

A Letter Unsent

By

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Cast of Characters

Matt: male, college student

Evan: older brother to MATT, excited about life, charismatic, makes people want to like him and be liked by him.

Rick: fiancé to JENNIFER in whom he is completely and deeply in love, male

Wendy: early to mid 20s, best friend of BRENDA, a barista

Counselor: grief counselor, gender neutral

Jennifer: fiancée of RICK

Brenda: early to mid 20s, WENDY's best friend, a writer

Angie: sometimes waitress, sometimes photographer

Doctors (3):

Scene

Set: three platforms approximately 2 feet wide, by 6 feet long and perhaps 2 feet high. Clearly separate circle of chairs, perhaps 6. Possibly a counter to be used as a diner and a coffeeshop.

Lights come up on four actors in a circle, Rick, Wendy, Matt, Counselor. Everything else starts black. Evan, Jennifer and Brenda are sitting on their respective platforms in the darkness. Matt is holding a letter when lights come up. He leaves it as his chair as he moves away.

MATT:

(Visibly gathering himself) I don't know if this is what you were talking about, but I guess this is what came out. *(Reading at first)* We were together for Christmas. First time in *(beat)* I don't even know. I got in a few days before Evan. He stuck around school to get in an extra day of partying. *(Spot comes up slowly on Evan; he's sitting, relaxed and smiling)* Last year he was studying abroad. In Venice. I think he spent more time studying wine and local ... culture ... than anything academic. *(Matt begins to wander over to where Evan is sitting, and eventually sits down next to him)* He pulled in—mom and dad were at work—and stormed upstairs to wake me up.

EVAN:

(Activating and leaping up from his seat) Jesus, Matt! Get up already! It's almost 9 o'clock for Christ's sake.

MATT:

(groans)

EVAN:

Dude, you haven't seen me for what? Four months? And that's the best you got? Oh, little brother, how far the mighty have fallen *(Evan leaps up, standing on the bed next to Matt)*.

MATT:

Come on Ev, what the fuck.

EVAN:

Oh, quit your whining and drink this *(hands Matt a very large cup of Dunkin Donuts coffee)*. And put some pants on--let's get out of here. *(moves away as Matt gets up)*.

MATT:

(addressing audience) He pulled me out to this diner...
COUNSELOR: Go on.

MATT:

He pulled me out to this diner I didn't know existed, where I had what had to be the worst pancakes in my

(MORE)

MATT: (cont'd)
 life--I mean, I love bacon, but bacon-flavored
 chocolate chip pancakes cross the line. (*Walks over to
 where Evan stands at a diner counter*) But everything
 worked out in the end. The waitress was (*beat*) divine.

*(Lights come up as Angie moves from table to table
 with a pot of coffee. She has a nametag, that
 clearly identifies her name as Angie. Matt stops
 speaking, and follows her with his eyes)*

Damn.

EVAN:
 No kidding, right?

MATT:
 I...

EVAN:
 I know! (*Slaps Matt's shoulder*). So we were out behind
 the apartment the night before finals started. Maurilio
 got his hands on a case of dry ice from lab. I found a
 water bottle under the bed, so we filled it up, and
 just as a car went by, bam! It was awesome, Tony fell
 on his ass and the car slammed on its brakes. It almost
 skidded into the curb--but it was the fuzz, and came
 over to investigate what could have potentially been
 mistaken for a gunshot. What are the chances?

ANGIE:
 Coffee?

MATT:
 Um...

EVAN:
 Fill 'em up. Thanks (*very obviously checks out her name
 tag*) Angie.

ANGIE:
 I think I can handle that.

MATT:
 Thanks.

EVAN:
(as Angie walks away) Just ask for her number already.
 And what happened to all the smooth lines we practiced.
 I think I can handle that. I mean come on. That's what
 she said, probably wouldn't do so well, because, well,
 it is what she said, but nothing? No, want to know what
 else you can handle? Not even a where and when?

MATT:
Dude, come on.

