

The time: The story takes place over two timelines - a present-day journey across the country in which the scenes move backward in time from Seattle to Pittsburgh and a series of flashbacks that move forward in time.

Setting: Two chairs that can serve as various settings for the scenes.

Characters: One male, one female. Thirties.

At rise, Joe and Annie are driving.

JOE
What time did you say your flight was? 2:00?

ANNIE
2:30.

JOE
Plenty of time.

ANNIE
Hm.

JOE
Shouldn't be much traffic on a Sunday.

ANNIE
No. I wouldn't think so.

JOE
United, right?

ANNIE
Hm-hm.

JOE
It's a direct flight, right-or?

ANNIE
It's direct.

JOE
So, you'll get to New York by-

ANNIE
A little before ten.

JOE
Good. Looks like good flying weather. First day we haven't had rain since we got to Seattle.

ANNIE
Yes.

JOE

I appreciate your coming out with me. I really do. It made the trip much easier.

ANNIE

(looking at him) Did it?

JOE

Much better than hauling all my stuff alone.

ANNIE

I suppose.

(silence)

JOE

(a beat) So, I thought I'd drop you off at the terminal and then park the car and then meet you at the gate-

ANNIE

Oh don't-

JOE

What do you mean?

ANNIE

No, I just. Well. Just drop me off at the terminal. That'll be fine.

JOE

Annie.

ANNIE

No. I mean it. I don't want a scene.

JOE

I'm not going to create a scene, I-

ANNIE

Not you. Me.

(silence)

JOE

Ned warned me, you know.

ANNIE

About?

JOE

He said, "Never drive across the country with a woman. Things can happen."

ANNIE

Hm.

JOE

I just didn't think it would happen with you.

(silence)

JOE

Probably wouldn't have happened if we'd sprung for a better hotel in Pittsburgh. I'd have raided the mini-bar; you'd have gone down to the pool and we'd be fine. (a beat) You'd still be speaking to me. (a beat) Will you call me when you get in?

ANNIE

Why?

JOE

Because. I want to know that you got there safely.

ANNIE

If you don't hear that the plane crashed, you can assume I got there safely.

JOE

(silence) Well, then, can I call you?

ANNIE

I don't want you to for a while.

JOE

Seriously?

ANNIE

It'd just be too hard.

JOE

Am I ever going to talk to you again? (she says nothing)
Annie. C'mon. You're my best friend. Ever since--

ANNIE

I know.

(The lights change as ANNIE and Joe assume the postures of five and six year olds, respectively)

JOE

What happened to your party favor?

ANNIE

I finished it.

JOE

All that candy?

ANNIE

Yup. Aren't you going to eat yours?

JOE

Nope. I'm saving mine for later.

ANNIE

Oh. (she looks) You got cake on your glasses.

JOE

No. I don't.

ANNIE

Yes you do so. Right. Here. (she goes to rub it)

JOE

Leave it. Now you made it worse.

ANNIE

How can you see?

JOE

I see fine.

ANNIE

Can I try your glasses on?

JOE

No. Get your own glasses. (she thinks about this)

ANNIE

I don't have any.

JOE
Too bad for you then. (they are silent)

ANNIE
You don't have to be so mean.

JOE
(he softens) Okay. But don't break 'em. This is my third pair.

ANNIE
(trying them on) How do you see through these? They're all fuzzy.

JOE
That's the way they're supposed to be, stupid.

ANNIE
I'm not stupid. How do I look? (she smiles)

JOE
Retarded.

ANNIE
I do not! I bet I look really good. I wish I could get a pair of glasses. I'm going to tell my mother I can't see so good. And then maybe she'll let me.

JOE
She's not going to get you a pair of glasses just 'cause you want 'em. You have to need 'em.

ANNIE
(disapppointed) Oh.

JOE
Whatsa matter? You're not supposed to want glasses. Geez. My eyes are bad. I can't see. I could go blind someday.

ANNIE
Really?

JOE
Maybe.

ANNIE

Says who?

JOE

My father.

ANNIE

(she crosses her eyes) My father says that if I do this too much my eyes will stay that way.

JOE

Don't do that! Ew! Crossing your eyes. It's gross.

(silence)

ANNIE

Joey?

JOE

What?

ANNIE

I think your glasses look really nice.

JOE

Really?

ANNIE

Yeah. Really.

(In the present, two days earlier; their car has broken down just outside of Billings, Montana)

ANNIE

(to Joe) What do you suppose is wrong with it?

JOE

Can't tell.

ANNIE

The guy at the station back in Rapid City said-

JOE

(cutting her off) I know. I heard him.

ANNIE

So do we just wait?

JOE

Guess so.

ANNIE

That could take forever.

JOE

Hopefully not.

(a LONG pause)

ANNIE

It's not the air conditioner is it? I noticed the air conditioner was acting a little funny before. It was making this. Puh-puh noise.

JOE

(laughing in spite of himself) I don't think it's the air conditioner.

ANNIE

Well. Never been to Billings, Montana before. Now we really get to see what it looks like. (silence)

JOE

I was hoping we'd be able to get into Washington tonight.

ANNIE

Well, like you said--

TOGETHER

We're not on a schedule.

JOE

I'm sorry about the car.

ANNIE

It's not your fault. It's the stupid rental agency's.

JOE

Yeah.

ANNIE

Maybe we can trade it in for a larger car.

JOE

Probably a good idea.

