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*Red Light Green Light*

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Made in America

**Red Light, Green Light**  
by Emma Lynn Worth

Cast of Characters

Luke, 28 year old man

Lucinda, 26 year old woman

Place:

New York City

Time:

Present Day

Light Design: Each scene will include a particular light source, to be denoted at the top of the scene, which will vacillate between RED and GREEN at the moments noted. This light shines GREEN when we are in "acceptable" reality (i.e. when they are saying that which they feel is acceptable to say). The light shines RED whenever we are glimpsing in on the characters' inner monologues(i.e. when they are saying that which feels true to them, yet unacceptable to say to one another or aloud). PURPLE light represents the activity of the character's subconscious/memory.

When in RED light, the non-speaking actor should continue a scaled-down expression of their activity (cleaning, eating, etc.), and the speaking actor should feel welcome - and encouraged - to act upon the non-speaking actor in expression of how they feel about the other. For example, the speaking actor may (stage) hit or choke the other in a moment of rage, or kiss and caress the other in a moment of tenderness.

Other Notes: The passage of time can be noted by a calendar onstage, which the actors flip to show the month during scene changes. Or it can be made clear through wardrobe.

Original Cast and Crew:

"Red Light, Green Light" was debuted in the Manhattan Repertory Theater's Long One-Act Festival, and was produced again at the Theater at St. Clement's, in the Strawberry Theater Festival, NYC.

It was directed by Darrell Larson.

LUKE - Jason Alazraki

LUCINDA - Hollis Witherspoon

Light Design - Marie Yokoyama

Sound Design - Rich Louise-Pierre

Choreography - Maria Phegan Sweet

Dedication:

*For my fathers and mothers  
Sisters and brothers  
Friends and lovers  
And anyone else  
Who taught me a thing or two  
About love.*

## Scene One

*Light Source: Traffic light outside kitchen window*

*Lights up on a dimly lit stage.*

*A hot, fresh night; the first night of summer.*

*Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn*

*In the din, we can make out a kitchen, with a simple table and two chairs at center, the apartment entrance up left, bathroom door up right. This is an urban apartment.*

*A clock beside the window reads two o'clock, presumably a.m.*

*Music Suggestion: the Yeah Yeah Yeah's "Let Me Know"*

*(LUKE and LUCINDA enter through door at right, LUCINDA riding piggy-back on LUKE. They are stifling giggles, chuckles and guffaws as LUKE pretends to teeter and totter. LUKE playfully threatens to drop LUCINDA three times, the first two being met by excited squeals from LUCINDA, and the third being met by a loud "thump!" as the two hit the floor in perfect unison. Thankfully, neither are hurt (or at least, both are too tipsy to be cognizant of pain): the foreplay continues uninterrupted. The "thump!" devolves into rolling around on the floor, as the two vacillate between making out and giggling.)*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: Shhhhhhhhh!

LUKE: You, shhhh!

LUCINDA: No you.

LUKE: You....

*And so on as they return to making out. The foreplay grows in intensity and gymnastics as they fool around like hormonal teenagers. They begin at a wall, tipping a hanging painting askew, move towards the center of the room and knock over a chair in their path, move back toward the counter top and knock a French press over in the process. LUKE*

*lifts LUCINDA up onto the counter top, accidentally banging her head into a frying pan hanging overhead (she is too blissfully knackered to feel the blow). And so on, as the lights go down..*

*Supertitle reads: 20 minutes later*

*Lights up on a kitchen destroyed. The fruit bowl has been knocked over, apples and oranges roll around on the floor. The flower vase has been overturned, water spilling out, lilacs strewn about and crumpled. Several pots and pans have fallen from the hanging rack and two paintings rest askew.*

*LUKE and LUCINDA sit heaving and panting on the floor, quite disheveled but mostly clothed.*

LUKE: Wow, that was incredible.

*LUCINDA fidgets uncomfortably, readjusting her clothing and fixing her hair.*

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: It's never been like this with anyone before.

LUCINDA: Oh God, please don't look at me like that. Where can I hide?!

LUKE & LUCINDA: I'm a little bit crazy about you...

LUCINDA: God I hope you don't find that out, or I'm in trouble.

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: What's wrong? Are you worried that your roommates might have heard us?

LUCINDA: *(hesitatingly)*: Sure, that's fine, I mean...once in a while....what's the big deal?

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: ...of course I mind! That was so embarrassing! I live with these people. I mean, how am I going to make coffee tomorrow morning beside one of them knowing they heard that? Why did I let you do that?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: *(as he strokes her cheek with the back of his hand)* Your skin is so soft...

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: That's why.