EVAN:
Look, I'll call her back. Rachel. (*Angie doesn't respond*) Rachel! That was her name wasn't it?

MATT:
Not cool.

ANGIE:
What's up?

MATT:
My brother just wanted to see if you'd respond if he called you by the wrong name. Sorry.

ANGIE:
(*Turning towards Evan*) Anything you need?

EVAN:
Nope. I guess I just wanted to see you again. Shoot me.

ANGIE:
I forgot my gun in my other apron. (*Rolls her eyes at Evan. Gives Matt a smile as she turns to leave*)

EVAN:
And it was so worth it. (*Matt watches Angie as she leaves*) That my friend, is where it's at.

MATT:
What?

EVAN:
And he's not even listening. Waitress 1, Matt 0. She's got a temper--fire, the good stuff. If she's got that now, just think about what she's got to be like when she's not wearing that apron. I mean, come on Matt, that is hot.

MATT:
I don't think hot quite covers it chief. EVAN: And the poet emerges.

MATT:
Seriously though? She made me forget that you were a total asshole and woke me up at some ungodly hour when she was over here, that's got to count for something.

EVAN:
Hey! Was it worth it?

MATT:

I don't leave my bed before 11.

EVAN:

Was it worth it?

MATT:

It was worth it. Lights fade down on Matt and Evan and up on the circle of chairs.

COUNSELOR:

Rick? (*Rick shrugs and looks away*)

WENDY:

(*Looks at Rick, waits; then to Counselor*) Look, I don't have anything--I couldn't write it. Can I just--(*Counselor nods*) I had this feeling--you know--what feeling is it? The one you can only say in French.

COUNSELOR:

Déjà vu?

WENDY:

Yea, whatever. I knew the place but couldn't have known it. I'd only been in the city maybe a month at the time. But the light--the way it melted through the trees and the breeze calling up spring time a few weeks too early. She walked past me before turning around

(*Brenda walks past and into the light*).

BRENDA:

Wendy?

WENDY:

I didn't recognize her. I mean, I hadn't seen her in ten, twelve years? And I run into her here, of all places on my way home from the bookstore. My feet were killing me from standing all day, and I just wanted to get home and sit down. I could already hear the sound of my spine settling into my chair. But there she was, standing before me and I had no idea. (*to Brenda*) Do I know you?

BRENDA:

Brenda. Brenda Fitzpatrick? We went to elementary school together. God, I don't even want to think about just how long ago it was. We went out together for Halloween. In first grade, we both tried to be the cowardly lion, but we ended up looking more like Ewoks. WENDY: Oh my god. Brenda! The next year we went as Ewoks because our moms were still tired of the comments everyone made.

BRENDA:

What cute little Ewok warriors you are!

WENDY:

Actually, they're--

BRENDA:

Lions.

WENDY:

I'd forgotten about it. It probably would have gone over better if your mom could actually sew.

BRENDA:

She made the costume? I always assumed she grabbed a Star Wars costume from the rack and attached a tail, because she didn't want to bother with it.

WENDY:

She made both of them. I can't believe you actually remembered that. My god, Brenda. How are you? What have you been doing for the last (mumbles purposefully) years? I haven't seen you since, what, sixth grade?

BRENDA:

I moved to California, my mom got a new job in some publishing house in LA. I thought we'd move back after she got bored, but then she met Ron, and suddenly, I had a step-dad, and she had a reason to stay in one place. She died a couple years ago, just after I finished up school.

WENDY:

Brenda, I'm so sorry.

BRENDA:

Thanks. I mean that's the way it goes, I guess. I moved east again after that. Ron's great, but he's not my dad, and I really didn't have anything left out there. I've been working on getting published. Mostly I get a lot of rejection letters.

WENDY:

I'm a barista at a bookstore downtown. It's not bad, but it's not what I thought I'd be using my degree for.

BRENDA:

I'll drink to that. Hey, what are you doing right now? Do you want to grab some dinner?