(another LONG pause)

ANNIE

One with a really big air conditioner. (they laugh)

JOE

That would be good.

ANNIE

Reclining seats.

JOE

Yeah.

ANNIE

And a CD player.

JOE

(teasing) Even though we don't have any CD's?

ANNIE

Well. (she smiles; he smiles back)

JOE

I didn't mean to snap at you yesterday. (he looks at her)

ANNIE

It's okay. I snapped too.

JOE

We were having a nice time and—

ANNIE

We were having a nice time, weren't we?

(a beat)

JOE

Pittsburgh kind of threw me.

ANNIE

That's just because we weren't expecting it. Believe me--

JOE

Yeah, I--

ANNIE

--I was surprised too. Shocked, really.

JOE

Yeah.

ANNIE

After all those years. Who would have thought?

JOE

I know.

ANNIE

I don't know why I didn't see it before. It was so obvious. I mean, the thing of it is I'm in--

JOE

(quickly) Annie, don't!

ANNIE

Why? Why shouldn't I say it? (a beat) It's true.

JOE

Because, I---. Oh, God. (a beat) I can't do this.

ANNIE

Joe--

JOE

Listen. (a beat) You're the best friend I've ever had. Ever. And I wouldn't have picked anyone else to come on this trip with me. Anyone. (he takes her hand and kisses it)

ANNIE

I know. It's been a really good trip and--

JOE

I can't do this. (he looks at her) I can't do this with you.

ANNIE

Why? Everything's been great so far! Except for Mount Rushmore. (beat) We're really good together. I'm really good for you and--

(silence)

JOE

It's just that I don't. I don't have those. Feelings. I mean. (a beat) Look. I thought that maybe. But. I. Can't. Not like that-

ANNIE

Well I know it feels weird because we've known each other for so long and--. Look, we'll take it slowly. As slow as you want. I mean, we'll have to, of course. (she laughs) I won't even come for Columbus Day if you don't want and--

JOE

No, really. It wouldn't work. I promise you it wouldn't. And I just need you. I need you so badly as a friend and if we keep going down this road, then we'll never get back and--

ANNIE

Well, you know, you can have both. I mean that's what-

JOE

Please. You have to trust me on this. I can't do it. I don't want to do it. I just. (silence) Look, it's been really great. (a pause) I just think we do better as friends, you know? (she is silent) Annie? (he pulls a strand of hair from her face)

(Flashback: Annie and Joe at eleven and twelve in their school cafeteria. Annie is picking apart a sandwich.)

JOE

Here, I'm supposed to give you this. (he hands her a note)

ANNIE

What is it?

JOE

What's it look like? It's a note.

ANNIE

A note? From who?

JOE

Bobby Henderson.

ANNIE

Bobby Henderson? BOBBY HENDERSON? Oh my GOD! (she opens it quickly)

JOE

Is there an answer? I'm supposed to give him an answer.

ANNIE

(she thinks) Tell him I'll think about it.

JOE

You'll think about it? What kind of answer is that?

ANNIE

You tell Bobby Henderson that if he wants a better answer, he can come over and ask me himself.

JOE

Look, I'm not your stupid messenger. Tell him yourself.

ANNIE

(she thinks) Alright. (pause) Tell him I'll do it.

JOE

What? You're going to cut seventh period? Just to meet him at the back of the school? What's the matter with you?

ANNIE

You read the note! You're not supposed to read notes, they're private.

JOE

What would you do a stupid thing like that for?

ANNIE

It's none of your business—

JOE

He's just testing you to see if you'll do it. Then he's going to try and kiss you and—

ANNIE

SO?

JOE

He does this to every girl. You want be to be like every stupid girl in your class? Marcy Pullman, Jill Forrester, Dee-dee Tibble—

ANNIE

Dee-dee Tibble?

JOE

Dee-dee Tibble.

ANNIE

What do you care what I do? What's it to you?

JOE

I don't care. It's just that—

ANNIE

I mean, I've got to start somewhere. I'm almost eleven and I haven't been kissed yet.

JOE

Annie--

ANNIE

Almost every girl in my class is going steady and—

JOE

Fine. Go ahead. Be stupid. See if I care.

ANNIE

I should listen to some goober in thick glasses and flood pants??

JOE

Fine. (he begins to walk away)

ANNIE

Wait—

JOE

What?

ANNIE

I didn't mean it. It was a stupid thing to say.

JOE

You meant it. Don't say you don't mean it, when you do.

ANNIE

Have you ever kissed anyone?

JOE

Well, yeah. Once.

ANNIE

See. (interested) When?

JOE

Tracy Thorne's boy-girl party last year.

ANNIE

Who was it?

JOE

Michelle Mac.

ANNIE

Michelle Mac? (she groans) God. How was that?

JOE

It was alright. Not great.

ANNIE

Was it a kiss-kiss? Or just a peck?

JOE

A kiss-kiss?

ANNIE

You know - (she makes elaborate motions with her tongue).

JOE

Gross. No. It was not like that. It was a peck.

ANNIE

Don't you ever want to try the real kind?

JOE

I don't know.

ANNIE

Well, I do. I definitely do.

JOE

If I did, you'd be the only one that I'd want to do it with anyhow.

ANNIE

Seriously?

JOE

Yeah.

ANNIE

(she rips up the note) I'll meet you out back after seventh period.

JOE

What?

ANNIE

And don't chicken out.