

No More I Love You's

By Lauren Rose

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Characters:

Ella - 12 years old. The peacemaker of the family. She doesn't like to fight or see her family fight. She tries to see the good in everyone and is quite mature for her age. She is the exact opposite of her older sister.

Alli - 16 years old. Ella's dramatic older sister. She is very loud and opinionated and will always speak her mind yet, she tends to avoid talking about serious things. She looks out for Ella and tries not to worry her.

John - Late 30's/Early 40's. He is Alli and Ella's father. He is bad at communicating and is growing distant from his daughter's due to his relationship with his girlfriend. He is unable to see what they see in her. Although he isn't good at showing it, he loves his daughter's dearly. This tension between them and his girlfriend is tearing him apart.

Angela - Late 20's. She is kind of like the stereotypical evil stepmom. She can be a bit over dramatic at times and doesn't like it when people disagree with her. She does not care for John's children very much but she tries not to let him see that. She fears that they will ruin the relationship she has with their father which is why she tries to push them away.

Jackson - Non speaking and is only in the back of one scene. He can potentially be doubled with the person playing Alli. He is one of Angela's children.

Setting:

This whole play is intended to take place in the couple months after Alli decides to move out. The set remains the same the whole time as the whole show takes place on the front porch/ yard of a modern farmhouse. There is also a trampoline on stage which is located in their neighbors yard which we do not see anymore of on stage.

SCENE ONE

Lights up on a farmhouse porch. There are steps up onto the porch with room underneath them to hide things. In the back corner of the stage there is a trampoline. Two teenage girls come storming out of the house, one slightly ahead of the other. The one in front looks slightly older and is flustered. She is carrying a large duffle bag and a backpack that are both messily filled to the brim. The one trailing behind is calling out to her sister.

ELLA

Alli, wait!

ALLI

Can't! Too busy storming off in a rage.

ELLA

Will you please be serious? *(Ella reaches out for Alli's shoulder)* I heard you and Dad fighting.

ALLI

(Alli shrugs her off and keeps moving) So what? We always fight.

ELLA

Alli, come on.

ALLI

(she stops and finally faces Ella) We dooo. And it's always the same. He storms in claiming he just wants to talk. I try to speak. SHE interrupts. I yell. He yells. Nothing changes. The end.

She turns around and starts to take off again.
But Ella grabs her before she can.

ELLA

Except that's not what happened this time.

ALLI

(caught)

Okkk well maybe it went a little different this time.

ELLA

Alli, we share a wall. *(she hesitates)* I heard what you said.

ALLI

(finally confessing)

Look, I just can't do it anymore. Being in this house, knowing she's always around the corner watching and listening. I-I feel like I'm walking on eggshells here. It makes me sick to my stomach. *(she sighs)* And Dad just won't listen.

ELLA

(hesitantly optimistic)

Maybe Angela's still just warming up to us?

ALLI

Ella, Dad met her when you were 9. I'd say she's pretty fucking warm. Look, maybe you're still willing to give her a chance but I'm not. I'm done... Mom's on her way now. *(she pauses to gauge Ella's reaction)* Are you going to be alright here by yourself?

ELLA

(Ella puts on a brave face) Yeah. I'll be fine. *(brushing it off)* And I'm not by myself. I've got the kids—

ALLI

Her kids. And you know what I mean.

ELLA

I'll be fine. I can handle myself. Besides, I don't push their buttons like you do.

ALLI

(she nudges Ella's shoulder) Well when they are sitting right there, what am I supposed to—

ELLA

(letting out a little laugh) Anywayyysss

ALLI

Well hey now you won't have to share a room with Mary anymore.

ELLA

She's not that bad.

ALLI

She's seven.

ELLA

Seven'ssss a good age.

Alli gives Ella a look.

ALLI

(serious)

I'll miss you.

ELLA

Why are you acting like you are going off to war or something? I'll still see you at Mom's. Mondays and Tuesdays...and every other weekend.

ALLI

I know I know but still uhhhh *(she thinks for a second while shuffling through her bag)* Here. *(she holds out a bright red converse sneaker and speaks super cheesy)* Take this shoe to remember me by.

Ella giggles slightly, holding in her sadness.

She takes the shoe and looks at it.

ELLA

Just one?