WENDY:

(to all) So we did. I called my roommate to let him know I'd be back late. Not that he ever answered his

(MORE)

WENDY: (cont'd)

phone--or knew I existed outside the rent check that I put on the fridge each month. I moved out a month later, anyway--the dinner with Brenda, hot dogs from the Spikes that went in a couple years ago--rekindled our friendship in a huge way. It was like--

BRENDA:

God, it's like we never lost touch--how many years ago did you say it was?

WENDY:

Mumble-ty.

BRENDA:

Right. We've grown up--well kind of--I like to think that I'm still a college student sometimes. You look--you're so different. You were always so quiet.

WENDY:

I always had you to speak up for me.

BRENDA:

And I'm exactly the same person I was when I was at six. Maybe even gone a bit down hill--I won that young author thing in first grade. When was the last time I won something for my writing?

WENDY:

Brenda! Seriously? I don't even remember what my dreams were--you stuck with yours. I traded them for an apron and smelling like lattes with extra foam.

Brenda and Wendy continue talking in sotto voice as lights dim, and fade up on Evan and Matt.

EVAN:

I've got to hit the head before we go. (*Exits*)

ANGIE:

(*Approaching*) You guys need any change?

MATT:

(*aside*) Don't we all.

ANGIE:

What?

MATT:

Sorry. Just talking to myself (she laughs). We're all set.

ANGIE:

You're brother's a character.

MATT:

Evan?

ANGIE:

Actually I was talking about the one who didn't come today.

MATT:

I only have the...oh. Yea, he is. He means well, he just likes being the center of the universe.

ANGIE:

There are worse places to be.

MATT:

I'm not so sure. They suspect the center of the universe might be a black hole. Not somewhere I'd want to live.

ANGIE:

Right. Character must run in the family.

MATT:

Yea, it's totally fair. He gets the charisma, I get the nerd-power.

ANGIE:

You shouldn't be so hard on yourself, you do just fine. (beat) You're the brother I'm standing here talking to. No?

MATT:

There is that.

ANGIE:

Where did he get off to anyway?

MATT:

He's probably waiting in the bathroom to see if I work up the courage to make a move.

ANGIE:

Well, are you? (*long beat*) Maybe tomorrow then. I guess I'll have to see you later.

MATT:

Yea. See you around.

ANGIE:

I hope so. (*moves away*)

MATT:

Damn. (*begins to move offstage to find Evan, when Evan bursts back on scene*) There you are. Make me an uncle while you were in there? I didn't know men gave birth.

EVAN:

Dude, you don't want to (*visibly falters*)--you don't want to go in there.

MATT:

You OK, Ev?

EVAN:

Fine brother, fine as... I guess nothing interesting rhymes with fine, and turpentine just doesn't sound right.

Lights begin to dim on Matt and Evan as they move to another area of the stage, Angie watches them leave. Lights come back up on Wendy and Brenda.

BRENDA:

So--tell me about him.

WENDY:

Who?

BRENDA:

You're smiling. Like absurdly smiling. Cheshire cat smiling--I'm just waiting for your face to start going on an acid trip and spin upside down or something. I figure it has to be for some guy.

Matt and Evan cross paths with Brenda and Wendy; Evan does something smooth as he passes, and Brenda follows him with her eyes as the brothers enter the light.

MATT:

I went to see her again today.

EVAN:

Who?

MATT:

Angie.

EVAN:

(*shrugs*) Not ringing any bells.

BRENDA:

Come on, spill it.

WENDY:

OK--Michael. He's come in the last few days. Extra dry cappuccino and a blueberry muffin.

BRENDA:

Which makes you smile like a fool?

WENDY:

This morning he told me his name, and then asked me if I liked Thai--when I said not really, he said he'd try Italian tomorrow.

MATT:

The waitress? From the bacon-pancake place?

EVAN:

Seriously? I didn't think you'd actually follow through with it.

MATT:

Well I did. We're getting coffee tomorrow.

