

Haywire

By

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Cast of Characters

ERICA:

Female - Early 20's

ALLAN:

Male - Early to mid 20's

ERICA storms on stage, arms crossed, heading for the other side. (The first few lines may also be given offstage.) She wears a nice dress, her hair done up, and heels. ALLAN rushes in after her. He wears glasses, a nice sweater with a collared shirt underneath, and pressed pants.

ERICA!
ALLAN

Nope! No!
ERICA

Please just...*hold on!*
ALLAN

Go away, Allan!
ERICA

Come...where are you going?
ALLAN

Home.
ERICA

You're gonna walk through the whole park home?
ALLAN

Yup!
ERICA

Hey...just...wait a second!
ALLAN

He reaches her and tries to grab her hand.

Fuck you and your dumb mumbling face!
ERICA

Come...hey...come on! Don't do *that*...can we just talk for a second, please?
ALLAN

She turns on him.

Why...you wanna dig yourself even deeper? You've already proven you're a grade-A asshole.
ERICA

She turns back around and continues to storm off. He goes after her.

ALLAN

Hey, that's...I can be a lot of things...but...I don't think I'm...an *asshole*. I mean...I just gave the waiter a thirty-seven dollar tip...for two drinks!

She turns back.

ERICA

(Sarcastically)

Aren't you just the sweetest...

ALLAN

Well...to be *fair*...I only had a fifty-dollar bill...and you stormed out so fast that I couldn't get change--

She groans in frustration and turns to leave.

ALLAN

But I would have left a large tip, *anyway*! *Hey*!

ERICA

You don't know when to shut up, *do* you?

ALLAN

Erica! Just...

He runs in front of her and blocks her way.

ALLAN

Stop for a second. I just...I want to explain myself.

ERICA

Explain?

(Guttural laugh)

...How...in *the fuck*...do you plan on explaining that? *Hm*?!

ALLAN

(Unsure)

Well...um...

(Beat)

...I didn't really think of that part, yet...I was more focused on catching you first...

(Impressed)

You're really fast.

(Back to the matter at hand)

But, just let me *think* for a second and--

ERICA

No. No! You've had enough time to think. All you *do* is think! So when it was *my* turn to say what was on *my* mind, all you had to do was say *something...anything* in return...preferably *not* something completely fucking stupid...but what do you do? You freeze up! You look at me like a dumb fucking cat who just heard the vacuum turn on--

ALLAN

Oh, I didn't look like that...

ERICA

You *did*! It was like...

She imitates his shocked look, as mockingly as possible.

ALLAN

Come on, don't do that.

ERICA

It's true!

ALLAN

Do cats even react like that?

ERICA

(Eyes wide)

I *have* a fucking cat, Allan! He basically *shits* himself if I even *look* at the vacuum! And Boots *isn't* a skiddish cat.

ALLAN

(Giving in)

He isn't...you're right.

ERICA

Yeah...I *know* I'm right.

(Beat)

...Fuck...what was I saying...

ALLAN

When?

ERICA

Just now!

ALLAN

Oh...

ERICA

God dammit. I *hate* when I do that.

ALLAN

I think you, uh...you were talking about...cats and vacuums?

ERICA

No! Before that! I said something about...you and...your stupid thinking...and...and then I said something else...

ALLAN

...Me freezing up?

ERICA

(Relieved)

Yes! You freezing up! Thank you.

ALLAN relaxes, thinking this has defused the situation.

ERICA

(Exploding)

And *then*, when you *did* speak, you were like...

(Mockingly)

"Oh...uh...uh...I don't know what to say..."

ALLAN

(Hurt)

Why do you always make me sound like a tired caveman every time you repeat what I say?

ERICA

You are a tired caveman!

(Beat)

And *why* am I even talking to you right now?!

She goes to walk passed him, he steps in front of her.

ALLAN

Wait-wait-wait...can you just...hear me out? Please?

ERICA

Why? Why should I?

ALLAN

Please, just...let me explain.

ERICA

Fine. You wanna explain yourself?

She sees a bench near them. She sits on the end, folding her hands in her lap, looking up at ALLAN.

ERICA

(Calmly)

Go ahead...give it a go...go on...

ALLAN looks at her, not sure if this is a trick. She beckons for him to continue.

ALLAN

(Uneasy)

Okay...so...um...we're there...in the restaurant...and...we got drinks, ya know? Well...of course you know, you were there. But...anyway...we're in the restaurant...and...yeah...you...you told me...that...you...ya know...and...I don't know, I uh...I...I didn't know how to...respond?

He looks at her, a deer in the headlights.

ERICA

...You're unbelievable Allan. You and your big dumb brain. Well, I guess it's not "dumb"...you're too fucking *smart* is the problem...

ALLAN

(Unsure)

Tha...thank you?

ERICA shakes her head slowly, arms crossed.

ERICA

...I could punch you so hard right now...

ALLAN

Wait...hold on. Are you mad at me because I'm not good at explaining myself or because of what happened back in the restaurant?

ERICA

Both! Fucking...*yeah!* *Both!*

ALLAN

Okay...well...let me...um...let me try again!

ERICA

You want to explain something? Okay. Yes, *please*. Through your *mumbling*...*explain* to me why...after weeks of busting my ass to help you get your shit together for your graduation tomorrow, I would be *dumb* enough to gather all the courage I can, and I say to myself, "Well...there won't be a better moment than *this!*" and I tell you...that I'm *IN*

(MORE)

ERICA (cont'd)

LOVE WITH YOU!!! And you look at me...with your big googly eyes...and after a solid *minute* of you mumbling like a drunk Muppet...all you could muster was...

(Mockingly)

"Thank you."