ALLI

Um well I can't find the other one. *(shuffling through her bag some more)* I packed in a bit of a hurry. I'm sure it'll turn up. *(they hear a car pull up)* Okay well there's Mom. I gotta go but, text me if you need anything.

ELLA

Okay.

ALLI

(Alli goes in for a hug as she speaks)

I love you. I'll see you on Monday, alright?

ELLA

Alright. I'll be fine. I promise.

Alli pulls out of the hug and goes offstage.
Ella sits down on the porch steps and looks at her sister's shoe, letting it settle in that her sister really moved out. Lights change and it is now the next morning. Ella puts on the red shoe with her black one on the other foot.
Her father comes rushing out of the house.

SCENE TWO

JOHN

Ella, come on. I'm going to be late for work. We have to go.

ELLA

Ok just one second.

John stops in his tracks and looks at Ella. He sees that she's wearing two different shoes. He's concerned but he doesn't want her to see that.

JOHN

(treading lightly)

Um you doing okay?

ELLA

Yeah, just one second.

JOHN

Look Ella, I know last night was... rough so if you're too tired—

ELLA

Dad, it's fine. Let's go.

Ella starts to walk away.

JOHN

Ella?

ELLA

Yeah?

JOHN

You are wearing two different colored shoes.

Before she can respond, a woman in her late twenties comes out from inside the house. She looks very uptight. She isn't paying attention, yelling into the house and doesn't see John or Ella.

ANGELA

Come on kids, grab your backpacks! Let's go! *(she turns scared to see John and Ella)* Oh Jesus, what're you two doing? I thought you left.

ELLA

(nervous)

Uh we are. Come on, Dad. Like you said we're late. Bye, Angela. *(Ella rushes trying to exit)*

JOHN

Hold it. You forgetting something?

Ella stops and turns back to Angela putting a fake smile on her face.

ELLA

Goodbye, Angela...I love you.

ANGELA

Have a good day at school, Ella.

ELLA

Yeah, sure. Dad, I'll be in the car.

Ella exits.

JOHN

(to Angela)

Maybe I should just take the day off, stay with her?

ANGELA

She looks fine to me.

JOHN

She looks like she didn't sleep a wink and she's got two different shoes on her feet.

Angela looks off stage to where Ella is and analyzes the situation.

ANGELA

Maybe it'sss a new trend.

JOHN

I really don't think—

ANGELA

Besides, keeping her home isn't going to do any good if she won't talk to you about it.

JOHN

I know but I don't know what else to—

ANGELA

How bout you just check her phone before she leaves for her Mom's?

JOHN

Well I'd rather she just talk to me.

ANGELA

Of course you would but, she's a teenager John.

ELLA

(yells from offstage)

Dad, are you coming?

JOHN

(yelling to Ella)

One second sweetheart! *(back to Angela)* I just...don't want the same thing to happen with her that did with Alli.

ANGELA

I know. Well just think about it, okay? *(she gives him a kiss on the cheek)*

JOHN

Okay, I'm late. I love you.

John hurries away. Angela turns back to yell into the house again.

ANGELA

Boys! What is taking so long??

Angela goes inside. The lights change marking a new day. Ella enters from offstage. Angela comes back out with a box of random stuff. We hear a car pulling out of the driveway.

SCENE THREE

ELLA

(yelling offstage) Bye Mom!! *(she turns back to the house)* Oh uh hi Angela. Whatcha got there?

ANGELA

Oh Ella, you're back. Perfect. Take this stuff to the trash, will you? The truck's coming by today. She drops the box on the porch and starts to go back in. Ella takes a quick look inside and interrupts.

ELLA

Um, wait Angela.

ANGELA

What?

ELLA

(she hesitates but knows this must be a mistake) This is Alli's stuff.

ANGELA

Well she left it here so, clearly nothing important.

ELLA

But she just moved out. Shouldn't we give her a minute to—

ANGELA

Well we're moving Mary's stuff in so we need to get this crap out of there.

ELLA

(trying to stay calm) It's it's not crap it's Alli's things.

John enters from inside the house.

ELLA (cont.)

Dad! Are we really clearing out Alli's room, already?

ANGELA

(to John)

Help me out here.

Angela heads back into the house. John pulls
Ella to the side.

JOHN

Look, Ella I know it may seem a little fast but, Mary's been asking about it and—

ELLA

But—

JOHN

And besides! At least now you don't have to share a room. Everybody wins.

