

# MAD LOVE

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CHARACTERS:

DIANE - Jace's mother, late 30's

COLT - 30

JACE - 13

TED - Jace's father, 40's

BECCA - Jace's best friend, 13

KEN - 16

BEN - Colt's friend, 30s

The action is continuous. There is no intermission.

The set consists of several platforms and sheer curtains and hangings that sometimes act like scrim. One platform is Diane's cell in the hospital; she is in it, onstage, hidden by scrim. A pile of cut Christmas trees off to one side; one Christmas tree in a stand with presents. A big metal tub.

The direction "Alone" indicates that the characters speak in solitude, in their own worlds, without regard for those around them. They may speak to the audience.

OPEN: Diane, dressed in a hospital gown. She lisps slightly on her "s"'s. She stands in her "cell".

DIANE(alone)

Let's call it a love story. After all, I was in love. I thought I could make him happy. And there was a night when he was driving me home in his car when we didn't need to speak, and deers' eyes created glowing patterns in the damp dark fields that the car sliced right through. The road was ours. And I knew, right then, the way you just know things sometimes...I knew he could make me happy for the rest of my life.

It was all very romantic, as love stories tend to be. He ripped off my bodice and sent his pulsing manhood throbbing to core of my womanhood. Thank god, the rubber broke. It is the only physical pleasure I have in my memory. The egg, itself, is a miniscule speck and the sperm even smaller but their coming together burrowed Ted deep into my soul. I could see him for what he was. His darkness took root in my cells, barely noticable but splitting and growing and dividing and multiplying until a little mesh of him and me, looking a lot like a lumpy blackberry, took a roller coaster ride through my fallopian tubes into my uterus and stuck right in its wall. Where, unbeknownst to me, it planned to stay for a while.

(COLT, 30, lean, wearing jeans and a button down shirt - his going to church clothes - and Jace, 13, overdeveloped, dressed up. Both wearing coats. They sit on the edge of the center platform as if in the front seat of a parked car.)

(Upstate, New York. Christmas Eve. This year.)

COLT

My feelings are as important as yours. My feelings are just as important as yours.

JACE

I never said--

COLT

It's not what you say. You think it's just what you say. You could be saying anything. It's not what you say. It's what you do.

JACE

What do I do?

COLT

Oh, you say all the right things but your actions, they betray you. Your movements. Your gestures, every tilt of the head, they say -- I don't mean it.

JACE

But I do.

COLT

I picked you out. I walked into that Church for some enlightenment I walked in there asking the Lord to give me my blessing this evening of his son's birth. I walked in there to thank him. My sales were good so I don't have to do much of anything until next Thanksgiving except take of my trees. I don't need a second job to make ends meet. That's worth a little prayer. You may not know it to look at me but I'm a spiritual man. You might not think I look the type. That's what you thought the first time you saw me, wasn't it?

JACE

No.

COLT

You thought I was a skid. You didn't think I belonged in that church. That's what you thought. Skid.

JACE

No.

COLT  
(whispers)

Skid.

You know what I thought the first time I saw you?

You want to know what I thought the first time I saw you? I look at these girls sitting in front of me -- Young things. Wearing blue eyeshadow and pretending to be grown up. Pretending they are women. Playing dressup at midnight mass. And right in the middle of them...you.

JACE

Me.

COLT

You. Stuck in the middle of all these flatchested twits. I could see you had-- a figure -- even from behind. I sat right in back of you and looked at those soft blonde hairs at the back of your neck. The line of your neck. I wanted to kiss your throat.

(He reaches across her, locks her car door)

And I could see over your shoulder, the way your blouse gaped open a little, stretched tight. You're no little girl. Those mean you're no little girl.

JACE

Stop. It's embarrassing. You're embarrassing me.

COLT

Look at you. How could you be embarrassed? I bet you gloat. I bet you gloat over all your friends with their hopes of a thirty-two double A. You shouldn't wear such big clothes, you should wear tight, tight things so when it's cold--

JACE

You're making fun. They always make fun. Stare. I don't like it.

COLT

Of course you like it. Look at the way you use your body. Look at the way you looked at me in the parking lot with your friends. Are you cold?

JACE

No.

COLT

It's like what I said before. Your words, they belie your body's action. Look at the way your body reacts to my body. Look.

(runs a hand down her neck.)

JACE

Colt please. Be nice.

COLT

You think I won't be nice. I saw you standing there. Pretty. How much did this dress cost? How much did it cost? Who bought it for you? Your mom? Your mom?

JACE

Yes.

COLT

And when you saw me there, you thought poor, didn't you? Probably didn't even graduate high school. Probably works some skivvy job for a living. Probably lives in a trailer park. I could leave my sweet bedroom for the night. I could get out for the night because I'll always have this nice rich clean home to wash everything off in. Mommy will never know and she'll buy me new dresses every week because tonight she thinks I'm -- where does she think you are? Where does she think you are?

She doesn't think. JACE

What about daddy? COLT

Becca's house. I'm sleeping over. He doesn't go to Mass. JACE

They don't know who you're with. You don't know who you're with. COLT

I want to go home. Please. Take me home. JACE

You are in over your head. COLT

(Jace cries)

You only know the outside. You only know my hands. You only know that you decided to trust me a few hours ago and now you're not quite sure you should have. Ask me if you should trust me. Ask me.

You're scaring me. JACE

Ask. COLT

You think it's so easy -- my life-- you think it's so perfect. JACE

(He grabs her)

I've got a transcript from an Ivy League University. I've had jobs, money. I make my life. My feelings are as important as yours. My feelings are just as important as yours. COLT

(Ted enters in boxer shorts; maybe he's drinking already -- just a little.)

