

SUNSET  
Matthew Butter

It's late June in St. Louis.

It's a clear, sunny day. A fairly cool day for the weather, around 70 degrees.

*We're focused on 2 men having a picnic in a park. EARL is slaving over the making of a sandwich. He seems stressed about it being perfect. He's wearing a green shirt with brown vertical stripes, and pants with the exact same design. He was born into a middle upper class family, and has survived mostly off of their generosity, though he has earned what would amount to around a minimum wage through his music. He's a bit socially anxious, not to the point of paralyzation in social situations, but he certainly won't initiate a conversation. Surprisingly, he actually loves talking to and being around people that he knows, he just has a problem meeting new people. LOUIS is leisurely looking from EARL to his phone, back and forth, back and forth. He's wearing a flannel shirt with khaki pants. He was born into a very wealthy family, and got into painting at an early age. Now, he's making a decent living off of it, and has mostly separated from his parents, though he'll certainly accept money if they send it.*

EARL

*(stressed)* And...it's done.

*(He passes the sandwich to LOUIS)*

LOUIS

Thanks! *(He smiles slightly, and goes to take a bite before pausing)* Are you sure you don't want this? I mean, I can make my own-

EARL

No, no, I'm fine, I-I'm not that hungry right now.

LOUIS

*(Unsure) OK... (He takes a bite)*

*(EARL is nervous that LOUIS won't like it. He's worried that he will hate him for making a bad sandwich. He's scared he's going to lose LOUIS)*

EARL

Is it good?

LOUIS

*(Starting to go for another bite)* Oh, yeah, yeah, it's very good. Thank you, again.

EARL

*(Relieved)* Don't mention it. I'm just glad you like it. I mean, it's not often the weather allows for a picnic like this, might as well make it memorable!

LOUIS

Yeah, yeah

*(There's a silence for about 4 seconds)*

EARL

Well... how was the drive here?

LOUIS

It was OK, I mean, I should be asking YOU how the drive was, considering you're the one who had to drive 30-something miles to- *(his phone begins to ring)* Ohp! I should take this. *(He puts*

*his phone up to his ear*) Hey! *(He stands and begins to walk upstage left, his audio getting slightly quieter as he gets further from EARL)* *(pause)* I'm doing good, you? *(pause. He laughs)*

*(EARL's smile fades as LOUIS gets further and further. He never stops looking at LOUIS)*

LOUIS

*(pause)* Yeah, I think I'm free on Thursday. I mean- *(longer pause)* No, no, it's not a problem.

I'll see you then. *(pause)* Love you too. Buh-bye.

*(He hangs up the phone and starts walking back to EARL)*

EARL

Who was it?

LOUIS

Kailey

EARL

Again?

LOUIS

Yep, again

EARL

That girl needs to stop *(chuckle)* She had her chance

LOUIS

*(chuckle)* Yeah, yeah *(pause)* So I'm having lunch with her tomorrow...

EARL

Wai-what?

LOUIS

Yeah, I mean, don't take it personally, it's just... *(thinks)* lunch among good friends. That's it.

EARL

Okay, but, like-

LOUIS

Hey, I can't just tell her "Oh, I can't eat lunch with you, because I'm-I'm dating- *(pause)* a GUY", 'cause that's gonna spread quick, and it'll get around, and-

EARL

*(faking acceptance, as if he's trying to convince himself)* No, no! I get it. It's ok. I can... *(exhale)* we'll keep this on the down low.

LOUIS

Thank you so much, man. You're a lifesaver.

*(LOUIS returns to his sandwich. EARL keeps his fake smile for a second, then loses it)*

EARL

*(quietly)* I love you, too.