They stare at each other. ALLAN holds up his right hand and opens his mouth.

ALLAN

...Ah. Yes.

(Beat)

That's...not so easy to explain.

She looks at him, anger still present, but a sadness creeping in.

ERICA

God *dammit*, Allan. You *know* all the shit I've been through with guys...

ALLAN

(Apologetic)

I know. I know how hard that's been for you--

ERICA

And *now*? I'm *finally* comfortable enough to open myself up to a new relationship--

ALLAN

I know. I didn't mean to--

ERICA

And what do I get? I get someone with an *impossible* schedule--

ALLAN

You've been very understanding!--

ERICA

Giving up all of my free time to help you study and finish your degree--

ALLAN

I *really* do appreciate you doing that--

ERICA

(Almost in tears)

And after *all that*...I somehow...*somehow*...managed to fall in love with you. You and all your intellectual babbling...and you give me a "*thank you*"?

ALLAN

I know...I *know*...and...and I'm sorry. That's not...that's not how I meant for that to come out. I just...I guess I was a little...

(Searching for the right word)

..."Stunned" isn't the right word. "Speechless"?

ERICA

That's just a synonym for "stunned", you ass...

ALLAN

Right...right. Yes it is.

(Beat)

I uh...I don't know...I'm not...

(Getting frustrated)

I'm not as good as you with expressing...ya know...how I feel!

ERICA

No shit.

ALLAN

And...and you telling me...what you told me...it's a lot for me...

ERICA reacts to this negatively.

ALLAN

No-no-no! That's not a *bad* thing!

ERICA

No?!

ALLAN

No! It's a lot because...I have at least *some* common sense to know that...you saying something as big as...

(Whispers)

"I love you"...that requires a response...a *good* response. And you know me...words are not my strongest suit.

ERICA

Are you fucking kidding me, Allan? I mention *anything* related to Engineering and it's like I put a roll of quarters in you. You don't shut up...

ALLAN

Well...yes! That's because it's what I *know*. It's easy for me to talk about it.

ERICA

Well, I know that I love you...so...there's that...

He stares at her and heaves a heavy sigh. He looks around, trying to find the right words, getting more and more frustrated.

ALLAN

Crap.

He grits his teeth and shakes his head, fighting with himself.

ALLAN

It's just...I...I *know*...

(Beat)

God dammit...

ERICA

...What...

ALLAN

Okay...I...I don't know...I just...it's like I...I have these...*feelings*...I *do*! They're *there*. But my whole life has been *thinking*. Neck up, ya know? And you know my family...they don't express their feelings...like...at *all*. And...we've talked about this and I've tried so hard. I just...don't know *how* to say what I'm feeling.

ERICA

Well, that's frustrating as shit for me, Allan...

ALLAN

Yeah. I know. But...

(Beat)

I *know* they're there...these feelings? I just can't get them out as easily as you...

(Gets an idea)

Just...gimme a second...okay? Let me figure this out...

He tilts his head down and closes his eyes, deep in concentration.

ERICA

Figure *what* out?

He throws up his hands while keeping his eyes closed.

ALLAN

Just...

He thinks for several moments, pacing slightly. Small hand gestures and mouth moving. His eyes shoot open, looking confident.

ALLAN

Okay! So...I suck at telling you how I feel, right? So, I'm not gonna do that. I can just...tell you what I *know*.

ERICA

What the hell are you talking about?

ALLAN

Like...okay...

(Beat)

I *know*...that when you help me study...I understand the material better! Or even if you're in the same room when I study. That's a *fact*!

ERICA rolls her eyes slightly, not believing him. She opens her mouth to speak but he continues.

ALLAN

(Beat)

Now...I *know*...that when we hold hands? My heart...it beats a little faster! It's true, I timed it once. I don't know why, it just does.

She squints slightly, unsure.

ALLAN

And...I'm a restless sleeper. Like, my brain never wants to stop working when I go to bed. But...I *know*...that when you sleep over...and you're cuddled up next to me...my mind...it turns off *completely*...and I fall asleep within *minutes*. And I get the best sleep! It's like...my mind can only relax when I'm with you.

(Remembering)

And! *AND!*

(Beat)

You know how you always look into my eyes and my pupils are always dilating? You said it's probably from reading too much.

(Beat)

Well...I tried looking up why they might be doing that. I don't know, maybe I just needed a new pair of glasses or something.

(Slowly getting worked up)

Then...I came across this *fascinating* study...and it talked about newborns and their eyes...and these researchers discovered that these babies' pupils were going *haywire* when they looked at their mother's face or-or-or...their *father's*...but...no one else's!

ERICA

What does this have to do with--

ALLAN

Hold on, almost done...I promise.

(Beat)

Their research showed...that human eyes keep doing this as we get older and can eventually extend to people we have a strong emotional connection with...and when we're adults...it's not uncommon for your pupils to do that...when you're...

(Finding how to say it)

In love...with someone...

(Beat)

Now...I might not be able to express to you how I *feel*...but I can tell you what I *know*.

(Beat)

My eyes don't do that around anyone else but you.

(Beat)

So if this study is correct...then...I *feel*...the exact same way as you...

(Beat)

So...yeah. That's what I know.

They stare at each other. ALLAN shifts nervously, unsure of what to do next. ERICA walks over to him slowly.

ALLAN

(Leaning back slightly)

Please don't punch me.

She smiles softly and puts her hand on his cheek. She studies his eyes.

ERICA

They really are going haywire.

ALLAN

(Nodding lightly)

Yeah.

(Beat)

...Science, huh?

She smiles lightly and nods, still looking into his eyes.

ERICA

...I love you, too.

They smile.

END OF PLAY.