TED (alone)

There are some things a man's got to do. A man's got to take care of people, family. A man's got to watch his back and present a front that no-one would dare fuck with. There are some things a man needs, it's not a want. There are some things necessary to function on daily basis. A man needs love. People don't think I'm a romantic kind of guy. They think I'm a good guy, does a good job, O.K. clothes. Family man...maybe. It's too bad, they say, too bad the wife's gone over like a too-ripe tomato that bursts as you touch it. And Adam. A tragedy, they say. He was old enough to know what he was doing. I worked for my life. I did.

(Christmas morning. He takes a present from under the one upright Christmas tree. Jace in a nightgown.)

TED

Open it. Go on.

(Jace moves towards her father and takes the present. Colt exits. Jace carefully unwraps, not ripping the paper, folding it carefully before opening the box, looking to Ted for approval. A dress.)

JACE

Thanks.

TED

Try it on.  
I want to see it on you. Just pull it on.

JACE

OK....one sec..

(Jace leaves the room)

TED

What's this getting shy all of a sudden? You never used to be shy like that.

(He digs sleep out of his eye and examines his fingers -- sticks his hand in his boxer shorts for comfort. Jace returns. Dress too tight, too adult, too short. Barefoot. Ted wolf whistles)

TED

I can pick them, can't I?

JACE

It's a pretty dress.

TED

Turn around.  
(she does)  
Missing something.

(Hands her a box with high heels. Jace puts them on)

TED

Walk for me.

JACE

Daddy?

TED

Yes?

JACE

I like the dress really. It's just tight, don't you think?

TED

No.

JACE

I could get the next size.

TED

You need stockings. There are some in your mother's dresser. Top middle...  
Makeup's there too.

JACE

I'm not allowed to wear make up.

TED

Merry Christmas.

(silence)

Finish getting dressed, then we'll go see your mother.

JACE

Like this?

TED

Anything wrong with that?

JACE  
No.  
Can she come home with us?

TED  
Jace.

JACE  
Please.

TED  
She's not well.

JACE  
Daddy...

TED  
The woman bit me.

JACE  
I know. But I don't like her in there.  
I have bad dreams about it.

(Ted reveals two puncture wounds on his throat)

TED  
The scars will never go away. The fact she thought she was poisonous makes the whole thing worse, doesn't it?

JACE  
Last night I dreamt there were all these bubbles in the air. And Mom was in one of them, asleep. This little mom. And I'm trying to catch the bubble -- you know how that's impossible to do -- the wind's blowing her all over the place and she's getting too close to the sun. She's got these tiny little hands and a barbie doll hospital smock on....and she wakes up and she's scared because she's floating around in this bubble and it's so fragile but she doesn't realize that and she starts banging her hands against the side of the bubble and I'm screaming at her not to, but she looks right through me and hits her hands against the side once more and it pops.  
I thought she'd come tumbling out but instead she just dissolved.

TED  
It means she wanted me dead. My wife wanted me dead.

JACE  
She didn't know what she was doing.

TED

She knew.

(Silence.)

Look sweetheart, they take good care of her there. Some kids would be very happy to have their mother put away.

(he caresses her hair and grips her face with his two hands)

Some girls would like spending time with their dad.

JACE

I know. I do.

DIANE(Alone)

The miracle of birth. I'll explain it to you just as my mother told me. The rabbit dies. In the woods there are thousands of rabbits. You've seen them. They eat all the lettuce in our garden, nibble at tomato plants and sunflowers. Still, except for that little jaw mulching away. You see, honey, when we set those traps and put the poison around the roots of the plants we are contributing to someone's happiness. Because, in each one of those stiff little fuzzy bodies lies the soul of an unborn child, and every time one of the little suckers winds up belly-up among the rutabaga, some very happy mommy-to-be comes home to break the very happy news to her husband that a little child's soul implanted itself firmly into her stomach the last time she ate a carrot. So now you know. Don't even think of asking how they get out.

(Jace and Ted approach Diane's platform -- a room in the Willard Psychiatric facility. Diane curled up on a chair.)

JACE

Hi Mom.

TED

Diane.

DIANE

Sssss.

JACE

Merry Christmas. Mom?

TED

Show her your new dress Jace.

Daddy picked it all out. JACE

Sssss. DIANE

Looking good, honey, isn't she? TED

(Diane lunges for Ted and goes for the jugular with her mouth)

Daddy? JACE

(Jace doesn't move.  
Ted throws Diane off and kicks her hard.)

Daddy! JACE

(Ted wrenches Diane's arm behind her back.  
Kicks her again.)

Sssss, DIANE

Merry fucking Christmas Diane.  
Jace, c'mon. TED

(leaves the room)

Mom? JACE

Sss DIANE

Mom. Please. I can't do anything for you. I can't do anything else. Why won't you help me? JACE

(Diane wraps herself around Jace's leg)

Stop it. Get off of me.

(Beat)

I want you to come home. I want you to come home.

JACE(Alone)

I am waiting for you to come to me at night. I am waiting for you to come to me at night. I won't be able to fall asleep until you do. I hear noises; my body hears the noises. House sounds. Attuned to the noises. Part of the creaks and groans. And when I finally hear you coming to me, I realize that none of those noises could possibly have been you. What could I have been thinking? I don't want you to wake me up in the middle of my dreams. Those dreams are mine. They're the only thing that's mine. So I'm not going to sleep until you get it over with. Sometimes I wake up in the morning with the light still burning because you never came.