ELLA

(faking a laugh) Hah yeah, right I guess...

JOHN

I love you.

ELLA

I love you too.

John goes back inside. Ella looks at the box
on the porch. She goes to pick it up and
instead of throwing it away she hides it
under the porch, before heading inside the
house. Lights change and John reenters with
a coffee in his hand. He goes to sit on the
porch. Ella comes rushing out of the house
in her mismatched shoes, a pair of leggings,
and a shirt that is not cropped but doesn't
cover her butt. She goes to run offstage.

SCENE FOUR

ELLA

(While she's leaving)

Bye Dad, love you.

John starts to say bye and then registers what she is wearing and stands up to stop her.

JOHN

Woah woah wait a minute. What are you wearing? You can't leave the house without pants. And what's with the shoes Ella?

ELLA

Uhh I am wearing pants. And I don't know do you like them?

JOHN

(looking at the shoes) I mean it's certainly...interesting. You know what? Whatever. Anyways back to pants. You're not wearing any. Your whole butt is out. Go change.

ELLA

Daddd, I don't even have a butt to be out.

JOHN

Ella knock it off! Go put on a longer shirt or change your pants.

ELLA

Ughhh!

Ella storms back into the house. John sits back down and goes back to drinking his coffee. Over on the trampoline we see a kid bouncing on the trampoline.

ANGELA

(yelling while entering)

John! JOHN!

JOHN

What is it? What?

ANGELA

(flustered)

I can't find Jackson! He's not in the house. I've looked everywhere.

JOHN

Okay, okay just breathe. I'm sure he's around. *(Ella enters again with a big sweatshirt on and tunes into the conversation)* He's probably just trying to get out of school or something. We'll find him. *(He starts to look around)* He must be around here somewhere. Have you checked the garage or—

ELLA

(interrupts)

He's on the trampoline.

ANGELA

Huh?

ELLA

The trampoline. He's over on the trampoline. At the neighbors. *(she points out to the trampoline)*

ANGELA

Oh thank god! Okay. *(she starts yelling as John and her head over there)* Jackson! Jackson!

What are you doing? Get over here!

ELLA

(waiting until they are out of ear shot she sighs) You're welcome.

Ella checks to see they are far enough away and then takes off her sweatshirt, smiles, and runs off stage. Angela grabs Jackson and pulls him back inside through the back of the house. John comes back around to the porch and sits down. Lights change and it is night time. Angela enters from inside the house

SCENE FIVE

ANGELA

Just got Jackson and Mary to bed. Ella's up in her room doing homework. What are you doing out here?

JOHN

(looking off into the distance)

Just thinking.

ANGELA

(She goes to sit with him) Okayyy... Anything in particular.

JOHN

Ella...And Alli.

ANGELA

Oh.

JOHN

Do you think Ella's avoiding us?

ANGELA

She's 12 years old. Of course she's avoiding us.

JOHN

No I don't know, I think it's something different.

ANGELA

(unconcerned)

I really don't think it's anything to worry about. Ever since Alli left you have been so paranoid.

JOHN

(defensive)

Well can you blame me? I mean Alli's gone. Ella looks up to her and now she wants nothing to do with me. Why wouldn't Ella leave?

ANGELA

(more seriously)

John don't—

JOHN

At least with Alli I knew what she was thinking. If she had a problem she would scream at me about it. Ella's not like that, you know. She's quiet. But I can tell something's wrong.

Ella steps outside from inside the house.

ELLA

Dad, uh I um think I'm going to bed so thought I would say goodnight.

JOHN

Ok goodnight, I love you. Remember to leave your phone plugged in on the counter.

ELLA

(groaning)

Dadd, no can I please just put it away in my room?

JOHN

The counter.

ELLA

But if you would just listen for one second—

JOHN

Ella!

ELLA

Fineeee.

JOHN

I love you.

ELLA

Love you too.

Ella starts to head inside.

JOHN

Ella, are you forgetting something?

ELLA

(uncomfortable)

I love you Angela.

ANGELA

Goodnight Ella.

ELLA

Goodnight...

Ella goes inside.

ANGELA

See I think she's fine. Like you said. She's not like Alli. And we can check her phone again tonight if you are really worried about it.

JOHN

Yeah I guess you're right. I love you.

ANGELA

Good now can we please go inside.

