

Allergic

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Original short

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Second Draft

Made in Highland

INT. ZACH'S DORM ROOM. EVENING

Typical college dorm room. ZACH (20), tall, blonde surfer haircut, is styling his hair and buttoning up his shirt in the mirror which is next to the door.

JULIA (20) is sitting on Zach's lofted bed which is at the other side of the room, writing something down, or doodling in a small journal. She's dressed as if ready to go out. Wearing a black leather jacket. Her big brown eyes are locked onto the notebook with razor sharp focus. She's mouthing word's though we can't quite tell what she's saying. Her head is swaying to the hazy rhythm of a song only she can hear.

ZACH

Babe?

Zach calls out still focused on his reflection in the mirror. Julia does not respond, still focused on her notebook.

ZACH (CONT'D)

How's you never told me how your writing project's going.

Julia looks up from the paper. With a slightly surprised smile.

JULIA

Really well actually. I'm almost done with the short story.

Zach looks at her through the mirror.

ZACH

Do you think I could hear some of it?

Julia's attention is back onto her notebook.

JULIA

It's... not ready.

ZACH

Well yeah but, maybe I could give you some feedback on it this time... you know? Isn't that something writers do?

Julia looks up.

JULIA

Yeah... with other writers...

Zach finds this funny.

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ZACH
Ouch! But... fair, I guess.

He walks to the back of the room and leans towards her from on the edge of the bed.

ZACH (CONT'D)
If you won't read me your story,
could you at least tell me what
the story's about?

Julia looks up with a conceding look. She snaps the notebook shut and seals it with the elastic.

JULIA
(playful)
It's about a girl... and a boy...

ZACH
Classic.

JULIA
And they fall in love...

She leans in closer to him.

ZACH
I like where this is going.

JULIA
But... their relationship takes
an... interesting turn.

Julia locks her lips with a smile.

ZACH
And? That's it?

JULIA
Seemingly so.

ZACH
C'mon, just a little more.

Julia shakes her head and shuts him up with a kiss.

Zach pulls back. Has a surprised and somewhat disappointed look about him.

ZACH
I thought we said you were gonna
stop smoking! My mom is visiting
in a week.

JULIA
I thought you just meant weed.

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Zach sighs.

ZACH
Alright come on... we're gonna be
late for this party.

Julia stays on the bed for a moment. Watching Zach leave.

ACT I, sequence 2

INT. FRAT HOUSE. NIGHT

Music is booming, deafening. College students are crammed into a sticky and sweaty frat house. Solo cups, beer cans, shot glasses, the works. Flashing lights.

In a slightly less packed corner, couches are laid out in a semicircle, Julia and Zach are sitting there along with some other friends. The other friends start to leave but ARTHUR (20), thick brown hair, bright red cheeks, walks into frame.

ZACH
Hey, Arthur!

Arthur walks towards Zach. He's visibly quite drunk, his cheeks are quite red.

ARTHUR
Hey man!

ZACH
Holy shit! I've been wanting to
introduce you two for so long!

Arthur turns to Julia and awkwardly extends his hand out.

ARTHUR
(to Julia)
I've heard A LOT about you!

Julia shakes his hand.

JULIA
All good things I hope!

Arthur ignores this and takes a big sip from his solo cup. He grimaces.

ARTHUR
Ugh!

ZACH
What are you drinking?

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ARTHUR
I have... no idea.

ZACH
Well... it's making me thirsty!

Zach jumps up from his seat and leaves the frame. Zach awkwardly goes to sit down on a couch across from Julia.

JULIA
So... what does he say about me?

Arthur looks at her surprised.

ARTHUR
What?

JULIA
Zach. You... said you'd heard a lot about me when we met earlier.
What does he say about me.

Arthur scratches the back of his head.

ARTHUR
That you're... cool. Like, you do... sick shit.

JULIA
Sick shit? Wow. High praise.

Arthur scratches the back of his neck.

ARTHUR
...He also says you remind him of me a bit...

A weird look comes over Arthur's face as if he's questioning what he's just said. Julia also seems a little confused, she doesn't exactly see much of herself in the disheveled drunk.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I... don't know why.