*(LUKE kisses LUCINDA as lights fade to YELLOW, and then down.)*

## **Scene Two**

*Light Source: Traffic light outside kitchen window.  
First night of autumn.*

*Bushwick, Brooklyn.*

*Music Suggestion: White Stripes' "My Doorbell"*

*Lights up on LUKE's apartment, which is littered with evidence of his sloppy lifestyle: beer cans, half-empty, are strewn about the floor, dirty laundry including socks, sweaty t-shirts and even underwear; the kitchen sink is piled high with dishes that have seemingly been there for weeks. Copies of Maxim magazine are scattered about, as well as various pieces of junk mail.*

*LUKE's apartment layout is much the same as LUCINDA's, except that his is a one bedroom. In fact, we can use the same set - but replace vase of flowers with a bong, her stack of Vogue with a pile of the New Yorker magazines, etc.*

*LUCINDA enters through apartment entrance in professional clothes to find LUKE's apartment in disarray. She stalks through the apartment, examining dirty laundry about the floor, untouched dishes in the sink, beer cans in every crevice and Maxim magazines open to fold-outs of scantily-clad women, to her obvious shock and disgust. She picks up a dirty sock to examine it, and flicks it away as if it is contaminated.*

*LUCINDA pulls a pair of rubber gloves and piece of chalk out of her coat pocket - she is a forensic investigator - puts on the gloves and begins tracing outlines of a single dirty sock- as if marking the scene of a crime - then photographs it with a Polaroid camera. She pulls a pair of nail scissors and Zip-loc bag out of her purse and begins clipping a page of the Maxim fold-out and putting it in her Zip-loc bag.*

*LUKE enters from bathroom door, up right, just come out of the shower, wrapped in a towel, to behold LUCINDA with chalk and Zip-loc bag in hand.*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: Babe, what're you doing?

LUCINDA: Collecting the evidence.

LUKE: Evidence?

LUCINDA: I'm researching the natural habitat of the male of the species. The findings, so far, are *fascinating*.

LUKE: What's so bad about it?

LUCINDA: Luke, this place is disgusting! How can you live like this?

LUKE: Hold on a sec...

*(LUKE exits right to get dressed.)*

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: *(continuing to stalk through the apartment)* This is *so* unfair. You *know* that I have to trek out to you every time we get together because there's *no* privacy at my place, and yet, you act like you live alone. I just rode that gross subway - and do so *every other night* for an additional 30 minutes than I would otherwise have to - to see you! What is that *smell?! Couldn't you at least clean the sheets every month or so? Do you know that I went to work the other day emanating your sweat, because you haven't done the laundry in weeks!!!*

Well, I actually don't *mind* the smell of your sweat so much...but my co-workers noticed...it's bad enough I had worn the same outfit three days in a row...

(LUKE returns, wearing jeans.)

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: Oh. Yeah. Well it's been really busy at work. But what's wrong with it anyway?

LUCINDA: Luke, this place is a frat house for rats! A raternity! Alpah-Phi-(*notices the sink*)-Om-I-God! How long have those pots been sitting there? Are you *asking* for roaches to establish their empire where we cook?!

LUKE: Ummm....??

LUCINDA: If I see a single mouse scamper across the floor, this relationship is over.

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: (*with genuine curiosity*) "Relationship". Why did that word just make the hairs on the back of my neck stand up?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: I don't know what you're talking about. I cleaned this place last week! Plus, this isn't that bad.

LUCINDA: I'm not kidding about the rodent. If little Mickey comes cozy-ing up to me in bed, we are through.

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Who's Mickey?! Oh, the mouse. You scared me there for a second.

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: What? Have you seen any? I could buy some mousetraps.

LUCINDA: That's not the point! I'm a vegetarian.

LUKE: Well, I wasn't going to serve him to you.

LUCINDA: You know what I mean! I don't want to kill them. I don't want him here to begin with!

LUKE: Well, so far as I know, there aren't any, so I don't even know what we're talking about.

LUCINDA: But they *might* come, Luke, they *might*. It all starts with a neglected dish, an empty pizza box, a little puddle of Coke...

*(LUCINDA continues to sweep through apartment, viciously swooping up piles of dirty laundry, throwing trash away, making piles atop counters and wiping down dirty surfaces - continues throughout LUKE's monologue.)*

## **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Well, so big deal? I'm beginning to regret giving you that key. Can I take it back now?

What's so wrong with this place? I mean, you can't really feel like you've got the right to gripe about it, when I mean, you can't even afford a place where we can actually have some privacy. I mean, I pay, like, what, 400 more than you to have a place where we can actually be alone, and you act like a total freeloader 'round here. I mean, with an extra 400 in your pocket, couldn't you stand a little stale Mac-n-Cheese?

You know, I never complain to you about the fact that the bill always comes my way after we've been out for drinks, or dinner. It's not like every buck I make comes by me easily. I *work* for them. Long hours. Hard. I am not even *thinking* about a dish at the end of the day! I was probably gonna do those, like, this weekend. When I was ready.

## **GREEN LIGHT**

*(LUCINDA storms past him, shoving one of his dirty socks under his nose - half playfully, half sadistically. )*

## **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: (*wraps his arms around her as she is cleaning*) But God, I can't be mad when you've got that look in your eyes. It's awful, even when you're mad, you're beautiful. That crazy look flashes across your eyes, and I just don't know what you're going to say next. In some ways, you're way hotter when you're pissed off than when you're mellow. You make it just a liiiiittle too much fun to rile you up...