EVAN:

Damn. I'm kind of impressed.

BRENDA:

That's actually not that cliché. Will he come back?

WENDY:

I don't know. I hope so.

BRENDA:

He'd better.

WENDY:

I think I'd kind of given up on the idea of meeting someone here. It's all so impersonal.

BRENDA:

You found me, right? MATT: Wish me luck. (exits)

EVAN:

As if that'd be enough.

BRENDA:

What are you going to say?

WENDY:

What?

BRENDA:

When he asks you about Italian?

WENDY:

Well, I like Italian, don't I?

BRENDA:

And if you didn't?

WENDY:

I might have tried to get him to come back a third time. Mexican, maybe?

BRENDA:

Really?

WENDY:

I would have lied.

MATT:

(Entering) Un-fucking-believable!

EVAN:

What?

MATT:

(Grabbing him) She kissed me!

EVAN:

And you're screaming?

MATT:

My god, I think I'm in love.

EVAN:

Getting a little ahead of ourselves Romeo?

MATT:

I don't even know anymore.

(Lights fade on Matt, Evan, Brenda and Wendy, come up on Counselor and Rick)

COUNSELOR:

Rick?

(Rick looks around impatiently, moves to get up, and then settles into his chair. He looks at an envelope before putting it down and speaking).

RICK:

Paris. It was a spur of the moment trip. I found a great price for two tickets about a week before the

(MORE)

RICK: (cont'd)

flight and showed up to pick her up Friday afternoon with our bags packed. We got into Charles de Gaulle, and the sun was just coming up. The metro took us to our hotel, and we took off on the town. Crepes for breakfast. Nutella. (Jennifer stands up and walks slowly over until she is standing behind Rick) We hit the Musee d'Orsay first and fell in love. The old station made each piece more wonderful than the last. We found this tiny café for dinner. You could see the Eiffel tower. Lit up and perfect in the night sky. A challenge to God himself. (Rick stands) Do you see what you have created? We can match it. We can build stars and construct beauty from steel and glass. We can meet your grace. And we can surpass it. A warm breeze was coming up the streets, and the sound of the city left us behind, alone and in Paris. I turned towards her (he does) and said (beat) I love you. (He kisses her slowly and deeply)

Angie comes on stage, but stays out of the action watching. She's holding a camera, pointed at Jennifer and Rick.

JENNIFER:

(Breaking away and pulling him with her) We could just...stay, you know. Oh, God. How wonderful would that be? It's beautiful here. I've never been happier. *(She's pulled ahead of him)* Can we stay? *(She laughs lightly)* It wouldn't be too hard. I mean, I waitressed all through high school and most of college. I could work in a café, and you could get a job engineering anywhere. Rick? *(Turning back to find him looking down at something in his hand).* Rick?

RICK:

Marry me. *(He holds out the ring he was looking at).*

JENNIFER:

Seriously?

RICK:

Marry me Jennifer. We've got our whole life ahead of us. Marry me and explore it with me.

JENNIFER:

Of course I will. *(She kisses him)* Oh, my god. *(Laughing, giddy)* I have to call my mom. *(Pulls out her mobile, and begins talking as she moves away from center scene, drops into sotto voice as she continues).* Mom? You'll never believe this. I'm in Paris... *(Angie approaches Rick)*

ANGIE:

When I saw what I thought was happening, I thought you might want it on film.

RICK:

Are you kidding me?

ANGIE:

Take a look.

RICK:

My God. I look like I'm terrified. I guess I was. Yes. Yes, it's wonderful. (Hugs her) It's perfect. I'm Rick.

ANGIE:

Angie. (Shakes his hand) I can email it to you. Do you have a business card?

RICK:

I feel like I should be paying you. Can I pay you for it? You don't know how wonderful this is.

ANGIE:

I won't accept it. How about this? Look back on the picture and smile. Remember how happy you were. How insane it all felt.

