

Caitlin & Nick 2

CAITLIN. I hope I'm not intruding, Nick, but I bumped into Emma the other day —

NICK. Right. At Pathmark or Foodtown, no, Pathmark has the big fish in the window — I've been here too long.

CAITLIN. And she said that after I left, you collapsed.

NICK. Yeah — yeah, that's true. Boy, that's difficult to explain.

CAITLIN. She said you had a panic attack because I rejected you.

NICK. I love that woman.

CAITLIN. I'm sorry, Nick. I hope it really wasn't because of me —

NICK. Oh no, no —

CAITLIN. 'Cause when guys ask me out, I usually don't call them an asshole.

NICK. Good, you probably get more dates that way. (*Aida enters.*)

AIDA. Caitlin!

CAITLIN. Aida, hello.

AIDA. What a wonderful surprise! You look hungry.

NICK. She has this remarkable sense —

AIDA. Let me fix you something ...

CAITLIN. Oh no, no, thank you, Aida, I just came by to see how Nick was doing.

AIDA. Oh, he's much better. He just gets nervous.

NICK. I used to chew on my rattle.

AIDA. I'll just fix you a little something ...

CAITLIN. No really, Ai —

AIDA. (*Exiting.*) No trouble, no trouble ...

Start

NICK. You have three minutes before she comes back with a fully dressed twelve-pound butterball turkey.

CAITLIN. I am sorry about the other day, Nick. You didn't deserve what I said. It's just that well — you see, Nick, when I was thirteen and my grandmother was in the midst of reading me *The Old Man and the Sea* — well, some days I'd visit and she'd read with such excitement and joy and other days she wouldn't let me in the door because she didn't think she knew me. She would stand there in a panic, screaming at me to leave her alone, her eyes darting back and forth —

NICK. I'm sorry —

CAITLIN. That look in her eyes still haunts me and — I'm sorry, too, Nick. I should've told you that the other day. (*A spot on Nick.*)

NICK. (*To audience.*) I don't know what it was — maybe the way the light was hitting her face or the way she was standing or

maybe it was because a woman who had rejected me came back to apologize. I don't know. But at that moment, she struck me as the most intelligent and beautiful woman on the planet, and I wanted her to like me so much. And for a second I had a horrible thought: Could my grandmother actually be right? Do I not really want to move? Could all I need to be happy is the right woman? Oh my God —

CAITLIN. So Emma said you might move to Seattle soon. She said you have a job offer —

NICK. A promotion, actually. A terrific one.

CAITLIN. Great. You know anyone there?

NICK. No. Just the promotion.

CAITLIN. Well, then — *(A beat.)*

NICK. Yeah — *(A beat.)*

CAITLIN. Well, I'm glad you're okay, Nick. I have to go, I'm on shift in half an hour and I can't be late. There are sick animals who need nursing, so —

NICK. Caitlin —

CAITLIN. Yes?

NICK. I'd still like to — I know you already said "no" but — I'd still like to take you out. You know, a real date. No relatives.

CAITLIN. But — you're leaving? For Seattle?

NICK. I've been thinking about not going. I maybe should stay — I don't know.

CAITLIN. Well, what happens if we go out, and we find out we like each other, and you decide to move?

NICK. I — I don't know. I, um ... *(A beat.)*

CAITLIN. I really have to go, Nick. The date offer was nice, but, oh, I don't know, I'd just sit there the whole time hoping I didn't like you. That's just too weird. Okay, take care of yourself. *(Caitlin begins to exit. Nick sings the first line of the old song that Nunzio sang earlier. Caitlin stops. A beat. Nick quickly sings a couple more lines of the song.)* Excuse me?

NICK. If that song worked, it's golden.

CAITLIN. Wow. All right, all right, Nick, if you decide not to go to Seattle — all right, call me, and a date with no relatives, you're on. But if you decide to go — then go. Start over. Sometimes you just have to be a little selfish. *(She kisses him on the cheek.)* You know something — just now, when I didn't immediately agree to go out with you — that was probably one of the

most mature things I've ever done. (*She exits. Aida enters carrying a huge antipasto.*)

Stop

AIDA. Here we are! (*A spot on Emma, D.*)

EMMA. (*To audience.*) Nunzio and I have been together for fifty-five years. Close your eyes and imagine that — fifty-five years. That's what Nicky doesn't understand — by trying to plan out his life so much, by staying away from marriage — he missed that. He'll never know what that's like — how love can deepen to places you've never imagined. Fifty-five years. (*Lights up on the living room. Emma and Aida set the table as Nunzio reads the paper and Frank plucks away on his mandolin.*)

AIDA. Nunz, how about another pillow?

NUNZIO. No, I'm fine —

AIDA. No, let me get you another ...

NUNZIO. Stop, I'm fine — (*Nick enters.*)

NICK. Hello.

NUNZIO.

EMMA.

There you are, Nicky!

Oh, thank God!

We're starving!

AIDA. Nicholas, why you so late?

EMMA. God forbid, we thought you had an attack on the bus!

FRANK. Good thing I was here to entertain the crowd for ya, Nick.

NICK. Sorry, I had a special session with my psychia — uh, head doctor this morning. We had a lot to talk about.

EMMA. Did you talk about your panic attack?

NICK. Yeah —

NUNZIO. And what'd he tell you?

NICK. To calm down.

FRANK. And for that, you paid him money?

AIDA. Enough! Dinner's waiting, everything came beautiful. (*Grandparents cross to the dining room.*)

NICK. Uh, before we eat, I have something to say.

NUNZIO. Talk and eat! You're late. *Mangiamo!*

NICK. It's important. It's about Seattle. (*Grandparents stop and turn toward Nick. They return to the living room and sit.*)

NUNZIO. Go ahead, Nicky.

NICK. Okay, first I want to say, last week, when I spent those days here — that was a real special time for me. It just seemed — I dunno — like maybe we talked a little more than we ever had. Like maybe we connected a little better. I'm not sure ...