John nods. Angela gets up and holds her hand out to him. She kisses his cheek and they go inside.

SCENE SIX

Lights change back to daytime. Ella and Alli both appear on opposite sides of the stage. They can not actually see each other. They are on the phone together.

ELLA

(shocked)

And then what happened?

ALLI

Well the whole kitchen was like filled with smoke and Mom was running around waving a dish rag trying to get the smoke alarm to turn off while I opened up all the windows. But it didn't work and the fire department came and we had to go stand outside. While they aired the place out.

ELLA

Jeez how come nothing like that happens when I'm home. Everything's all boring and regular.

ALLI

Maybe you just keep us all put together. *(jokingly)* So uh how're things over there in hell?

ELLA

It's not that bad.

ALLI

Yeah, yeah. But seriously though are you doing okay?

ELLA

Um yeah, I mean Angela's her usual self but, what can ya do?

ALLI

Yeah. How's Dad?

ELLA

Strange. I swear he's getting more overprotective by the day. I mean he refuses to believe that leggings are pants and now I'm not even allowed to have my phone in my room when I sleep. *(mocking)* I have to leave it downstairs.

ALLI

Stupid.

ELLA

Yeah.

ALLI

You think they're looking through it?

ELLA

What?? Um, I don't think so.

ALLI

Well you never know. Maybe you should think about going through and deleting some texts.

ELLA

Alli, that's ridiculous. Dad trusts me he's not gonna go snooping through my messages.

ALLI

Okayyy I'm just saying—

ELLA

Stop it! He's not, okay? Look, I gotta go. It's almost time for bed. I'll text you tomorrow.

ALLI

Alright. I love you.

ELLA

I love you too, bye.

They hang up the phone and Alli exits. Ella stands there looking at her phone for a moment, thinking of deleting some messages. She decides not to.

ELLA

He wouldn't.

Lights change as Ella sits down against the side of the porch and looks up at the clouds. Angela enters, annoyed.

SCENE SEVEN

ANGELA

What're you doing?

ELLA

Looking at the clouds

ANGELA

Why aren't you playing with Mary and Jackson?

ELLA

Because I'm looking at the clouds?

ANGELA

(snippy)

Don't be smart with me young lady! Looking at the clouds, what does that even mean looking at the clouds? Look. Still there. That's it.

ELLA

No look. *(ignoring Angela's anger, she points up at the sky)* If you watch you can see them move really slowly across the sky. It's relaxing.

ANGELA

You'd rather watch a cloud inch across the sky than play with my kids? What's next you're gonna sit and watch the paint dry in Mary's room?

ELLA

That's not what I—what paint?

ANGELA

The paint on the wall. Maybe if you weren't out here watching clouds all day you would know about what's going on in the house.

ELLA

I didn't realize we get to repaint our bedrooms! Can I? The orange in there right now doesn't match any of my stuff—

ANGELA

Um I don't know if we have that in the budget right now. Maybe for Christmas.

ELLA

But Mary chose the paint for our room—

ANGELA

Exactly. Your room just got painted. Mary's hasn't.

ELLA

I don't think you heard what I said—

ANGELA

Look Ella, take it up with your father another time. I can't do this right now. *(while she exits)*

Come inside when you've lost the attitude okay?

ELLA

Whatever. *(under her breath)* Bitch.

Ella pulls out her phone and starts texting annoyed. The lights change and it is a new day. Ella moves from texting to talking on the phone with Alli. Alli enters on the opposite side of the stage.

SCENE EIGHT

ELLA

I don't know if I really understand what love is anymore, Alli.

ALLI

Oh god, Ella you are twelve! You never have known what love is.

ELLA

No, listen to me okay? I mean I used to think that I knew what it was because I said it to people who care about me a lot and they would say it back. But now that I think about it more I think that it is thrown around too easily.

ALLI

What are you talking about?

ELLA

I meannn I say it to everyone at Thanksgiving and Christmas even though over half of those people I won't see for another year when the holidays come back around. Dad makes me say it to Angela every night even though she never says it back. *(Alli starts to realize what this is actually about)* She just smiles at me and says goodnight. I mean why do I have to say it if she doesn't?

ALLI

I don't know Ella but, they are just words.

ELLA

I know they are just words and people don't really care that much, but I'm starting to think that I kind of care. So I don't want to just throw out those words because then they are going to become completely meaningless and when I do have someone I want to say those words to then they won't feel special anymore and I'll—

Angela enters from inside having heard some of the phone call through the window.