*(curtains close)*

## SCENE TWO

*We're in EARL's apartment. It's by no means a cheap apartment, but it's not necessarily the most lavish. If you saw it, you'd probably think the owner is making about \$100k a year. It's upper middle class. The design is very modern, with a tinge of postmodern mixed in. There are 2 abstract art pieces on display, the kind people still protest. One is literally just the colors purple and yellow, with purple on the left half of the painting, and yellow on the right half. As good as the colors are separately, and as much as the combination doesn't necessarily sound bad, they just don't mesh well. Upstage left, there's a drawer with a picture of EARL, LOUIS, and KAILEY together at a park. There's*

*a window at the back of the apartment with a dim light going through it, implying that it is the afternoon.*

*EARL is sitting on a countertop, scrolling through twitter fairly aimlessly. LOUIS walks through the door, looking fairly happy. EARL perks up as LOUIS enters.*

EARL

How was work tod-

*Then KAILEY follows. EARL instantly becomes stonefaced.*

KAILEY

*(smiles and waves)* Hey Earl!

EARL

*(flatly)* Hey Kailey. *(He halfheartedly waves)*

LOUIS

Earl! Oh, Kailey...*(thinking)* you already know Earl, right?

KAILEY

Yeah, we met at... *(thinks)* Wilmore Park, I think?

EARL

*(flatly)* Yeah, I know her. *(Looks to LOUIS)* So, what's going on with the museum. Are we not going?

LOUIS

Oh yeah! *(Looks to KAILEY)* Sorry, I forgot that I promised Earl that we'd hang out at the museum at 6.

KAILEY

*(Laughs)* Haven't heard of many bros going to museums

LOUIS

*(a bit nervous)* Yeah, yeah, well you've never met Earl before! Aaaanyway, I'm gonna have to get going on that. Love you!

KAILEY

Love you too babe! *(She kisses him)*

*(EARL's face goes from an expression of aloofness and uncaring to a face of shock and horror. It's as if he had just seen all of his friends and family simultaneously ran over by a truck. He believes he's on the precipice of losing LOUIS, if he hasn't already lost him)*

*(KAILEY exits)*

*(EARL's expression gradually changes from one of shock to one of anger)*

*(LOUIS smiles as he watches KAILEY leave, then towards back towards EARL)*

EARL

What was that?

LOUIS

What was what?

EARL

She-she called you "babe", and then kissed you. What was that?

LOUIS

You know Kailey, you know she's very loving to everyone, and-

EARL

Not ONLY do I BARELY know her, but also, there is-there's a difference between loving someone, a- and calling them BABE and- and where WERE you? I drive an hour and a half to hang out somewhere that I HATE and-

LOUIS

*(trying to defend himself, starts speaking after "hate")* I didn't know that, you never told me! We could have-

EARL

*(Starts speaking after the "me" from LOUIS)* I didn't TELL you, because I know YOU like the museum, so I'm going for YOU! I drive an hour and a half to your house for YOU, only for YOU to switch our plans last minute, meaning I have to turn around and drive ANOTHER hour and a half, and then I wait ANOTHER hour because you're doing WHO KNOWS WHAT with

EARL

LOUIS

Kailey, and I'm left here ju-

Are you implying that Kailey and I are-

EARL

YES I'M IMPLYING THAT YOU'RE DATING HER! And I'm SAYING that you've got to make a choice. *(on the verge of tears)* I love you, I do, but you HAVE to pick one of us. PUBLICLY.

LOUIS

You're SERIOUSLY asking for me to pick between my gir *(sounds like it could be either "girl" or "great")*- my great friend and my boyfriend? AND you're asking me to come out. You know how-



EARL

*(sarcastically)* Yes, I know how TERRIBLE it will be for you to actually be the real you in public, because it means you have to be put in an actual vulnerable position for HALF A SECOND! Louie-

LOUIS

Don't call me that. Not now, while you're doing *(gestures vaguely in the direction of EARL with his hands)* THIS. Asking me to pick? That-that's just terrible.

EARL

You... you're blaming me?

EARL

How could you do tha-

LOUIS

Yes! You're the one who-

EARL

You know what? We're done. We're through. That's it.