There's a slight awkward pause.

ARTHUR
So, umm... what'd you like to do for fun?

JULIA
Drugs.

Arthur smiles

ARTHUR
Im' sure.

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JULIA

No, no, I'm serious. Real
hardcore shit! I'll try anything
twice!

ARTHUR

Oh yeah?

JULIA

That's why I'm majoring in
chemistry you know?

Arthur extends his solo cup.

ARTHUR

Try this then.

He says with a grimace.

Julia doesn't hesitate and downs the entire cup in one go.

Arthur seems shocked.

She finishes and wipes her mouth with her wrist.

JULIA

You weren't lying that shit was
gross.

Arthur smiles. Julia seem's to still be recovering from what
she's just drank.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Your turn. What's something you
do for fun.

Zach walks back into frame and sits back into his spot
between the two. He puts his arm around Julia.

ZACH

Here you go babe

He hands her a can of beer. Which she drinks immediately. He
cracks one open for himself.

ZACH

What'd I miss?

JULIA

Arthur was just about to tell me
what he does in his free time.

ZACH

A lot of jerking off I'm sure.

Zach says playfully smacking Arthur's leg.

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Julia turns to Zach

JULIA
Gross!

Arthur gives a conceding nod.

ARTHUR
It's true, I do jerk off a lot.

ZACH
Still no women? I don't understand why not! You're a handsome guy, in some, weird... tired... disheveled, kind of way.

ARTHUR
You're too kind.

ZACH
Babe, he's handsome no? Enough for some of you friends at least. Let's get him laid tonight!

JULIA
He's even handsome enough for me! If you're not careful I might end the night in his bed!

Zach laughs a genuine laugh.

ZACH
Oh shit, there's Elizabeth! Babe, let's go say hi!

JULIA
You go ahead I'll catch up. Arthur still needs to tell me what he does in his spare time besides... jerking off.

Zach laughs and gets up.

ZACH
They're just words you know!

Julia turns to Arthur.

JULIA
So?

ARTHUR
I don't know... I... I like to write.

JULIA
Oh?

Julia seems very intrigued.

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JULIA (CONT'D)
What do you write?

ARTHUR
Poems.

Arthur says looking a little embarrassed.

JULIA
Is that so?

Arthur nods.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Are you studying poetry?

Arthur laughs nervously.

ARTHUR
Fuck no!

Julia looks somewhat disappointed.

JULIA
Why not?

ARTHUR
I mean I've taken some classes...
but, you know... kind of want a
job after I graduate.

Julia shakes her head. Disappointed.

JULIA
Okay mister employment. Could I
see something you've written?

ARTHUR
No shot!

JULIA
Why not! I told you my deepest
darkest secret earlier!

ARTHUR
You did not!

JULIA
And now he doesn't believe me.
Wowww.

Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR
You'd have to buy me dinner
first.

Julia laughs.

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JULIA
 (sarcastic)
 Ahhhh, such a prude!

She says with a smile. Taking another swig.

ARTHUR
 What can I say, I'm a classy guy.

JULIA
 if you won't let me hear any of
 your poetry... could you at least
 tell me what kinds of things you
 write about?

ZACH walks back in with ELIZABETH, blonde, very very drunk,
 holding a wine bottle in one hand and holding her arm around
 Zach with the other.

ELIZABETH
 Arthur!!

She stumbles towards Arthur, and pushes her wine bottle onto
 him which he grabs before she collapses onto the couch next
 to Julia

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Oh my god Julia you gotta come
 dance with us!

JULIA
 Oh I... Arthur and I were
 actually having a pretty
 interesting conversation.

ZACH
 Yeah come dance, you can't spend
 the whole night just talking to
 each other.

JULIA
 In a minute I-

ELIZABETH
 Oh my god so boring!

She gets up and starts dragging Zach with her.

ZACH
 Come join us when you're done.

Julia watches them leave. The two sit in silence for a bit.

ARTHUR
 Do you... wanna go smoke a joint?