ANGELA

Ella! Phone. *(She holds out her hand for the phone.)*

ELLA

What? Why? It's the middle of the day. What'd I do?

ANGELA

Don't talk back to me young lady. I said give me the phone.

ELLA

But I'm talking to my sister.

ANGELA

I didn't ask for an excuse missy.

ELLA

(under her breath)

Well technically you didn't ask for anything—

ANGELA

ELLA! Give me the phone now.

ELLA

Fine! *(She talks into the phone)* Hey, Alli I've gotta go. I'll talk to you later okay? I love you, bye. *(She hangs up the phone. Alli exits and Ella hands the phone to Angela)* Here.

ANGELA

Thank you.

She turns to leave.

ELLA

When am I getting it back?

ANGELA

That's up to your father.

ELLA

But I didn't even do anything.

ANGELA

Don't talk to me. Take it up with your father.

ELLA

But he never—

ANGELA

Your father!

Angela goes back into the house. Ella shrugs in defeat and lays back against the porch staring at the clouds again. The lights change and it is almost dinner time. John enters from inside the house.

SCENE NINE

JOHN

Ella! You out here?

ELLA

Yes! Dad, can I have my phone back? I told Alli I'd call her back.

JOHN

Not right now. Why don't you go inside and clean up for dinner?

ELLA

Will I have it back before bed at least?

JOHN

Ella. Enough.

Ella huffs and heads inside. A few moments pass and Angela comes out enraged. She is holding Ella's phone.

ANGELA

DID YOU SEE THIS?

JOHN

What?

ANGELA

Your daughter's phone. Look what she said about me.

Angela shoves the phone in John's face and he looks at what she is seeing.

JOHN

Oh honey, I'm sure she didn't mean it. She's just a teenager. They overexaggerate—

ANGELA

OVEREXAGGERATE?? She called me a bitch! Is that how you are going to let your daughter talk to me?

JOHN

(optimistic)

Well at least she didn't say it to you.

ANGELA

Well it's about me! And it's incredibly disrespectful. You can't just let her get away with this.

JOHN

Of course not honey, I'll talk to her but—

ANGELA

Good.

Angela leaves still flustered by what she saw. Dad lets out a sigh. He sits and waits. Lights change and Ella enters from offstage. She stops when she sees her dad. He is clearly not happy.

JOHN

Ella, we have to talk.

ELLA

Um alright. About?

JOHN

You need to apologize to Angela about what you said.

ELLA

(confused)

What'd I say?

JOHN

(hesitant)

We saw that you called her a bad name. *(He holds up her phone)*

ELLA

You went through my phone?? Alli was right.

JOHN

Ella—

ELLA

(Ella gets a sudden burst of confidence) I'm not apologizing.

JOHN

Yes you are.

ELLA

NO I'M NOT! If you two weren't snooping through all of my text messages she wouldn't have even seen it! I mean I'd never say that to her face.

JOHN

Ella—

ELLA

(ranting)

It's not fair! I TRUSTED you! And that's MY phone and what I say on there is my business not hers! I'm not apologizing!

JOHN

That's enough! You need to start showing Angela some more respect which includes what you say about her behind her back. You don't see her kids running around here being disrespectful to me do you? She is family and you need to start treating her that way. Now she loves you and what you said really hurt her a lot. You can take your time and cool off but, sooner or later you are going to apologize and tell her you love her. And from now on I want to see a change in this behavior young lady, you understand?

ELLA

(timid)

Yes.

JOHN

Alright then, I love you.

ELLA

(mumbling)

I love you too.

Her dad leans in and kisses her on the forehead and goes inside. Ella sits down, defeated. Lights change and it is the next morning. Angela comes out expecting an apology.

SCENE TEN

ANGELA

Ella.

ELLA

Angela.

ANGELA

Is there...anything you have to say to me?

Ella pauses for a second. Then suddenly gets the courage to ask what she always has wondered.

ELLA

Do you love me Angela? Like you love your own kids?

ANGELA

What?

ELLA

Do you love me? Because I'm sure you love your own kids and dad loves your kids and he loves me and I have to say that I love you but do you love ME, Angela? Like you love your own kids?

ANGELA

Well Ella, I could never love you like I love my own kids.