RICK:

It is insane isn't it? (*Angie exits as Rick continues*) Oh, that I could always be that insane. That anyone could be that insane once in their life, that I should be so lucky. Everything coming up sevens, and no turning back. We went home and I was afraid it was all come to an end, that my high would come crashing back down to earth, the angel whose wings I'd borrowed would come back to claim them, and my grace would be no more. But it was better than I could even have hoped. We set the date for December, giving us six months to fall apart. But we didn't.

JENNIFER:

And we can use the ballroom?

RICK:

Everything's taken care of. They love having alums get married there, and it was wide open. Nothing to worry about.

JENNIFER:

I feel like I should be going crazy. All my friends did. And they had twice as long to plan.

RICK:
We're just that good. Second best decision you ever made--the short engagement.

JENNIFER:
And the first?

RICK:
The pinot with dinner last night. Superb. (She hits him) Oh, you thought I was talking about you agreeing to marry me? I'm totally not that cheesy. Way too cliché.

JENNIFER:
Jackass.

RICK:
That's why you love me.

Lights come back up on Matt and Evan as they enter

MATT:
So, how'd it go?

EVAN:
Shouldn't I be asking you? You went out with Angie last night again, right?

MATT:
Yea--we hit up the new sushi place on Park. Pretty good, but I've had better. Nice seaweed salad though.

EVAN:
And the afterward?

MATT:
The afterward?

EVAN:
The sushi after party. Where you took her to your apartment and showed her what a real man does with his dates?

(Lights come up again on Brenda and Wendy, now sitting on Brenda's platform)

BRENDA:
Any ideas?

WENDY:
I'm going out with Michael later.

BRENDA:

Wow, this is getting serious. Four weeks and he hasn't gotten sick of you yet.

WENDY:

You've been living with me for two months, and you haven't gotten sick of me.

MATT:

Always about the sex. Can't I just enjoy a night out with a beautiful girl?

EVAN:

You've gone out five times!

MATT:

Four times, spread over several months. I'm never home.

EVAN:

No excuses! Always bring your A game.

BRENDA:

I'm a special case. I have genes for extra patience. Remember, I'm a writer that hasn't been published in a while. I'm used to dealing with annoying rejection letters, and annoying editors. An annoying Wendy is child's play.

WENDY:

He's taking me to see *Wicked* while it's in town again. (*Brenda stops whatever she's doing*) Brenda?

BRENDA:

Nothing--I just get lonely sometimes.

WENDY:

He'll come along.

BRENDA:

Hey--who am I to worry. I found you again after so many years, right? (*exits*)

MATT:

Leave it to you to make me feel even more awkward than I normally do. Truly sir, you are an artiste.

EVAN:

Oh, I know. Hey, thanks for coming out for this. I know I rag on you, but it helps to have something normal going on.

MATT:

Evan, I'm your brother. You go and get some scary-ass test done, I'm going to be there.

EVAN:

I might hear back next week or so. But hey, you're in town, you going to see Angie again? More than the monthly date? (*Matt and Evan exeunt*)

(*Brenda reenters, holding a rejection letter.*)

BRENDA:

Damn it.

WENDY:

Another one?

BRENDA:

They just don't know what they're missing, right?

WENDY:

Yeah! I mean the story was brilliant. It was dark, but hopeful, and brutally funny. So much more than the cliché pieces I keep reading there.

BRENDA:

Thanks. It just sucks. I think I've seen more of these than pages I've actually written.

WENDY:

Who are they to tell you that your writing isn't good enough for this crap (*holds up a magazine*). I mean listen to this: *America's Next Top Media*: the rise of competitive video blogging. Three pages of feature space arguing that the video blog is going to replace television as the primary means of getting information. I mean, who cares?

BRENDA:

Yeah, right? Why would I want to get something published in the *New Yorker* anyway? It's not like anyone reads it. Everyone just gets it to say that they get it.

WENDY:

Or read the cartoons.

BRENDA:

And they usually suck.