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: What's so wrong with a mouse? We can name him.

LUCINDA: LUKE?!?!?!?

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: See what I mean?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: I'm just kidding. I'll definitely do the dishes like, by the end of the month. And my mother was planning on visiting around Easter, so all the laundry will be done come spring....

LUCINDA: LUKE, that is not funny. How are we going to live together?

LUKE: Well, if you won't agree to my lifestyle, I will just have to hold you captive...

(*LUKE begins tickling her.*)

LUCINDA: (*through laughter*) Stop! Help! Police!! Tickling is the first step on the road to an abusive relationship!

LUKE: (*teasingly*) ...oh, poor baby, you will have to report me to all those powerful authorities you work with...

LUCINDA: Mercy! You have to stop at mercy!

LUKE: ...if you can get away...

LUCINDA: God damn it! What happened to our "safety word"? Uncle! UN-CLE!!!!

LUKE: ....but if you can't...I will subject you to Japanese mouse torture: I will tickle you through all my waking hours....

*(LUKE continues tickling her.)*

....and when I tire and fall asleep, will tie you to the couch, and release a bushel full of Mickey's over you, until you have learned to put up with my mess...and to never, ever leave me.

*(LUKE has stopped tickling her by now, yet LUCINDA continues to laugh hysterically, much lighter of heart.)*

LUCINDA: How could I ever leave you, you slob?

*(They kiss as lights to half. )*

*(LUKE and LUCINDA arise, and dress one another to go out.)*

### **Scene Three**

*A dance studio in the Flatiron district.*

*Early evening, mid-October.*

*Light source: Studio light*

*(LUKE and LUCINDA are mid-step in what appears to be some kind of partner dance (rumba, salsa, tango, etc.), clearly struggling to lock in their step.)*

*Music Suggestion: Tune-Yards "Hatari"*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: So remind me, why are we here again?

LUKE: You mean, why are we dancing?

LUCINDA: Yeah.

LUKE: Well, it is my turn to pick, and I wasn't going to have us watch another romantic comedy.

LUCINDA: I thought you liked movies!

LUKE: Yeah, sometimes with a little more "Fight Club", a little less "Love, Actually"...

LUCINDA: Oh...

LUKE: ...and I've been regretting that I've had two left feet my whole life, and I'd like to turn that around.

LUCINDA: Why?

LUKE: Why? I don't know. It seems like something everyone should know how to do, like driving stick shift. You know, like if your buddy gets drunk or you find yourself in Europe - it's a good life skill to have on hand. Same goes with dancing. You know, let's say you find yourself at a wedding, and, uhh....

LUCINDA: And...?

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Jesus, how do I always get my foot stuck in my mouth with her?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: ...and, you know, you're with someone who likes to dance.

LUCINDA: Like who?

LUKE: I don't know. Somebody. Anybody. People like to dance, you know.

LUCINDA: Hmm.. So I'm just practice, then?...

LUKE: Oh no you don't...

LUCINDA: ...I'm just practice until you have your real James Bond moment, with another Ursula Andress?

LUKE: Maybe you're my Ursula Andress.

LUCINDA: (*appeased by this*) Okay, I'll take it.

(*Pause, as they look around to see if they're following the steps right.*)

LUCINDA: You know, they say that the way you are vertically - when you're dancing - is a reflection of the way you are horizontally - as a couple...

LUKE: Is that so?

LUCINDA: That's what they say.

LUKE: Huh. Well, how do you think we're doing vertically so far?

LUCINDA: (*suggestively*) I don't know, the night is young...

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: ...actually, I'm a little troubled by the fact that you don't seem to have any clear direction in your steps, and that you are immune to following directions! It's so simple! Right, back, left, forward, right, back, left, forward - I'm the one who has to do the little leg swivel! God, we look like so stupid.

LUKE: You know, if you'd just follow where I was leading us, we'd be doing a lot better right now...Look at that little old Asian lady, over there - she knows what she's doing! And you know why? Because she's actually following her partner! Why is it you American women are so resistant to following a leader?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: So okay, why is dancing important to you?

LUKE: Well, it's something my father was always very good at. Very elegant, you know?

LUCINDA: You admire him, huh?

LUKE: Well, he's by no means perfect, but ...

*(LUKE trails off to concentrate and their steps begin to lock in)*

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: Incredible. He can be saw awkward in conversation sometimes, but there's just this basic understanding that's there. ..this other attractive force...so funny...

LUKE: *(looking down at his feet)* Left, forward, right, back, left, forward, right, back...

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: ...but what?

LUKE: Huh?

*(LUKE loses his rhythm, steps on LUCINDA's foot.)*

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Don't distract me! How is it she can do two things at once? Why is it she always wants to talk when we're doing something *else*? Can't we pick one or another? Shit! Left, forward, right, back, left, forward, right, back...

LUCINDA: I mean, I know what steps come next, why do I have to wait for him to go there? Alright, maybe I *could* take his lead. Okay, Lucy, just try it, as an experiment...

*(LUCINDA laughs to herself.)*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: We'll talk later...

*(LUCINDA pecks LUKE on the cheek and they fumble on, finding their way.)*

*LUCINDA relinquishes need to lead. Their steps begin to lock in more.)*

LUKE: Hey, not bad! I'm starting to get it!

LUCINDA: Oh my God, that actually worked!

*(Their steps have locked in by now and they dance for another full minute. As they do so, their skill, technique and commitment to the dance increase exponentially, as if we were watching their dance develop over the course of several weeks or months. By the end of the minute, they have grown to proficient and even passionate.)*

*Music Suggestion: The White Stripes' "I'm Slowly Turning Into You"*

### **Scene Four**

*Light Source: Christmas lights.*

*Luke's apartment, first night of winter, evening.*

*Music Suggestion: Of Montreal's "Lysergic Bliss"*

*(LUCINDA enters, holding big Mac-n-Cheese encrusted pot in one hand and a pair of scissors in the other, picking up each sock, making little cuts into it, and dropping them into the pot. Proceeds to the kitchen sink, pulls out each dish, and stacks them high into a pyramid formation. Pours half-empty beer bottles into adjacent plants. Moves before the couch, rips out a fold-out from Maxim, folds the pages several times, makes a few snips and opens it up to reveal a string of cut-out men. Rips a few more pages out, cuts them up with her scissors and drops them into the Mac-N-Cheese pot. Brings the pot up to the counter, opens a half-empty can of tomato sauce and pours it atop her mixture and throws the whole concoction in the pot into the oven.*

*All of this "cleaning up" is done with genuine delight - not a trace of resentment - as if she is a five-year-old playing house with found objects. This entire clean-up sequence is somewhat danced to the song.\_*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

*(LUKE enters through apartment entrance, dressed in professional clothes; presumably just getting back from work. He has not witnessed any of the preceding action, so there is nothing out of the ordinary.*

*LUCINDA runs up to him, pecks him on the cheek, and proceeds to set the table and light candles. She pulls the large pot out of the oven, which now magically contains an aromatic serving of pasta, - rather than her sock concoction - which she stirs and prepares to serve.*

*LUKE unloads his gear from the day, gives a great stretch, neck roll and a sigh, and sits down.)*

LUCINDA: So...what do you have planned for Christmas?

LUKE: Oh I don't know. My Mom wants me to come out by her in Jersey. And my Dad just moved to his place in Maine, and is all jazzed up about having our first Christmas by the hearth up there. I'm just not sure I feel like doing the runaround again this year.

LUCINDA: Aw, that sounds rough. It must be hard feeling like you're expected to be in two places at once, on a day that should be fun for you too.

LUKE: Yeah, I'm used to it by now. It doesn't bug me that much after fifteen years, it's just the gas money to get between the two. You know, they never think about that when they yank on their end of the cord in their yearly game of divorce tug-of-war.

LUCINDA: Well, listen. I don't want to put any pressure on you, but if it makes it any easier...I mean, that's not the only reason I'm asking, or putting it out there, or just mentioning....what I'm trying to say is, that if you want to spend Christmas with us, you're more than welcome.

LUKE: In Connecticut?

LUCINDA: *(playing with the pasta)* Yeah. I mean, it's not home for you, but it is like the halfway point between your Mom and Dad. Or if you wanted, you could go to your Mom and Dad's, and then stop by us in between. I mean, again, it's your choice...no pressure...but it would be nice, if you wanted to *(fidgets with napkin, under table her foot shakes wildly)*...

LUKE: Umm, well...

LUCINDA: You don't have to say now. You can just think about it.

*(Both sip wine. A breath.)*

LUKE: Well, I mean, it's just that. ...no, I definitely *want* to. I really want to. It's just that I was planning on taking Route 495 up to Maine from Jersey, and if I stopped by you, that would mean getting off the interstate, which would probably run me, like an extra three hours, plus

gas money...I mean, it's not that I don't want to, I just think that time-wise, you know, and with holiday traffic...  
Could you pass the bread?

*(LUCINDA holds bread basket out to LUKE, who does not receive it but rather launches into following monologue. Lights to half and spotlights up on LUKE. LUCINDA puts down basket and continues to eat throughout LUKE's speech.)*

## **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: You know, I'm not sure why I feel like I've gotta explain myself. We've only been seeing one another for, like, six months. You know, sometimes, babe, I feel more like this figure of a boyfriend than an actual person to you. Like "Boyfriend (insert name here)" like on a government document or something. Like I've gotta have all my papers in order to be outta your doghouse. "Occupation: fill in here". "Height", "Hair Color", "Eye Color", "Smoking/Drinking Habits", "Level of Expected Paternal Affection and Sense of Parental Responsibility". I mean, really, when there's all this family talk, I've gotta feel a little bit like you're just looking for someone to fill a role. Someone who will get your mother off your back or validate you at family parties. But really, I feel like, I could be anyone who fit those requirements. I mean, if it's really *me* you like, why all this pressure to meet your mom right now? We've only been really together six months. I mean, of course I wanna meet them, eventually, but why now, when everything is going so nice? Families like yours have a vacuum effect on a guy like me. They see a relatively upstanding, gainfully employed and good-looking guy, and "suuuuuck!", they sweep in with an eggnog and a hearty pat on the back, and suddenly I'm playing chess with your pops. God help me if he asks me my intentions, cause I ain't so clear on that myself.

## **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: Do you want some more?

LUKE: Sure, babe.

*(LUCINDA spoons out some more pasta for him. Looks around kitchen for another candle to add to the table. LUKE looks back at LUCINDA, contemplatively.)*

## RED LIGHT

LUKE: I can't help noticing these little "hints" you drop, right and left, suggesting you want this to move far, and fast. And babe, I've gotta let you know, I've seen some terrrrrrrible shit go down between my folks, and they, apparently, *loved* each other before it all hit the fan! I asked them each, separately, for advice on how I could make it work - or avoid what would make it fall apart - and they both said "Don't jump into anything too early. Live your life...*then* get hitched." Hah, that was the only thing they agreed on, actually. (I never told the other they'd given me the same advice...they would've taken it right back, just for spite!) And here you've got your sweet little Hans Christian Andersen family...of *course* you wanna dive right in. As for me...I've just spent way too many Christmases reliving all the bad memories..

*(LUKE stops for a moment, lost in a memory of a Christmas past. Perhaps can hear shouting of implied "mother" and "father" in an argument from off-stage. LUKE's body shifts perceptively from confident young man, to awkward unsettled adolescent, and then back again to his mature self.)*

LUKE (cont'd): ...it's gonna take a *while* before I walk down any aisle with you, besides Zabar's. You know, I just see way too many guys, mid-50s with their mid-life crises and infidelities, and I think, man, that ain't gonna be me. I don't know how, but it ain't.

*(LUCINDA has stopped eating, is fidgeting with her hands and has begun discreetly crying.)*

LUKE (cont'd): Yeah yeah, I know I shouldn't get so upset, but it's not like that's an innocent little question you're asking. If I say yes, I'm roped into scrutiny by your folks for the holidays. If I say no, we're back to icy sheets and cold dinners.

*(Notices LUCINDA's tearing up.)*

LUKE (cont'd): And besides that, I can't *stand* it when you cry. That's the only unfair warfare tactic you employ, those tears. God *damn* it! Don't you know I've got nothing when you start welling up. Why is your lip trembling?! If only you would say what you meant...

## GREEN LIGHT

LUCINDA: (*pulling herself together*) No, no, I understand. I mean, it is kinda outta the way, and maybe this is too soon. You know, Christmas is such a big holiday...so blown out of proportion. Maybe it would be good for you to meet them some other time, when there's less pressure...

(*LUCINDA's voice trails off. Silverware clinks, unbearably.*)

LUKE: I mean, Luce, don't you think we're taking things a little fast?

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: (*incredulously*) What?!

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: (*obliviously*) What?

LUKE: I mean, do you really think it's time to be meeting your Mom and Dad now? Isn't it a little early?

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: (*hostilely*) Funny, you've never asked if we were going too fast in *other* areas of our relationship...why start here?!

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: (*compassionately*) Well, um, well, I didn't think about it that way. I mean, it doesn't have to be this big, symbolic "meet the parents" moment. I mean, I just thought, because, you know, it's probably going to be a kind of weird holiday for you anyway with your parents, that, you know, maybe it would be a relief to come by and spend it with us.

(*unbearable silence*)

...Could I have some more wine?

(*LUKE picks up bottle as lights fade to half and spotlights up RED on LUCINDA. LUKE now continues to eat throughout LUCINDA's speech.*)

## RED LIGHT

LUCINDA: I can't believe you're getting cold feet about something as small as meeting my parents! You seem to feel quite comfortable with *fucking* me every other night. But I ask you to step into a different part of my life, and you act as if I am demanding of you an intimacy you can't bear. What, I ask you, do you think I risk whenever we spend the night together? Whenever I walk home from your place on Sunday morning, dressed like Saturday night? Whenever I avoid my parents oh-so-casual "seein' anyone lately?" line of questioning, or have to fend off unwanted attention from my guy friends and male co-workers without being able to make mention of an actual "boyfriend"...one that will make his peace with the word?! You leave me in the no-man's-land of relationships. I adore you far too much to look elsewhere for love, and yet, until you do me the dignity of acknowledging me as your girlfriend, I have to evade everyone's nosy questioning...like last Christmas...

*(LUCINDA wanders into a memory. She clutches her wine, and in the span of several seconds, her body language shifts from a grown woman to that of self-conscious teenager. She emerges back from the memory into her mature self. )*

LUCINDA (cont'd): ... With each passing day that you elude public acknowledgment that we are solidly together, I crawl ever more reluctantly underneath our sheets, wondering what I am doing there. One of these days I'm going to break.

## GREEN LIGHT

LUCINDA: *(sweetly)* You done, babe?

LUKE: Yup. Thanks.

## RED LIGHT

LUCINDA: *(Begins clearing the dishes, spitefully. Can clank a dish or two)* Why don't I end it? Right here, right now? It's not like other guys don't flirt with me. Bet you didn't know that, did you? Maybe I should tell you...see what you do. But I don't *want* other guys. That's something I will never tell you. *(Sits on his lap, stroking his hair.)* Because then you know you've got me. It feels so freakin' fragile right here. I look in your eyes, and I feel like I've known you forever. I feel like I

knew you when I was five. Is that possible? Why do you feel so familiar? I met you on the *subway*! I know, somewhere in a part of me that's pretty sure as I can be of anything, that you're it. I see it, Luke. I see it. I don't know if I'll ever tell you this, but when you walk into a room, I can actually see the light in you...or you, surrounded by light. I'm not sure which, but you're actually lit up. It's like that cheesy thing they say at the end of yoga class, in that saccharine syrupy voice (*imitating such a voice*) "Namaste; I honor the light within you." I never got what that meant, always thought it was so cheesy, but the more I am with you, the more I can feel, maybe a glimmer, a hint of what that means. And the more I see it...your light...us...the less I can see it any other way. I know you're it...I can feel it...(grabs his shoulders, shaking him)...when are you going to wake up to that too!?

### **Scene Five**

*LUKE's apartment.*

*First day of spring, early morning.*

*Light source: sunrise*

*(LUKE and LUCINDA lie in bed - a mattress on the floor far down stage left.)*

*LUCINDA is fast asleep and LUKE lies awake - stroking LUCINDA's hair and watching her sleep.*

*Music Suggestion: Dan Auerbach's "Whispered Words"*

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: Luce, what do you think we'd do if we ever broke up?

LUCINDA: (*eyes popping open, startled*) What?!

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Maybe I should've contextualized that better.

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: No! No...I'm not saying I want to break up...

**RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: ...no one ever asks that question unless they're thinking about breaking up...

**GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: ...I'm just saying, like, what do you think would happen to you and I, if we ever broke up?

**RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: Isn't that the same question, just worded differently?

**GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: I mean, do you think we'd still talk to one another, or do you think we'd cut one another out of each other's lives?

LUCINDA: Why do you ask?

LUKE: I mean, isn't it just so weird that two people can be incredibly intimate, and know each other in a way that no one else does, and then in the next moment, act like the person doesn't exist? Or never existed for them?

LUCINDA: Are you thinking about your parents again?

**RED LIGHT**

LUKE: This woman knows me too well...

**GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: No, I mean, there are a lot of examples out there besides my Mom and Dad. Like, don't you know anyone else who fits that description?

LUCINDA: Yeah, I know, it is weird. I mean, there must be a good reason for it - you know, why people shut off that way when they break up. Maybe it's a good thing, though. Maybe it's like an inner defense mechanism that lets us heal psychologically or emotionally or something - being able to move on from the other person.

LUKE: But that's just it! Is that a good thing? Being able to "move on"...but to what? Who would want to "move on" from feeling this way? The intensity of it...

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: ...I mean, Luce, I'm crazy about you...

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: ...I couldn't imagine seeing you at a party or something and having, like, a casual conversation with you...

LUCINDA: Yeah, I know, I mean, you wouldn't want to move on from all the great feelings, but what about all the pain and suffering and angst of it all?

LUKE: What are you talking about?

LUCINDA: You know, I mean the...anxiety...and, all the emotional charge that goes around being in a relationship...it takes a lot of your energy!

LUKE: Is does?

LUCINDA: Well, yeah, I mean - whenever you and I aren't so good I feel unsettled til it's over. I can't think straight at work and I'm pissy with everyone.

### **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: When are we not "all good"?

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: Really?

LUCINDA: Yeah, I mean, maybe part of the forgetting that happens after a break-up is a healthy thing - like forgetting labor pains after giving birth - allowing life to literally go on - maybe after a break-up, you forget so that you're a whole enough of a person to meet your next contender.

## **RED LIGHT**

LUKE: Do you think you'll forget about me?

## **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: What?

LUKE: Nothing.

*(Pause.)*

LUCINDA: Go to sleep, babe. We've still got two more hours.

*(LUCINDA kisses LUKE on the forehead and both close their eyes.)*

*(Music Suggestion: guitar solo at the end of Dan Auerbach's "Whispered Words")*

## **RED LIGHT**

*(LUKE falls fast asleep. LUCINDA's eyes pop open and she tosses and turns a few times. Opens a book and tries to read for half a minute. Cannot concentrate, closes book, gets up and wanders around the bedroom. Stops at "window", facing out, far downstage right, cradles herself and takes in the morning sun.)*

## **Scene Six**

*Light source: Lamps in their respective spaces.  
First day of summer.*

*(LUCINDA stands on the left side of the stage, and LUKE the right, both facing out. Spotlight on each player and darkness in between to denote separation of space. Within each spotlight are a few props to suggest their respective living spaces"*

*For LUCINDA, a small table with a few well-used journals on top, and a vase full of lilies.*

*For LUKE, a few issues of the New Yorker atop a makeshift table, an empty beer can on the table and another strewn on the floor, aside a dirty sock or two.*

*A long couch connects their spaces, to be used by both, on their respective sides.*

*Both are on their cell phones, presumably speaking to one another.)*

## **GREEN LIGHT**

LUKE: Why the freakin' ultimatum?!

LUCINDA: Please stop yelling. I refuse to speak to you if you keep speaking to me like that. And it's not a goddamn ultimatum. It's been a year, Luke, a year! I ask you the question, "Where do you see us heading?" and you can't give me anything resembling an answer! Maybe a year doesn't feel very long to you, but how much longer do you expect me to keep waiting, for like, an *indication* if we've got a future?!

LUKE: A year is not that long. And Luce, I told you, now is like the *worst* time you could be putting the heat on! The economy's in the tank, my job is on the line, and I'll be paying student loans for like a decade. Now is the goddamn worst time you could be talking about a future. What, you want me to marry you? How am I gonna marry you, Luce? With what money? You wanna go to city hall? Yeah, that's real classy.

LUCINDA: There's always another excuse! You've been saying that for six months now, Luke, six months you've been saying your job is on the line, and you've been fine! You're a smart guy - and I'm not a dumb girl - and if you really wanted to make this happen, really *wanted* to commit to me, the money would be there! How much longer are you going act like money's the issue? Money will *always* be an issue!

## **RED LIGHT**

*(lines delivered overlapping)*

LUKE: Will you shut up, you little fucking princess? You've had it so easy - so easy - and just expect that I can come along, like I ain't got my doubts. You have no idea how little faith I've got in marriage. Maybe someday I will. I hope to God I will. Can't you just wait a little

longer? I'm nowhere *near* there yet. If you really gave a damn about me (actually *me*, not some vague boyfriend-figure-figment-of-your-imagination) you would.

LUCINDA: You could use this job excuse eternally, to avoid marrying me. Why should I waste myself on someone who's got such doubts? I'm still young, attractive, intelligent enough...why should I have to twist somebody's arm to want to be with me? I feel that you love me, deep down, but why there should be this great disconnect between your love for me, and actions that show it...well, I'm sick of trying to figure out why that is

### **GREEN LIGHT**

LUCINDA: Luke, I hate to bring it to this, but now I have to - I need you to tell me you see a future for us...a committed one. Otherwise, please don't waste any more of my time. I've gotta move on with my life.

LUKE: So, I guess that's it then.

LUCINDA: .....

LUKE: Hello?

LUCINDA: What do you think about what I'm saying?

LUKE: I think you're dead wrong. You can't just do everything on your schedule. But if having someone to call your husband or something is more important to you than what I need, you gotta do what you gotta do, Luce.

*(LUKE waits for a response.)*

Hello?

*(LUCINDA begins to cry inaudibly.)*

Good luck to you, Luce. I hope you find what you're looking for.

*(As the cries grow in intensity and volume, LUCINDA pushes a button on her cell phone and overhead we hear a "beep", and automated voice say "You have now been muted". Lights overhead transform from YELLOW to RED. The sobs grow in intensity and volume as her body goes limp, and she slides slowly down the wall or whatever furniture will support her, into a puddle on the ground.)*

*LUKE waits for a response, says "hello?" once or twice more, hangs up and storms out of the spotlight.*

*Spotlight stays on LUCINDA as LUKE's fades out, long enough to see her wipe her eyes and pull herself off the ground and exit right. )*

*Music suggestion: Beatles' "I'm So Tired"*

## Scene Seven

*Central Park.*

*Light Source: Street lamp.*

*(LUCINDA sits alone on a park bench, stage right, looking out the first day of winter.)*

### **RED LIGHT**

LUCINDA: *(to us)* Do I miss him? Of course. I've spent the past half a year in contemplation of what went wrong. I lost twenty pounds in three months. My diet? Cigarettes and depression. How ironic: all my friends and family have told me that I "look great". Perhaps they couldn't see I've been dying inside, and I suppose it didn't matter .

*(Lights up on LUKE, who sits on another park bench at the opposite side of the stage. Central Park, the same night. His street lamp glows RED as well.)*

LUKE: Lucy? Of course I miss her. Nobody's gotta know that. I mean, she was a bit right about that whole 'out-of-sight, out-of-mind' thing. The week after we broke up, I got plastered with my boy Jake three nights in a row, and I know I went home with some chick on at least one of those. She wasn't all that cute, but - truth be told - it definitely helped. I must've gotten laid with like six different girls that month, but again, these girls were nothing compared to Lucy. It seems like a cruel trick of nature! When Lucy and I were together, you would not believe the girls who were giving me the eye! Gorgeous girls! Girls who I'd always thought were too smart for me, or who acted too good for me. They evaporated into thin air the second Lucy and I called it quits. It was like these women smelled my desperation again, and went back to clutching their mace whenever I passed them

too closely on the sidewalk. Okay, it wasn't that bad, but for the most part, the pickins' grew slim again.

*(Lights down on LUKE. Lights up on LUCINDA.)*

LUCINDA: Why did I pressure him? Back him into a corner, until he reacted like a scared cat?

Why did I insist that he be my "boyfriend", and then eventually my "fiancé" and some day, "husband"? Were these demands emerging from within me, or without? He kept on arguing that true love would sustain itself, that it needed no labels to exist.

Is that true? And if it is, then why *do* these labels exist? And why did I so relentlessly thrust them on him, without even wondering what they meant? Perhaps I thought that, with a label, I would no longer need to worry about his feelings for me. That somehow, a label could cement his affection; freeze it in time, and that I would never again have to face an uncomfortable fear that he no longer cared...like he'd be obligated to me or something...

*(Lights down on LUCINDA. Lights up on LUKE.)*

LUKE: I thought about calling her so many times...almost always after I'd had one or two. But I knew I couldn't be the first one to make the call. If you call them first, and get back together, the entire relationship is on their terms. They can always say you called them first. Because, by calling first, there is almost always an implied apology. And that is something that I just cannot give. It's not that I don't feel bad about a few things I said or did, but if I were constantly apologizing and groveling at her feet, she wouldn't be attracted to me anymore! She kept saying she didn't know that I cared. But, if I *were* to have shown her that I cared as much as I did, she would have had me reduced to a bowl of mush, a puddle of gooey, disgusting, sappy emotions, and she could never see me as a man again. Why do women ask for us to share our feelings?! They don't want us to! If we dared to cry in front of them, they would cringe, repulsed. Or, if we begged for their love, they would laugh in our face and recount our words verbatim to their eight "best" friends. Yet our coolness is invariably met by their superiority trip, as if it is easy for us to keep all we have bottled up, the way we do.

*(Lights down on LUKE. Lights up on LUCINDA.)*

LUCINDA: What did I want? What a question! As if that could have been distilled into a single answer, true at any given time or place... Sex? Passion? *Compassion*? Companionship? Love? Perhaps I wanted it all, from one person, at different times, and in different proportions. How was he to know, at any given moment, what I hungered for most?

*(Lights down on LUCINDA. Lights up on LUKE.)*

LUKE: But I'm through getting pissed off about it. I've got better things to do. I would like to say, honestly, that I don't think about her, hardly ever. That I don't compare other girls to her or that she doesn't cross my mind on every long road trip by myself. But the subconscious is a little bastard. Don't get me wrong, I don't think of her often in daily life. There are things to get done, and lots of friends to see. But in those few minutes right before I fall asleep, there I am vulnerable. There I am powerless, defenseless, weak. There have I seen her many times, over and over, by my side or from far away. On the pleasant nights, I can feel her in my arms. On the rougher ones – and admittedly, the beer-soaked ones – I see her with any number of my friends, flirting with them, laughing at their jokes, in their arms. It is torture. I get so...ugh, sick, when I think of her with anyone else. I don't even know if she's seeing anybody. Not that it should matter, but it does...

*(Lights down on LUKE. Lights up on LUCINDA.)*

LUCINDA: So, where does that leave me? To expect, *demand*, that one person be everything to me, and at all times? Or, to (*LUCINDA shudders*), "settle"? To pick, say, three qualities that are absolutely *essential* in a mate, and turn a blind eye to all the rest?

Was I ever able to see Luke for who he was, or only ever able to see him for who he could, or..."should" be?

By seeing what is highest in another - seeing the "light" within them - do we create a possibility for them to live up to? Or, do we place on them an expectation that they could never meet?

By seeing only what I wanted Luke to *become* to me, I wonder if I missed out a little on everything that he already *was*.

*(LUCINDA looks toward the horizon.)*

*(Lights down on LUCINDA. Lights up on LUKE.)*

LUKE: I do miss Lucy from time to time. I do think she may have been the one for me, but I can't bring myself to call her. If she calls me, well that would be another story, but in the meanwhile, I'm just going to enjoy being young. I turn 30 next week. That's still young, right? I mean, guys don't get married until they're at least, like 35, these days. So I've got time. I've got time...

*(LUKE looks toward the horizon.)*

*(Light transforms from RED to GREEN. Light fades down to half on LUKE, and fades up to half on LUCINDA, so both are now sitting on their respective benches in a shared, dim RED light. LUCINDA is smoking, and LUKE pulls out the most recent copy of the New Yorker, throws himself into an article. They share the stage for a full minute of silence.)*

*(Music plays as LUKE and LUCINDA rise from their respective benches and wander, as if in a trance, towards center stage, meeting one another halfway. They find one another's arms and begin to dance, eyes half-closed, with one another yet unaware of the other's presence, as if in a dream state.)*

*Music Suggestion: White Stripes' "Forever for Her (Is Over For Me)"*

*Slow fade out.*