ELLA

(holding back tears) Of course.

ANGELA

(avoiding)

Um well Ella that is not why I came out here. I believe that you still owe me something so don't be trying to change the subject.

ELLA

I'm not sorry about what I said about you. And I'm not going to apologize for it.

ANGELA

(shocked)

Uhhh how dare you speak to me that way young lady!?!?

ELLA

I'm not apologizing.

ANGELA

You are a disgrace to your father and this family! *(she walks over to the door and yells into the house)* John! Can you come out here please?

ELLA

I don't care what you say or whether my dad is here or not. I'm not changing my mind.

ANGELA

I don't know what is with this sudden outburst of defiance Ella but, I do not like it. I mean you have always been the good one. But I can't say that I'm surprised with your sister always in your ear I'm sure.

ELLA

(starting to get defensive)

Don't talk about my sister.

ANGELA

And your mother is no better. I'm sure she's definitely not shutting any of those negative comments down. If anything she's adding to them.

ELLA

(warning)

Don't talk about them.

ANGELA

No wonder where you got the potty mouth. I mean what kind of mother—

ELLA

STOP TALKING ABOUT THEM! Shut up. Shut up! SHUT UP!

As she is yelling shut up, John enters and jumps in immediately.

FATHER

ELLA! You do not get to talk to Angela like that.

ELLA

But she—

FATHER

I don't care. I didn't teach you to yell at people. And you're supposed to be apologizing.

ANGELA

(playing the victim)

I don't know what has gotten into her. I mean she refused to apologize and now is acting like a complete maniac.

ELLA

Well you said—

FATHER

She's right, Ella. This isn't like you. What is your problem?

ELLA

(panicking) I need my phone. I want to call Alli.

ANGELA

(sarcastically)

Perfect.

ELLA

(begging)

Dad, please I need it. I need to talk to Alli!

FATHER

Ella, you are not getting your phone back right now. Talk to us. I'm here. Tell me what is going on.

ELLA

I CAN'T! *(Ella burst into tears)* Don't you think I have tried? You never listen. You always take her side before I even get to talk. Maybe if you actually listened to me you wouldn't have to look through my phone every night to figure out what's going on with me. *(aimed at Angela)* And I sure as hell do not want to talk to you. YOU started this! I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to tell you I love you. And I do NOT want to apologize for calling you a bitch!

Angela lets out a gasp in complete shock.

She runs into the house.

FATHER

Ella! Stay right here. This conversation is not over! *(He turns to go inside)* Angela, honey...

He chases after Angela. Ella sits on the steps. She looks at the door into the house that her dad just went through.

ELLA

Shocker. *(She lets out a chuckle through her sadness)*

Ella sits on the porch steps and cries. She looks at her one red sneaker on her foot and remembers her sister's box. She pulls the box out from under the steps. She looks through and cries wanting her sister. At the bottom of the box she finds the missing pair to her sneaker. She gets an idea and replaces her black sneaker with the red one.

ELLA cont.

(As she finishes tying her shoes) I'll give you one last chance. Come find me. *(she takes her focus off the door as she walks but is still talking to her dad)* I won't go far. Just across the street. Like Jackson, remember? I'll even walk right in front of the window so you can watch me go. I put on Alli's bright red sneakers for you. *(innocently)* I'll jump on the trampoline for a little. That will be nice and easy to spot, a kid bouncing up and down wearing bright red sneakers. *(She goes and bounces on the trampoline, checking to see if her dad has come out yet. There is nothing)* I'm getting tired Dad please come out. *(She gives up and sits on the trampoline)* Ok well still pretty easy, a kid sitting on a trampoline in bright red sneakers. You're going to find me. *(After a few moments, Father comes out. He sees all of Alli's stuff scattered around the porch and looks around)* Finally. *(She sits there patiently waiting for her dad to see her. He takes a few steps away from the porch. He calls out her name a few times she speaks but it is in her head to him)* I'm right here Dad. Don't you see me? Of course you can see me, I'm wearing bright red sneakers. *(He looks as though he is looking right at her and calls her name. As Ella speaks she begins to fall apart)* I'm right here! I'm right in front of you, looking right at you. Come over. *(Desperate)* Run and hug me and tell me never to do this again and I'll tell you everything please we'll fix this. I won't have to leave. I promise I won't. *(The father turns around and goes back into the house calling for Angela)* Dad?