(*MATT and Angie enter*)

ANGIE:

What did you think?

MATT:

It was OK--not quite what I expected, but I guess anything called Mid-Morning of the Living Dead is probably aiming to disappoint.

ANGIE:

Oh, come on! The story was raw, the camera work brilliant. The use of undiscovered talent was a bold slap in the face to the modern Hollywood mentality that a face and a name is worth more than innate talent. And the bare-breasted women were used very tastefully.

MATT:

You're right--we should have gone to see the foreign flick. What was it again?

ANGIE:

Casablanca isn't foreign!

MATT:

No, it's just ridiculously old.

ANGIE:

And ridiculously good.

MATT:

Whatever you say. (*Evan enters*) I'll grab the car--you OK hanging with my loser brother for a bit?

EVAN:

Hey! That's my line.

ANGIE:

I'll manage.

MATT:

(*Putting on his best Bogart*) Here's lookin' at you, kid. (*Exits*) EVAN: You guys went to see Casablanca?

ANGIE:

No--Zombie Days, or something like that.

EVAN:

He's always had great taste in movies.

ANGIE:

How are you doing?

EVAN:
Oh, you know--never better.

ANGIE:
Right. He worries, you know.

EVAN:
I know. I wish he wouldn't. I just want it to be like it used to be. Well, at least like it was before all this shit.

ANGIE:
Have you told him?

EVAN:
I can't. He'd just worry more. He's already taking the semester off school to make sure I'm OK. It's not supposed to be like this. I'm the one who takes care of him. When mom and dad were working too much, or fighting--he'd come into my room. We could just sit for hours drawing and playing games. It's probably my fault he's a giant nerd. I got him this book about galaxies when he was in, like third grade. I think he read it half a dozen times. God, he was insufferable. It's all he wanted to do.

ANGIE:
Hey--I like nerds. (*Looking up*) He's almost here.

EVAN:
You're good for him, you know.

ANGIE:
I know.

EVAN:
Sometimes, I think I should have gone for you that day in the diner. Maybe then I wouldn't be sitting here pretending I was OK.

ANGIE:
You are OK. You're not gone yet, right? Help him take care of you for once. Make sure he doesn't lose his brother unless he has to.

EVAN:
Thanks, Angie. For helping him forget about all this. Seriously.

ANGIE:
Anything I can do, I will. But in the end--Ilsa can't be there for Rick.

EVAN:
You'll always have Paris.

MATT:
(reentering) You guys good to go?

ANGIE:
(to Evan) There certainly is that. *(to Matt)* Let's get out of here. *(Kisses him)*

EVAN:
I don't know Matt, I might have to steal this one from you some day.

MATT:
Go ahead and try. *(Matt, Evan, Angie exeunt)*

(Lights up again on Rick and Jennifer--Counselor gets Rick's attention)

COUNSELOR:
Rick?

RICK:

What? Oh. Subway car. She stood turned just away from me. The flickering lights from the outside silhouetting her in their artificial glow. She turned to me and smiled. I see it every time I blink. *(Pulls out a picture)* She turned to me and smiled. And she asked where I wanted to go to dinner.

JENNIFER:
What are you in the mood for? I was thinking Indian, or maybe Vietnamese.

RICK:
Either works for me.

ANGIE:
(Approaching--another passenger on the train) Have you tried the new place on 5th? It's really phenomenal.

JENNIFER:
Is it? We haven't tried it yet.

ANGIE:
Give it a go. You only live once, right? *(moves away, Rick looks like he might recognize Angie).*

RICK:
Let's go for it. Next stop, right?

(Lights come up on Wendy at work. She is wearing an apron. Brenda is waiting for her coffee, Angie comes up to stand in line behind her.)

WENDY:

She came in to see me at work. Her fifth rejection in as many pieces. One of the in-flight magazines. This one wasn't particularly kind about what they thought about the quality of her writing. I didn't know what to tell her.

BRENDA:

Whatever. Something will come up.