LOUIS

What? Are you saying you don't love me-

EARL

How I feel-it doesn't matter, we're done. Get out.

*(pause. LOUIS is shocked. Even EARL seems a bit shocked by what he said. Suddenly, his face again hardens)*

EARL

I said to GET OUT. I-I've been doing this for months, and you still can't commit? Go.

*(LOUIS is still shocked)*

*(EARL pushes off of the countertop and onto his feet, leaving his cell phone on the countertop)*

EARL

*(Screaming at the top of his lungs) GET OUT!*

*(Still shocked, LOUIS finally turns around and leaves. As soon as he leaves, EARL slams the door behind him)*

*EARL goes to a chair upstage right and sits down. He looks downwards, his hands clasped behind his head. He's holding back tears. After 6 seconds, his hands move in front of his face, and he cries. Outside, the light gradually dims, before disappearing entirely, then coming back in full force implying a time lapse to the next morning. Finally, EARL looks up, and sees the photo of him, EARL, and KAILEY upstage left. He gets up, walks over to it, picks it up, and looks at it. He doesn't smile, but he seems on the edge of smiling, almost as if he's reminiscing.*

*Suddenly, he throws the picture against the wall at full force. He then stomps on it for good measure. He grabs the painting off the wall, which pulls it out of its frame. He rips it in half vertically, separating the purple and the yellow. He throws it onto the ground. He punches a hole through the wall. He turns, and sees his cellphone on the countertop. He picks up his cell phone and dials LOUIS' number.)*

EARL

*(angry)* Hey Louis, it's Earl. Oh- my mind slipped! Cheater is what I should have called you, you narcissistic, parasitic prick! You're terrible, and you lost me, and you-you're gonna have to live with that! We... we had so much, and you...

*(EARL is on the edge of tears, with a few coming out. He stops the voicemail and restarts it)*

EARL

*(still angry, but not as angry as before. A bit more sadness in the voice)* Hey Louis, it's Earl. I want to know just how you could be the way you are. Were you using me-Did you- did you know you were using me? Was it intentional? Was it EVER real for you? Did you ever feel the way that I-

*(EARL cries for a second. He pauses to collect himself [though he doesn't collect himself fully], and he restarts the voicemail.)*

EARL

*(sadness, with a fake anger in the voice, trying to fake it until he gets there)* I hate you.

*(EARL restarts the voice mail)*

EARL

*(more anger)* I hate you.

*(EARL restarts the voice mail)*

EARL

*(more anger)* I HATE you

*(EARL restarts the voicemail)*

EARL

(screaming, crying) I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU. I LOVED YOU AND I TRUSTED YOU AND YOU DESTROYED IT ALL. AND I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY, BECAUSE I DON'T- I DON'T LOVE - I DON'T LOVE-

*(EARL cries.)*

*(Voicemail recording says "We didn't get your message either because you were not speaking or because of a bad connection")*

*(EARL cries for a few seconds, then begins to collect himself. After about 20 seconds, his tears have mostly stopped, but a few are still coming out, and more are still clearly in wait. He stands up, and he walks over to the halves of the purple and yellow painting. He tries to put the purple and yellow painting back in its place on the frame, but he can't do it fully correctly. It's irreparable. He puts it in as best he can, but the yellow half is skewed towards the edge of the frame while the purple half is skewed towards the center. He then walks over to the crumpled portrait of him, LOUIS, and KAILEY. He pauses, and looks at it for a few seconds. He uncrumples it and puts it in a new frame, placing it back on the drawer.)*

*(EARL restarts the voicemail)*

EARL

Hey Louis, it's Earl *(pauses)* Listen, I know that I... I got a bit emotional yesterday and..

*(EARL is nervous that LOUIS won't accept the apology. He's worried that he will hate him for making a bad scene. He's scared he's going to lose LOUIS)* and I got too aggressive, and I... I really am sorry. And I understand if you want to leave me after this, it's my fault, I get it, but at the very least, can we... *(exhales)* can we still be friends?