt reluctant to say it, because...

HANNAH looks at BEN confidently.

BEN (CONT.)

I was scared and it made me realize something.

HANNAH

Realize what?

BEN

Hannah, I realized how much you mean to me and how kind you are and that you became the one person who understands me. And I thought to myself if I really wanted you to be my girlfriend, but I was scared, because I was scared I was gonna hurt you, because of my Autism

HANNAH

That's what you were worried about?

BEN

Hannah, I really don't want to make this crazy for you to understand. It's just that...

HANNAH

Ben, I know what you're saying. You're worried that your autism will get in the way of how we feel for each other. But you are the most lovable guy I know. And I love you just the way you are. ASD or not, I love you.

BEN

You mean that? I mean, I get that a lot. From my mom, my dad, mostly my entire family.

BEN and HANNAH laugh.

BEN (CONT.)

I just don't want to screw things up with you. Hannah, you are the one girl that I want to be with. You made me feel like there's hope in the future that I can overcome and I don't want to lose that and I don't want to lose you.

HANNAH

I don't want to lose you either.

BEN

You mean that?

HANNAH

Yeah. Ben, I was reluctant to keep our friendship going, because I was scared to hurt you, like my dad did to my mom. I guess that's you were right about me becoming like my dad.

BEN

Hannah, you're not like your dad. The reason he hurt your mom was because he was out of love, but you, you're in love. With me.

HANNAH

You mean that?

BEN

Of course I do. I always keep coming to you no matter what and I don't want things to end between us. I want to know if you feel the same way too.

HANNAH

Of course I do. You know, hanging out with you and talking to you about my life, my parents, everything, I have never been closer to you than ever.

HANNAH scoots over a little to  
BEN's side.

BEN

You know, I felt that way too and when you kissed me the first time, I never stopped thinking about it and it felt magical and real.

HANNAH

I never stop thinking about the kiss all the time and I never stop thinking about you all the time as well.

BEN

Yeah. You know the other thing was that I kinda felt a bit skeptical of whether or not I wanted to ask you to be my girlfriend. But now I do realize I do want you.

HANNAH

So what are you waiting for?

HANNAH scoots closer to BEN. BEN  
and HANNAH look at each other

romantically as they are about to kiss.

BEN

Hannah, will you...Be my girlfriend and promise me that no matter what, we can be honest with each other?

HANNAH places her hands on BEN's face.

HANNAH

Ben, I would love to be your girlfriend. The question is what's holding you back?

BEN

Nothing. Well, except this.

BEN and HANNAH kiss romantically. They keep on kissing until the lights go down. The light flashes on BEN alone on stage.

BEN (CONT.)

So that was the day I realized I love Hannah and how we became boyfriend and girlfriend. You know, falling in love can be complicated and scary and it can cause a few misunderstandings and problems for yourself, but it makes us who we are and it makes us realize that we can overcome anything. Whenever I'm around Hannah, I can be myself and become calm and in peace without worrying or freaking out, because she made all that happen for me. So therefore I...

HANNAH walks in on stage right with the light shining on her.

HANNAH

Hey, um, not that I'm complaining or anything, but are we gonna get right back into kissing or...

BEN

Oh, um, just hang one second and we'll get right to it.

HANNAH

Okay.

HANNAH holds BEN's hand.

BEN

I believe we all deserved to be loved whether we're autistic or not. And being with Hannah really shows how much I believe, because she is the one who taught me what love is. Wanna take this one?

HANNAH laughs a bit.

HANNAH

Don't be afraid to fall in love. Just go for it. Because love is worth it.

BEN

Now will you excuse us?

BEN and HANNAH start kissing again as the light goes down on them.

END OF PLAY