WENDY:

I wish I could give you something to make it suck less.

BRENDA:

You just did (holds up coffee). What would I do without overpriced café mocha? You know, I think I'm glad I've never taken the time to find out.

WENDY:

Sex and chocolate--got to love the serotonin boost.

BRENDA:

Don't remind me about how long it's been since I've had that particular serotonin boost.

(Lights up on Evan and Matt, sitting on Evan's platform playing cards--more specifically pitch; each holds six cards.)

EVAN:

Two.

MATT:

What's the score?

EVAN:

Nine-four, my lead.

MATT:

I'll take it. *(plays a card)*

EVAN:

Bastard. You had to choose clubs *(plays a card)*.

MATT:

Hey--maybe I'm just psychic. No trump? *(takes the trick and plays another card)*

EVAN:
I stand by my sentiments.

JENNIFER:
Rick?

RICK:
What's up?

JENNIFER:
You just got silent all of a sudden.

RICK:
Sorry. Must have spaced out. We were talking about dinner--

JENNIFER:
Right. Indian. The new place--are you sure you OK?

RICK:
Never better.

WENDY:
So you stick to chocolate. There are alternatives, you know--of the double-A variety.

BRENDA:
You think I don't? When did my halo show up?

WENDY:
But I know, it's not the same.

BRENDA:
(holds up her coffee in mock salute) And this serotonin comes with caffeine to back it up. You find a man that comes packed with caffeine, drop whatever you're doing and call me. *(turns to leave)*

ANGIE:
God, does that smell good.

BRENDA:
I'm sorry?

ANGIE:
The coffee. What kind is it? I took one whiff and I don't think I've ever wanted anything else.

BRENDA:
(laughing) Oh! It's a café mocha--ask Wendy to make it herself--the new barista isn't any good.

WENDY:

Are you making more work for me?

BRENDA:

(leaving) Always.

ANGIE:

Thanks for the advice. I'll have what she had.

EVAN:

Damn you, and the luck you rode in on. *(throws down his last card)* There's your game.

MATT:

(takes the cards, and begins looking through the cards he's taken) So I've got high, low--no jack. You got any points for game?

EVAN:

Funny. That's three then?

MATT:

Just closing up the game. Your deal.

EVAN:

Bid to go out?

MATT:

Always.

WENDY:

One serotonin express coming up. Extra chocolate OK?

ANGIE:

Is there any other way?

WENDY:

Only if you're dead *(turns to make coffee)*.

ANGIE:

Let's hope you're half as good as your friend seems to think you are.

WENDY:

Maybe not half as good--but I might be two-fifths of the way there.

JENNIFER:

You know, we don't have to have all the ceremony--we could walk into city hall and then onto a plane. Go back to Paris--

RICK:
And miss the look on everyone's face when you walk in?

JENNIFER:
It's your jaw they'll have to reattach.

RICK:
And you still won't let me see the dress?

EVAN:
(deals cards three at a time, two sets each to Matt and himself) Angie coming over tonight?

MATT:
Pretty soon, actually. *(looks at cards)* I'll bid three.

EVAN:
You're not shaving or anything?

MATT:
Just staying in tonight--probably sit on the couch with my lazy-ass brother. Maybe watch a movie, eat some popcorn.

EVAN:
As long as you let one of us choose the movie. I'll take it. *(plays a card)* How are you in spades?

MATT:
You'll just have to see *(plays a card, take the trick)*. Leading low? *(plays)*

EVAN:
Hey, I'm sick, but not sick enough to play without a plan. *(plays a card and takes the trick)*. There's low.

MATT:
Nicely played. *(Evan plays a card)*

JENNIFER:
No way! The only face I care about seeing surprised is yours.

RICK:
Fine.

JENNIFER:
You should pout more often. Makes you cuter.

ANGIE:
(takes coffee) Thanks.

WENDY:
Just enjoy it.

ANGIE:
You too.

WENDY:
Your coffee?

