

WHAT?!?

It's 7:30 on the same Friday night in the same alternate suburban reality. Lights up on Ben, standing at the front door of a modest home. He looks great. He knocks on the door. He is excited and a little nervous. Beat. He knocks again. After a moment, Andy answers.

BEN. Hey!

ANDY. (*Surprised.*) Hey! Wh[at's up]/—ooh!, Nice tie!

BEN. Huh?, // Oh, thanks.

ANDY. Where'd you get that?

BEN. I don't know. Online. SuperCenter.

ANDY. I like it!

BEN. Thanks. Um—

ANDY. So what are you doin' here?

BEN. Well—

ANDY. Isn't it Friday? >

BEN. Yeah—

ANDY. I thought we were on for tomorrow night.

BEN. Yeah, we were, but...I couldn't wait. >

ANDY. Oh—

BEN. So I thought I'd surprise ya. >

ANDY. Okay—

BEN. Surprise!

ANDY. So...what're we doin' tonight then?

BEN. Well, a lot of things, I hope.

ANDY. Okay.

BEN. For starters, I wanna come in...

ANDY. U//m...

Andy quickly steps outside and closes the door behind him.

so that whatever transpires must transpire outside—not inside.

—well—

BEN. (*Classy innuendo.*) ...'cause some of the things I would like to do with you should probably be done inside.

ANDY. (*Deflecting the classy innuendo.*) Okay, okay. Well, Ben...I told you, I can't...do those kinds of things. Yet. I have to take things slow, I // told you—

BEN. I know, and I have totally respected that, but...this is just *too* slow! It's been over a month now, and I haven't even been inside your place, and you've never been over to mine, and I've never even held your hand, and it's just gettin' a little weird! I mean, are you into this?!?

ANDY. Yeah, // yes!

BEN. Good!, 'Cause I am! And, well...I just think you're great, Andy.

ANDY. I think // you're great, too...

BEN. You're different, and sweet, and not...messed up.

ANDY. Well—

BEN. You're actually decidedly *un*-messed up.

ANDY. Well, I put up a good front.

BEN. But—I feel like...we haven't really moved forward since we met. We're not getting anywhere. And I want to get somewhere. With *you*. Because...

He has something big to say but struggles to say it.

Argh!—I can't believe—... God!—this is crazy—I never thought I'd be this guy, but...

He struggles to find the words.

ANDY. Are you okay?

BEN. Yeah— (*A happy struggle.*) —argh, Andy, listen: Nobody's more surprised by this than I am, but...

Ben can't quite say what he says next directly to Andy, so he says it without making eye contact with him. He probably says it to Andy's knees or to the ground—which isn't odd,

actually, because the most important things we say are often said without making eye contact.

I love you.

Beat. No response from Andy. He's just smiling. Ben reengages with Andy's eyes, expecting the best.

Andy?

ANDY. What?

BEN. *(Again not making eye contact, and gathering the courage to say:)* I love you, Andy.

ANDY. What?

BEN. *(Reengaging with Andy's eyes; maybe a little irked.)* Andy!

ANDY. What? I didn't hear you.

He really didn't.

BEN. Oh. [Well, that's weird]. Okay. Okay. Well...I mean, again, I know this might be a little soon, but...

Again—not making eye contact:

...I think I love you.

ANDY. What?

BEN. *(Irrked and hurt.)* Andy. Stop it. Come on, cut it out!

Little beat. Then:

ANDY and BEN. *(Simultaneous realizations.)* Oh, God! Oh, God!

ANDY. *(To himself.)* Tell me this isn't h//appening!

BEN. You know what? This was a mistake!

ANDY. What was a mistake?

BEN. Forget I said anything.

ANDY. What did you say?!?

BEN. Because, obviously, that was way too soon, wasn't it?, // Dammit! >

ANDY. What was too soon?

BEN. *(He is leaving.)* Stupid! Stupid—stupid—stupid. >

ANDY. *(Not wanting Ben to go.)* Ben—no—no—no!—

BEN. (*Comes right back.*) But, you know what?, No!! I'm not sorry, and it's not stupid, and I don't care if you're gettin' all guy on me here, because I do!,

Again, avoiding eye contact—saying this to Andy's knees or to the ground:

I love you, A//ndy, and if—

Andy does not hear the "I love you" part of what Ben said.

ANDY. Aaah!, It happened again!, // You do what?

BEN. *What happened again?!?*

ANDY. Ben: I didn't hear all of what you just said, so you have to say it // again—

BEN. What?!? Andy, // come on—

ANDY. Ben: Just say what you said again!

BEN. No! And why would I want to?, It hasn't really worked out the way I planned!

ANDY. Because I think I know what you said and I wanna make sure you said it, >

BEN. Andy—

ANDY. *and I just need you to say it again! So just say it again, please!*

BEN. Andy—

ANDY. PLEASE!

BEN. All right.

ANDY. And look at me when you do!

BEN. [This is weird, but...] All right.

Little beat. Then, making eye contact with Andy, he says:

I love you.

ANDY. (*Overwhelmed—happily so.*) Oh-my-God! Really?

BEN. Yeah. So...you heard me?

ANDY. No—I read your lips.

BEN. What?

ANDY. (*Overwhelmed—he can't breathe.*) Oh-my-God!

BEN. What's goin' on? Are you okay?