(ACT II SEQUENCE I)

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EXT. BACKYARD - PORCH. NIGHT

Julia and Arthur are sitting next to each other on a back porch separated by the wine bottle Elizabeth handed Arthur. Music can still be heard from inside the party. Julia's big brown eyes are absorbing her surroundings. Arthur has a joint in his mouth and clicks his faulty lighter a few times trying to light it.

He's successful and takes a hit of the joint. At the same time Julia takes a deep swig of the wine.

JULIA
This is actually... not terrible.

She says looking at the bottle, then handing it to Arthur he hands her the joint. She takes a hit.

ARTHUR
The wine or... the moment.

Julia looks up at Arthur. Intrigued, but not surprised. She's played these games before.

JULIA
(exaggerating)
Oh no, the wine is fucking
horrible.

She takes a hit.

JULIA (CONT'D)
But this...

She gestures to their surroundings.

JULIA (CONT'D)
The stars, the... the moment...
it's not half bad.

Arthur laughs. He takes a swig.

ARTHUR
(looking at the bottle)
Yeah, this stuff is pretty
fucking bad.

He takes another deep swig.

They sit in silence for a little while longer.

JULIA
So can I finally know what you
write poems about?

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She hands him the joint.

ARTHUR
Honestly... mostly about sad things.

JULIA
Why sad things?

ARTHUR
It helps.

This seems to strike a chord with Julia.

JULIA
Do you think you're... a sad person?

ARTHUR
(banal)
Not particularly. But it feels good to write about sad things. It's... cleansing. If anything I think I'm a happier person for it.

JULIA
So... it's like, a coping mechanism?

ARTHUR
Yeah I guess you could say that.

JULIA
Do you think everyone should write to cope with their sadness?

ARTHUR
I don't know... it probably depends what they're sad about.

JULIA
What kinds of things are you sad about?

Arthur sighs and looks ahead of him.

ARTHUR
I mean I've been feeling pretty lonely lately.

He looks into Julia's eyes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
...Lonely and bored.

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He says with a smile. He takes a final sip from his glass and starts filling it up again. Julia's eyes are locked onto him.

JULIA

Why do you think that is?

ARTHUR

Honestly? I guess... it's because I've just been spending a lot of time alone.

Julia smiles, but she looks sad. Arthur senses this.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

But... I'm not alone right now... and I'm also definitely not bored.

He say's trying to cheer her up. She appreciates the gesture, but still looks melancholic.

JULIA

You know... maybe it's normal to feel like that. To feel alone.

ARTHUR

You can't say that.

JULIA

Why not?

ARTHUR

You know why not.

He says gesturing back towards the party, towards Zach.

JULIA

I...

She looks of into the distance determined, as if' she's really digging deep. She turns to Arthur.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You don't need to be alone to be lonely. I mean yeah, I'm hardly ever actually alone anymore. I... I feel looked at.

She looks at him dead in the eyes.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I feel looked at A LOT, for sure, but I...

She looks back off into the distance.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I don't feel seen.

(BEAT)

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JULIA (CONT'D)

Maybe it's... maybe that's just part of being human? Maybe we're supposed to feel alone.

They sit in silence for a bit.

ARTHUR

But then... what about love?

She turns to him a little surprised.

JULIA

What about love?

ARTHUR

Well if it's part of being human to feel alone no matter what then why do we fall in love? I mean... isn't that the point? To find love in order not to feel alone?

JULIA

Pfffft!! Definitely not!

Arthur looks at her surprised.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Fuck love! It's... it's so overrated!

She looks at Arthur expecting him to laugh. Arthur looks bothered.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Have you ever been in love?

ARTHUR

Yeah... I mean... hasn't everybody?

JULIA

And did it make you feel less lonely?

ARTHUR

Well I... no, but... I've never actually been in like, a long term... thing. You know?

JULIA

Well I have... many times, and I can tell you... it doesn't.

She takes a swig of wine.

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JULIA (CONT'D)
Love is just... love is just a
chemical reaction in the brain.
You know?

Arthur hits his joint.

ARTHUR
Yeah but... isn't everything a
chemical reaction in the brain?

The two sit in silence for a bit.