ANGIE:
Being happy (*leaves*).

RICK:
Maybe I should try it at work. See if my designs get noticed more.

JENNIFER:
Never know. God, I'm starving. I can't wait to have my samosas.

RICK:
I don't get any?

JENNIFER:
If you order your own--touch mine and you'll be celibate for a very long time.

WENDY:
(*to audience*) I closed up for the night a couple hours later--I had a voicemail from Brenda. She sounded giddy--

(*Lights up on Brenda, sitting on her platform*)

BRENDA:
I'm downtown--maybe it's just the chocolate, but the sunset tonight is amazing. (*continues in sotto voice*)

EVAN:
And that's game. (*plays last card and takes the trick*)

MATT:
What's the verdict?

EVAN:
Three more for me--twelve. One for you? (*Matt nods*)
That's eight.

MATT:
One more?

ANGIE:

(entering with a coffee) What's the game tonight?

EVAN:

Pitch. I'm busy winning--you know, the usual.

MATT:

(Standing) Hey. *(kisses her)* I talked to Ev about watching a movie--he's game. As long as I don't have a say in what we watch.

ANGIE:

Smart move. I'll get the popcorn *(exits)*.

EVAN:

Better make a few extra bags--Matt hasn't been feeding me. I figure now that you're here I might get some food.

MATT:

You're a pain in the ass. What kind of pizza do you want?

EVAN:

Whatever--not really that hungry.

BRENDA:

--but I thought I'd give you a call to say hi. Hope it makes you smile when you get out tonight. See you when you get back? I'll make martinis--we'll watch Gilmore Girls, and get a little buzzed. Tonight is going to be a great night.

WENDY:

(walking to her chair) She sounded happy again. Like when she found me that spring. Before all the rejection letters came in, and everything was a mess. It was good to hear the light in her voice again. It was wonderful.

RICK:

(Walking Jennifer to her platform, and then continuing on to his chair) But we decided not to get off at 5th and went on to hit up one of our favorites. She had a mango lassi with dinner--on top of her own order of samosas. And we split carrot halwe for dessert. I can't for the life of me remember what we else we ate, but I can hear every word of our conversation, midnight echoes across frost covered plains.

MATT:

(looking at Evan before moving to his chair) I put the cards away, and grabbed my phone to order from this place that opened last year. I wish I knew how they get

(MORE)

MATT: (cont'd)

their crust so thin--it's incredible. I was on the phone when I heard him fall. We got in there at the same time. Everything was on autopilot--I can see my fingers dialing 9-1-1, and Angie holding his head and crying.

WENDY:

I got into our apartment twenty minutes later, and it was dark. I felt something reach up and start squeezing my chest, and my phone rang.

RICK:

(Looks down at picture) It happened when we were walking back to the station. I can still feel her hand on my arm. Her laughter dancing with mine and the taxi horns and buses braking and nightclubs just starting to turn up the bass for the night. I didn't hear it. I was too focused on the high of everything else hitting me. I felt a hitch in her step, and the sounds blurred into the mechanical droning of so many cicadas. I never found out where it came from.

WENDY:

I don't remember leaving the apartment, or walking into the hospital. A nurse took me to her bed, and an officer told me the driver was drunk and had driven onto the sidewalk. There were a dozen people in the emergency room. One woman had her leg crushed between the car and the side of the building that finally stopped him. The driver walked away from the accident unharmed.

MATT:

The ambulance was cramped. Two EMTs, and two of us. Angie drove so we'd have a way to get the three of us home. They put a mask over his face. And had to shock him twice on the way. That was the worst part. In between, I held his hand. The colors were too bright, and the sounds were all too loud. I called mom from the hospital.

RICK:

They told me it was random. I don't understand how something like that can be random. Random is winning the lottery. Random is the design of a snowflake, the path of water. Random doesn't enter the picture. Random takes the fault away.

(Spot on Jennifer, Evan, Brenda dim; they lie down)

How can you randomly decide to pull the trigger?