

THE MIXTAPE PLAY by Steve McMahon

JONNY, in the 1990s, holding a cassette tape. **LAURA**, in the year 2000, holds the same tape, reading sleeve notes, hunched over the cardboard box she pulled it from.

LAURA

(reads)

“Maxell XL-II C90 Blank Audio Cassette. To Laura, happy birthday slash Christmas slash anniversary. This mixtape is so good; you won’t need another present all year.”

She laughs, puts it back in the box. Picks out a book, looks at it, puts it back. Picks out the mixtape again, reads.

JONNY

(to the audience)

Side A, track one. ‘You Always Hurt The One You Love’. Nah, just kidding. Track one: Culture Beat – ‘Mr Vain’.

The 90s. They are dancing to the song, separately, in a club.

JONNY

(shouting over the music)

Hey!

LAURA

(shouting back)

What?

JONNY

Hey!

LAURA

Oh. Hey!

JONNY

Want a pill?

LAURA

A what?

JONNY

Want a pill?

LAURA

No! No way.

JONNY
Oh. Okay.

They keep dancing.

LAURA
What kind?

JONNY
Huh?

LAURA
What kind of pill?

JONNY
Ecstasy. I think.

LAURA
You *think*?

JONNY
Yeah, pretty sure.

LAURA
You don't even know?!

JONNY
Feels like ecstasy. It's good. Want one?

She stares at him like he's crazy.

LAURA
Yeah, okay then.

JONNY
Great. Oh, wait, what's your name?

They smile at each other. Then, they stop dancing. She stops the tape, turns it over and presses play. She starts to cry.

JONNY
(to the audience)
Side B, track five. Radiohead – 'Fake Plastic Trees'.
(to her)
What the fuck, Laura?

LAURA

Stop shouting at me!

JONNY

I'm not shouting!

LAURA

Yes, you are. You're shouting.

JONNY

Well you're not hearing me.

LAURA

I am hearing you!

JONNY

You might be listening, but you're not *hearing*.

LAURA

What are you talking about?

JONNY

Exactly. Exactly. You don't understand me. That's the whole problem. We can't communicate with each other.

LAURA

Then just *talk* to me. Stop yelling and talk to me. I want to understand.

A silence.

JONNY

I think it's too late. I think we're past that.

LAURA

So what are you saying?

JONNY

I don't know. I don't know what I'm saying.

Beat.

LAURA

I know what you're going to say. And I'm asking you not to say it. Don't, Jonny. Don't say it.

JONNY

Then you say it.

LAURA

I can't. Don't make me say it.

Beat.

JONNY

Well then. There's nothing left to say.

She stops the tape. Rewinds.

JONNY

Side B, track four. Roberta Flack – 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face'.

They are slow-dancing. She clings to him, tight.

LAURA

This was her favorite song. This song, this version.

JONNY

I know.

LAURA

I know you know.

JONNY

You're going to be okay, baby.

LAURA

I know. I know. I feel... okay. I thought I'd feel... different. Shouldn't I be more upset?

JONNY

She's not in pain anymore.

LAURA

No.

JONNY

She's at peace now.

LAURA

I hope so.

JONNY

And you loved her.

LAURA

I did.

JONNY

And you still love her.

LAURA

I do.

JONNY

And she loved you.

LAURA

Yeah.

Beat. They continue dancing.

Thank you.

JONNY

That's okay.

She stops the tape.

LAURA

Side B is a bummer.

She turns to side A again, presses play.

JONNY

Side A, track two. Santana featuring Rob Thomas – 'Smooth'.

LAURA

Nope. No way. No one needs to hear that ever again.

LAURA rewinds the tape, stops, listens.

JONNY

Side A, track three. Pearl Jam – 'Jeremy'.

She laughs, then she's back in the 90s with him.

JONNY

Okay, okay. Pun of the day. Suggestions?

LAURA

Band names as types of food!

JONNY

Alright, let's go!

LAURA

Fleetwood Mac and cheese!

JONNY

Pate Smith!

LAURA

That sucks.

JACK

Fuck off.

LAURA

Catfish Stevens. Count it!

JONNY

Pearl Jam.

LAURA

Doesn't count.

JONNY

How?

LAURA

It just doesn't!

JONNY

What?

LAURA

You're not punning if you don't –

JONNY

Jam is food, Laura.

LAURA

You can't just say the band name! It's not a pun if you just –

JONNY

Fine. Pearl Ham. Suck it.

LAURA

Fine. Suck this. Salmon and Garfunkel.

JONNY

Shit, that's good. Wu Tang Clams.

LAURA

R Jelly.

JONNY

Tuna Turner.

LAURA

Celine Dijon.

JONNY

The Yeastie Boys.

LAURA

You're a yeastie boy.

JONNY

Shut up.

LAURA

Bean Martin.

JONNY

Fela-fel Kuti.

LAURA

I feel awful after that one...

JONNY

See what you done there. Bread Zeppelin.

LAURA

Filet Collins.

JONNY

Food Fighters.

LAURA

Nope!

JONNY

What?

LAURA

You can't have that.

JONNY

Yes I can.

LAURA

No you can't.

JONNY

Yes I can.

LAURA

No you can't!

JONNY

No, wait, why can't I –

LAURA

Types. It's types of food, moron. You can't just say *food*.

He starts to chase her around the room. They giggle.

JONNY

Bullshit!

LAURA

You're as useful as the first 'r' in February!

JONNY

You're as useful in an argument as fucking Switzerland!

LAURA

No! You are to conflict what – fucking – *Sweden* is to conflict!

He catches her and tickles her. She squeals with laughter.

LAURA

No! Stop! I'm going to pee!

JONNY

There's no escape!

LAURA

I'm going to pee all over you!

*She runs to the player and presses stop. She tries to rewind. The tape unravels. She tries to wind it back up with her finger. It breaks. **JONNY** disappears.*

LAURA

No, wait, come back!

She tries to fix it, only makes it worse. It keeps unraveling. She's covered in unwound tape. She reaches into the box and pulls out mounds of unraveled tape. She sits in it.

LAURA

Jonny, come back. Please come back. Come fucking back! Rewind. I want to rewind. I want to go back to the start.

***JONNY** re-appears.*

JONNY

Side A, track one. 'You Always Hurt The One You Love'. Nah, just kidding. Track one: Culture Beat – 'Mr Vain'.

LAURA

No!

JONNY

Side A, track three. Michael Jackson – 'Earth Song'.

LAURA

No, Jonny –

JONNY

Side B, track two. Ace of Base – 'All That She Wants'.

LAURA

No. I don't want the songs. I want you.

JONNY

Side B –

LAURA

I want you back. I want you.

***JONNY** is silent. He presses stop and walks away. She sits alone. End.*