JULIA
Hey... the music's kind of doing
my head in... d'you wanna go on a
walk?

Act 2 sequence I

EXT. ROW. NIGHT

Arthur walks quickly with his hands in his pockets. Julia follows. He shivers a bit.

JULIA
Cold?

ARTHUR
Oh you know it!

JULIA
Do you need a jacket?

ARTHUR
No I- I love the cold!

JULIA
Shut up.

ARTHUR
No I'm serious it makes me feel
so alive!

JULIA
Pfft. You're drunk.

ARTHUR
And high!

He adds with a smile.

JULIA
Hey...

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Arthur turns to her.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Do you think I could tell you a
story?

ARTHUR
A story?

JULIA
Yeah.

ARTHUR
(smiling)
I'd... love to hear a story.

JULIA
(smiling eagerly)
Okay! Okay! It's been a minute
since I last told it. So don't
judge me if I mess up mister
poetry.

ARTHUR
Oh I'll be judging alright!

JULIA
Okay so... Our story starts a
long long time ago. Far far away
in a little mountain village
in... Eastern Slovakia.

FOR THE REST OF THIS SEQUENCE THE PAIR WALK FROM THE ROW TO
MEMORIAL CHURCH.

ARTHUR
(sarcastically)
Wow. Eastern Slovakia!?

JULIA
(Smiling)
Yup!

ARTHUR
(performatively)
Please, do continue.

JULIA
And in that little village was a
shepherdess - like, a female
shepherd - who wanted nothing
more than... to be in love! She
lived in a small cottage with her
grandmother, and despite her
longing, was forbidden from ever
going down to the village and
meeting young men of her age.
(MORE)

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JULIA (CONT'D)

Though she often protested,
Grandmother never faltered,
because Grandmother knew
something the little shepherdess
did not! She knew the shepherdess
had been born allergic to love!

(BEAT)

JULIA (CONT'D)

Love allergies are very rare, but
they are cruel, which is why,
despite the ceaseless begging and
crying, Grandmother had never
allowed the young shepherdess to
venture down to the village.

(PAUSE).

JULIA (CONT'D)

One day, upon the arrival of the
shepherdess's eighteenth summer,
Grandmother fell very, very ill!
She was bed-ridden for weeks!
And, the young shepherdess grew
very very scared. She petitioned,
prayed, pleaded for Grandmother's
permission to go down to the
village, find the old apothecary
- basically like a pharmacist -
and fetch medicine that would
save Grandmother's life! She
accepted on the condition that
the shepherdess promised not to
speak to any man other than the
old apothecary.
And... that she also wore horse
blinders - those pads horses wear
so they only see what's directly
in front of them - to avoid
seeing any other men.

Julia mimics wearing horse blinders by placing her palms on her temples and looking from side to side. During her storytelling, Julia's hands remain very active, miming out many of the actions she describes.

JULIA (CONT'D)

And so, she did. She walked
diligently down to the village,
making sure to stare only at the
ground ahead of her the entire
way!

(MORE)

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JULIA (CONT'D)

In the main square, the men of the village, surprised to finally be seeing the beautiful shepherdess up close, called out to her, cried out for her attention! But, her gaze remained fixed on her forward marching feet, and, her vision obstructed, she could not see the men's faces and thus, obviously, could not fall in love!

Arthur chuckles.

JULIA (CONT'D)

When she finally made it to the apothecary, the man was charming, but far too old to stir any passions within her fragile little heart. She recounted her grandmother's symptoms and the experienced apothecary knew exactly what she needed! He proclaimed she needed a simple treatment of herbs and roots,

Julia mimics the apothecary's voice.

JULIA (CONT'D)

But, when he asked his apprentice to fetch the ingredients, the nervous young man knocked over the glass container holding Wormwood seeds.

Julia smacks her fist into her palm.

JULIA (CONT'D)

The crash startled the young shepherdess! She looked up instinctively to find the young apprentice's guilt ridden face.

(BEAT)

JULIA (CONT'D)

Before she could look away, close her eyes, forget what she had seen and run back to Grandmother with her tail between her legs...she fell in love and it was too late!

Julia remains quiet for a second.