Lights close in on Ella. Time is frozen. She sits there for a second in disbelief. Eventually she gets up and walks back towards the house almost in a trance, knowing what she has to do. She gets to the door and knocks on it before going back to sit with all of Alli's things. John opens the door.

JOHN

Ella, there you are! Why are you knocking on the door? I was worried sick.

ELLA

(sniffling)

You were?

JOHN

Of course I was. I looked everywhere.

ELLA

Oh. *(she pauses)* And-and what about Angela? Did she look?

JOHN

Well...no but she was worried.

ELLA

Of course...But she's got her own kids to worry about.

JOHN

Ella, what are you talking about?

ELLA

(Ella takes a second before deciding to say what's on her mind) Angela doesn't love me, Dad. And she didn't love Alli either. Not like her own kids. Maybe not at all.

JOHN

Oh Ella, that's not—

ELLA

She told me herself, Dad! When she came to talk to me earlier. I asked her.

JOHN

Maybe you misunderstand—

ELLA

No Dad I think it was pretty clear. It's always been clear but, you can't see it! *(she starts to cry again)* It hurts, Dad. I mean I get it when she was first getting to know us but it's been four years. And even now you're defending her! I mean what do I have to do to get you to listen?

JOHN

(trying not to mess this up)

Ella, I'm here now. I'm listening. I want to listen.

ELLA

But it's too late now, Dad! Don't you see? I'm never going to apologize to her. I-I-I can't do it. *(she sighs)* And I'm so sick and tired of saying I love you. She never even says it back! Have you noticed that? Cuz I have. I notice it every time.

JOHN

(distraught)

I didn't...

ELLA

Of course you didn't because you love her, Dad. And at the end of the day that's all that really matters to you is her...not me...or Alli.

JOHN

That's not true. I love you both so much.

ELLA

Then why do you always choose her? What'd I do wrong?

Suddenly we hear a car pull up and Alli enters from offstage.

ALLI

Ella?

ELLA

Alli? *(Ella runs up and cries into Alli's arms and speaks muffled by her clothes)* He checked through my phone, Alli. He looked through my phone. *(Ella takes a second to compose herself)* Why are you here?

JOHN

I called your mom when I couldn't find you. I figured I knew what was coming.

ALLI

(carefully)

Why don't you go inside and pack your stuff, Ella? Mom's waiting in the car.

ELLA

(still sniffing) Um okay.

Ella exits. Alli and John are left alone standing across from each other. John goes to sit on the steps. He is trying desperately to keep it together but he is distraught. After a long silence, Alli speaks.

ALLI

I didn't talk her into this.

JOHN

What?

ALLI

I know you're thinking it.

John doesn't respond.

ALLI cont.

Don't think I didn't try. I mean I told her to go through her messages and delete some but she shot me right down. *(John looks at her)* She really thought you trusted her...for a moment I thought she might be right.

JOHN

Alli, I—

ALLI

I thought that maybe me leaving would finally give you the wake up call you needed to make things better...Maybe things would be different for you two.

JOHN

...I did too.

ALLI

Guess we can finally agree on something then.

ANGELA

(offstage)

John!

JOHN

(yelling back without thinking)

Coming!

ALLI

(she lets out a sigh) Well I hope you made the right choice. Tell Ella I'm waiting in the car.

Alli walks offstage and leaves John sitting amongst the random array of Alli's things on the steps. John watches her go and then looks back at the house. He puts his head in his hands and starts to cry. Ella enters stone faced from inside after a moment with all of

her stuff shoved into a bag. John doesn't hear her through his crying.

ELLA

Dad?

John jolts up quickly trying to hide his tears.

JOHN

Ella...Alli went to the car...Um you got all your stuff?

ELLA

Enough.

JOHN

Okay, well I'll save the rest of it for you. Promise.

ELLA

(she lets a hint of a smile appear on her face) Okay.....Well I should get going. Can I have my phone back?

JOHN

...Yeah, yeah right uhh here. *(he pulls her phone from his pocket)* I'll uh call you.

ELLA

(nodding) Okay....I've gotta go.

JOHN

Goodbye. *(Ella starts to walk away but he calls out to her)* I really love you, Ella!

Ella turns back to look at him.

ELLA

Goodbye, Dad.

Ella walks offstage. John is left standing in front of the porch. BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY

