

LOVE WRITTEN IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Written by

Madison Hadley

FADE IN:

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - AFTERNOON

RAINA, early twenties, hippie with pixie hair enters room and quickly takes a seat across from her therapist, BRAD QUINN. Brad, mid-forties, a kind face marked by years of sun, picks up his clipboard and thumbs through several pages of notes.

BRAD

Hi, Raina. Where've you been these last few months?

RAINA

It's been a uhm, tumultuous end of the year. Sorry for ghosting you.

BRAD

I like what you did with your hair.

RAINA

I needed a fresh start, I guess.

BRAD

I see, and what's changed since the last I saw you? What makes you want a fresh start?

RAINA

Well, nothing, but everything...if that makes any sense.

Brad nods like he understands, waiting for her to continue.

RAINA

I met someone.

BRAD

Ah. Tell me about 'em.

Raina finally looks up at Brad.

Cut to:

INT. Art Center Writer's Open Mic Night - EVENING

Raina sits amongst a crowd of twenty other writers and poets. She is nervous. Loud applause interrupts her daydreaming.

EMCEE, short, round man with a receding hairline stands at the front of the room with a paper in his hand. He takes microphone from the last speaker.

EMCEE

Thank you so much for sharing,  
Tanner! Okay, next up, we have a  
regular of ours, Raina.

Raina goes up to the podium and stands in front of the room.

RAINA

Uhm, I've been having trouble  
writing recently, but this is a  
short poem I wrote:

I sit with my grief like an old  
friend. Though sometimes she has a  
hard time leaving, pulling me  
further down into this well of  
pain, I know that is not what she  
intends, she has nothing to gain. I  
eventually understood that she does  
this so that I may heal, and learn  
again, how to truly, and deeply,  
feel. There are times when I want  
to quit, to give up and say that  
this is it. But I know that what I  
have endured, will only make me  
stronger, kinder, and more matured.  
So, I push on with this hope in my  
heart, that I will be filled with  
love and joy before I depart.

Scattered applause. Raina sits back down in her chair. There  
is now a man sitting next to her.

MICHAEL TROY, mid to late twenties, a handsome man with  
unruly curly brown hair, smiles at Raina.

MICHAEL

I really liked your poem.

A pause. He leans in and catches Raina's eye.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The way you are able to capture  
grief in such a compelling,  
sorrowful way, is enchanting.

RAINA

Thanks. Most people seem off put by  
my tendency to write about the  
shittiest part of the human  
experience.

Michael nods and hands Raina his phone so she can add her  
number. She hesitantly does.

MICHAEL  
I'm Michael. Want to grab dessert?

RAINA  
Right now?

MICHAEL  
Right now.

EXT. ITALIAN BISTRO ON MAIN ST. - EVENING

Restaurant is packed. Michael cuts the line and goes straight to a young man behind the counter and shakes his hand.

MICHAEL  
How are you, Nate? It's good to see you again.

NATE, mid to late twenties, slender and welcoming.

NATE  
I'm great, man. And who's this?

MICHAEL  
Right, this is Raina, she is a fantastic writer. We recently met, but I have a feeling we're going to be excellent friends.

NATE  
Nice to meet you, Raina. Michael is a good guy. You must have done something to catch his attention.

Raina shrugs and looks at Michael.

RAINA  
He showed up at my writer's forum's open mic night and practically gave me no option but to go out with him.

MICHAEL  
(Sheepishly)  
What can I say, I saw a talented, beautiful woman and took my chances.

Michael orders two plates of Tiramisu and hands one to Raina.

NATE TO MICHAEL  
How's the movie you're working on?

RAINA

You're working on a movie?

MICHAEL

It's been fantastic. The budget isn't the best, but I was hired as the Art Director so I can't complain about the temporary promotion and experience.

NATE

Good for you, man. But hey, I'll see ya'll around, need to get back to work.

They wave goodbye.

RAINA

You gotta tell me more about your movie.

MICHAEL

I'll tell you anything you want.

They eat their Tiramisu as they leave the restaurant. They walk down main street and talk.

RAINA

It's getting late, I should probably get home and finish my assignments for class. Thanks for the dessert. I had a good time.

MICHAEL

I would really like to see you again.

RAINA

I would like that, too.

Raina drives off, frowning to herself.

INT. HOUSE- A WEEK LATER

Raina sits alone on her bed typing on her laptop. Her phone vibrates. There is a message from Michael. The display reads: "I can't stop thinking about you. Halloween party tonight. Will you come?"

Raina looks at her laptop then back to her phone and types: "How can I say no to that? When and where?"

INT: HALLOWEEN PARTY- LATER THAT EVENING

Raina walks through the crowded main room full of dressed up people dancing and drinking. She is dressed as Velma. She finds Michael dressed as Patrick Bateman sitting on a couch flirting with a girl dressed as a bunny. Michael notices Raina and extracts himself from the girl and meets her.

MICHAEL

Raina! Hi! Again, so sorry for being so busy we had to resort to texting for the last week. Also, love your costume, it's really cute. The short hair fits you.

Michael goes to hug Raina, but she stiffens slightly.

RAINA

Hi, Michael, thanks. Are you sure I wasn't interrupting anything?

Michael looks genuinely confused.

MICHAEL

What do you mean? I was just waiting for you.

Michael noticing Raina's discomfort, suggests:

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Hey, actually let's leave? The party isn't that great and I remember you saying you weren't a big fan of large groups. Want to go for a drive? Get some food?

RAINA

Yeah, actually, I'd like that a lot.

MICHAEL

Perfect.

INT. CAR- EVENING

Michael and Raina are in Michael's car at a park with Taco Bell and McDonalds food. They eat in a tense quietness.

RAINA

I hope I didn't ruin your night. Sometimes I just get overwhelmed in places I've never been, you know?

MICHAEL

No, no, don't apologize. It's completely fine. I'd rather spend all my time here with you.

Raina nods and eats her fudge sundae. Michael notices chocolate syrup on the side of her mouth and leans in and kisses her, licking the syrup off in the process. Raina laughs shyly and kisses him back.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I want to know everything about you. I want to know why you are so cynical but compassionate and how it's possible we're the same person. Tell me why I like you too much, too soon, and how I am going to recover after you break my heart.

Raina smiles and kisses Michael. They spend the entire night talking in the car until the sun begins to rise.

RAINA

(Yawning)

Do you want to come back to my place?

MICHAEL

Absolutely. Thankfully, I have a late start for work and I could really use a shower.

INT. HOUSE- EARLY MORNING

RAINA

(Awkward)

Looks like my roommate is not home.

They enter Raina's room. Michael admires Raina's slightly messy bedroom and picks up a book, *The Virgin Suicides*, from her several bookcases.

MICHAEL

I love this book. We should watch the movie adaptation, it's really good.

RAINA

I'd love to. Uhm, the bathroom is there.

Michael heads to the bathroom but hesitates and looks back to Raina.

MICHAEL  
Care to join?

Raina smiles shyly and takes his hand.

CUT TO:

They are both in bed, naked with the sheets around them. Raina plays with Michael's hair with his head on her chest.

RAINA  
I'm really glad I met you.

MICHAEL  
Me too. You're the most interesting thing here. Coming back to town has been nostalgic. It's reminded me of how grateful I am to be in LA. It's so small here. Nothing to do.

Raina stops stroking Michael's hair.

RAINA  
You live in LA?

MICHAEL  
Yeah? I'm only in town until the movie is over. Well, I'm also visiting family.

RAINA  
But, I thought you lived here?

MICHAEL  
I did. I was raised here until I graduated high school. There is a small ceiling for those getting into the film business. So, I moved to LA and have been there since.

RAINA  
I feel like that is something I should've known.

MICHAEL  
I thought you knew that. I'm sorry if I wasn't clear...I can leave if that's what you want?

RAINA

No, I don't want that. But what's the point? Between us, I mean.

MICHAEL

I've never met anyone like you. I truly care for you and would like to continue whatever this is until I go back to LA.

Raina lays back down and Michael follows. They face each other.

RAINA

This is going to hurt when you leave.

MICHAEL

I know.

INT. HOUSE - ONE MONTH LATER

MICHAEL

What? You think I'm just going to quit everything for us to be together? My career is finally taking off, Raina, and I can't do that from here. That's why I left in the first place.

RAINA

Well, no, but I thought-

MICHAEL

You thought what? You were going to come back to LA with me? Drop your job and school and family?

RAINA

Yes, actually. I would for you.

Silence.

RAINA (CONT'D)

Do you have someone in LA waiting for you? Is that why you've been so dodgy in answering my questions?

MICHAEL

That's complicated and not even relevant at the moment.

RAINA

Are you fucking kidding me?

MICHAEL

We aren't together right now, but I can't afford to leave. Yet.

RAINA

Unbelievable. This is insane.

Michael paces and then takes Raina's hand.

MICHAEL

Look, Raina. Everything I've told you has been the truth, and I wish that we met before I moved to LA because who know what could've happened between us. Our connection is rare and intense and I-

RAINA

But that's not how life happened. So, you get to use me and run off when things get real?

MICHAEL

Don't pretend you didn't use me to make your life more interesting! You have written more being with me then you ever have. I inspire you.

RAINA

That's not at all the same thing, and you know it!

MICHAEL

Spend my last night here with me. Let's not ruin what we have. We'll keep in contact, and I'll come see you when I can.

Michael takes Raina's face in his hands and kisses her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What we've found in each other is incredibly special. I'm so deeply grateful I met you and if we get another chance, let's do it right.

Raina and Michael spend the night together. Michael goes back to LA in the morning after a hard goodbye. Raina goes to her bathroom and stares at herself in the mirror. She picks up a pair of scissors, grabs a chunk of her long hair, and cuts it off. She does this until it's very short. She showers.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - THREE MONTHS LATER

RAINA

I just feel so stupid. Like it still shouldn't hurt that he stopped texting and calling me. I should've seen it coming, I guess. I obsess over his social media and cry every time I see him out clubbing with girls. Who knows what happened with his ex or whatever he claimed she was. He acts like he didn't completely upend my life when he left. And he doesn't seem to know how to be alone! He loves to be loved more than anything.

BRAD

I've seen this countless times of girls who don't know how to stop giving and boys who can't help themselves from taking.

Brad sighs deeply and looks at Raina with sympathy.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Find out who you want to be and be it. Internally validate yourself, sweetheart. Find love within before allowing others to have the privilege of sharing it.

RAINA

It's just even though he destroyed me, he showed me love I've never experienced before. Even if it was selfish and messy, I know I'm capable of such intense feelings when I thought I was broken. But, he still lingers everywhere and someday it hurts to even breathe.

BRAD

Sometimes these brief encounters are harder to heal from because you are left with the 'what could have beens', the potential of that person. Don't shut down, Raina, embrace this pain. Someday you'll find that consuming love again.

Raina nods, looks to the window and smiles at her reflection.

FADE TO BLACK