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ARTHUR
Did she die!?

JULIA
No! She didn't die! Our little shepherdess was surprised! That's all. Surprised by how effortless it was to fall in love. How easily her heart warmed up, melted, like sweet butter. And most of all, she was surprised by how good it felt! How could she be allergic to something which felt so good? Had Grandmother's fears been for nothing after all?

(BEAT)

JULIA (CONT'D)
She brought the medicine back home to Grandmother and she got better. But those seeds of love which had begun to germinate within her body pushed and pulled ever more deeply on her heartstrings. Irrepressible desire set in. And, as fate would have it, she ventured out that night back into the village which was alight with solstice festivities, and there was music in the village square. There, she found the apothecary's apprentice dancing with the other villagers. She approached him, and they danced together all night. His hands were so warm, his smile so entrancing. She loved him and loved that she loved him and that he loved her! As they parted, he gave her a little kiss on the forehead.

Julia taps her own forehead.

(BEAT)

JULIA (CONT'D)
When she woke up in the morning and looked in the mirror, she saw a red rash had appeared on the spot where her lover's lips had met her pale skin! A bright, burning, pulsating hive... in the shape of a heart!

(BEAT)

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JULIA (CONT'D)

She ran her finger around the outline of the red rash. The warm flesh her fingers traced burnt almost as brightly as the passion she felt towards the young man! This was a trinket, a testament of the love they had for each other! How absurd for Grandmother to deprive her of this joy she had wanted for her entire life. This love, was pure ecstasy and if its price was a patch of red skin, which despite being itchy was also beautiful, it was a price well worth paying! So that night she went back down to the village and found the young man in the square... she blushed when he kissed her fingers.

Julia presses her fingers to her lips.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Her white knuckles were in turn branded with another bright red heart.

Julia extends the outside of her palm to Arthur as if showing off the rash.

JULIA (CONT'D)

They danced with more passion than they had the night before! And when the revelry was over, and the music stopped, they found themselves alone staring into each other's eyes in a state of pure, rapturous bliss. He brushed a strand of brown hair off her forehead-

Julia brushes a strand of brown hair off her own forehead.

JULIA (CONT'D)

...and kissed her lips.

Julia places a finger on her wine stained lips.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Another heart appeared, making her lips all the redder... She brought the young man back to her cottage...

ARTHUR

And??

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JULIA
(feigning a solemn tone)
When he woke up next to her the following morning ...he was horrified to find her swollen red carcass, barely breathing in bed next to him. He ran back to the village and sparked a panic among the villagers who mobbed the small cottage and burnt the young shepherdess at the stake for being a witch. Grandmother died the following week of a broken heart.

ACT II - Sequence 3

EXT. MEYER GREEN. NIGHT.

Julia and Arthur are lying down next to each other looking up at the stars.

ARTHUR
Your story... what'd Zach think of it?

(BEAT)

JULIA
Don't know. He's never heard it.

Arthur ponders for a bit.

ARTHUR
So the shepherdess... that's you?

Julia turns her head to him.

JULIA
That's a little forward of you wouldn't you say?

Julia smiles.

JULIA (CONT'D)
But I guess... I'd be lying if I said I don't feel like that little shepherdess sometimes.

Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR
Wouldn't be the first writer to write themselves into one of their stories.

They both chuckles.

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ARTHUR

And I take it the boy's supposed
to be Zach?

JULIA

Oh god no! No, no definitely not.
Zach and I... Zach is so much
fun.

ARTHUR

I'm confused.

JULIA

Zach is... the antithesis to that
relationship in the story.

ARTHUR

You mean you're not in love?

JULIA

(stern)

I mean I'm not consumed.

(PAUSE)

JULIA

He probably hasn't even noticed I
left the party yet.

The two lie down in silence for a bit longer.

ARTHUR

Is that really what you want? To
be left alone?

(PAUSE)

JULIA

Codependency is... not good.

ARTHUR

It's only codependent if the
relationship's unhealthy.

Julia turns to Arthur, raising an eyebrow.

JULIA

What do you call healthy
codependency?

ARTHUR

Love.

JULIA

If you're codependent, you aren't
free. So by definition if you're
codependent... you're unhealthy.

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ARTHUR
 So you think love is...
 unhealthy?

Julia smiles.

JULIA
 Hmm... I wonder if we didn't just
 hear a story highlighting that
 very message.

Arthur chuckles.

ARTHUR
 (smiling)
 Freedom over love... what a true
 American patriot.

JULIA
 Fuck off.

They both start laughing.

(ACT II - sequence 4 (??))

ARTHUR
 I get though I mean love is...
 scary.

JULIA
 You... don't seem to mean that.

ARTHUR
 I absolutely do I mean... having
 someone fall in love with you
 that's... that's power.

JULIA
 Explain?

ARTHUR
 To have power over someone,
 they... they have to need
 something from you... the way you
 depend off a teacher for grade,
 or a friend for a favor. It's all
 a game kind... you'll give them
 power over you if you think it's
 worth the payoff.

JULIA
 So love's like a favour?

ARTHUR
 No. Love's a step further. It's
 complete control. You don't need
 something from a person, you just
 need... them.

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JULIA
I don't feel like I need Zach.

ARTHUR
But you also don't think you love him.

JULIA
I just think the that's how Zach and my relationship is you know?

ARTHUR
Do you think that that's how he sees it?

(BEAT)

Julia cusps her face in her palms.

JULIA
Oh god no. Fuck! I'm... I'm meeting his mother in a week.

They stay in silence for a bit.

ARTHUR
(softly)
What do you want from life?

JULIA
To die unhappy...

Julia looks at Arthur in the eyes.

JULIA (CONT'D)
...why do you care?

ARTHUR
I think you're... interesting.

JULIA
You're not bad yourself.

ARTHUR
So?

JULIA
To die unhappy...

Arthur smiles.

JULIA
I'm not a good person you know?

ARTHUR
I think given the world we live in... it might be impossible to be a good person.

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ARTHUR (CONT'D)
 We're all the children of
 conquistadors...

Julia smiles. Shifts closer to Arthur. They are very close now.

JULIA
 (softly)
 Where did that come from?

ARTHUR
 (softly)
 A poem.

Julia smiles even more.

JULIA
 (softly)
 So he's not such a prude after
 all.

They're side by side. They are very close to each other.

They stare into each other's eyes for a moment.

The world narrows to just them.

They both seem to be waiting for something. Waiting for the other to make the first move. To take a leap of faith.

They kiss, for just an instant before...

ZACH (O.S.)
 (elated)
 There they are!

The two jump apart as if splashed by a bucket of cold water.

THE END

Process statement

Rewriting this script was such an interesting process. I found myself rediscovering the story and the characters all over again. My biggest takeaway from the workshop was that I needed to develop Arthur's character and his conversation with Julia more. I also had to figure out how to fit the "story within the story" in a more natural way. The way I went about doing this was by focusing more on the element of the two characters as writers. In this way, I was able to make their link feel more justified, as well as for the reason why Julia would bring the story up in the first place. Another important moment in terms of the rewrite was the office hours I attended. Two of the biggest changes in the draft were inspired from suggestions during office hours.

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The first was the decision to set the story at a party, and thus making the characters' isolation something they had to actively pursue instead of something merely handed to them. The other (and perhaps largest change) was the fact that the twist in the movie was removed. I was compelled by the idea that we generally know everything the main character knows, and since Arthur in the script would know Julia has a boyfriend, I decided to show it in the first scene. Though challenging, I thought this was a really interesting change to work with as it brought so much more tension to the piece. My task then changed from trying to make the audience surprised that she had a boyfriend to trying to make the audience forget that she had a boyfriend.

The writing process for this script, and more generally the writing I had to do for this class, really showed me the importance of planning before starting to write. Instead of just spilling words onto a page, I really tried to think through the whole story beat by beat, like a puzzle, the actual writing of which would resemble more like connecting dots than generating something from scratch. In the future, I think I'd like to take more time figuring out my characters, their motivations, and desires before starting to write. Planning on how to make these things evident throughout the script not only through plot, but dialogue and form as well.