

The Note

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Production Draft

FADE IN: *

1 EXT. SAVANNAH - DAY * 1

A confection of IDYLLIC CITY IMAGES lulls us into harmony. *

PEYTON (V.O.) *

All around me I see beauty and I see *

grace. Everywhere I look... *

A haunting CELLO delicately drifts over shots of the waterfront. *

PEYTON (V.O.) *

I see it, but I don't feel it. *

2 INT. ECKERD'S DRUGSTORE - DAY 2

WE SWOOP DOWN AND FLY FAST with a toy plane held by a YOUNG BOY who runs reckless down an aisle, randomly toppling items in the shelves with swooping dive bombs. He races into another aisle and nearly runs into--

PEYTON MACGRUDER, mid-30s, an unfussy beauty with probing eyes that watch with grief as the boy runs full tilt away from her.

PEYTON (V.O.) *

Practical Peyton. That's what they call *

me down at the paper. Readers send me *

letters, I do a little research and write *

up some specific, step-by-step, practical *

advice. I'm the how-to girl. *

3 CARD AISLE 3

Peyton steps up and stares blankly at all the greeting cards. *

PEYTON (V.O.) *

I don't get as many letters as the *

previous how-to girl... *

CARDS: a wide offering of Father's Day cards sits before us. *

PEYTON (V.O.) *

My editor says my writing has all the *

warmth of a glacier. She says I write *

without passion, without heart... *

Peyton scans the cards for a quiet moment, indifferent. *

PEYTON (V.O.) *

I guess, for some reason... I just don't *

think it's practical... *

She reaches out for one, but changes her mind and saunters off. *

4 CHECKOUT COUNTER

4

Peyton places her basket on the counter as a gum smacking CLERK finishes checking out another PATRON. OUTSIDE AMBIENCE comes and goes as SHOPPERS enter and exit the store. SIRENS drone in the distance, steadily increasing into an uncomfortable caterwauling.

As Peyton reaches the CLERK, she notices TWO TEENAGERS outside being overly demonstrative while pointing to the sky. A few ALARMED PEOPLE run past the windows.

CLERK

Musta been a wreck out there. Traffic's terrible this time of day.

PEYTON

Tell me about it.

Suddenly, one of the teens bursts into the store and shouts:

TEENAGER

Mom, a jet just went down in the bay!

Peyton's face goes pale as she digests what she just heard.

Then TIME CRAWLS in SLOW-MO as the place goes dead still and ALL SOUND GETS SUCKS OUT LIKE A VACUUM, leaving only the FAINT CACOPHONY of stomach turning SIRENS in concert with our CELLO.

The Clerk blows a bubble as she turns her head to the teenager.

Peyton wobbles a little, turns and sees the

Young Boy, now by the candy machines, transfixed, mouth agape... the toy plane drops from his hand --

-- and tumbles in SUPER SLOW-MO to the ground.

Peyton, now in SUPER SLOW-MO, pulls out her cell phone as she leaves her items behind and rushes for the door.

5 EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - DAY

5

An SUV skids to a stop next to several emergency vehicles. Inside, Peyton tosses a laminated "Savannah Times PRESS" placard on the dash. She hops out and holds up her press card as she hurries past PERSONNEL and disappears over a grassy knoll.

6 EXT. SAVANNAGH BAY - CONTINUOUS

6

Peyton rushes down to water's edge.

PEYTON POV: a serene bay stretches out before her with no sign of an airplane gone down.

Peyton studies the horizon. As does everyone along the shore.

MAN (O.S.)
It'll take time...

A weathered MAN standing near Peyton turns his head from the bay and steadies his gloomy gaze on her.

MAN
It'll take time for things to surface.

Peyton swallows the thought, unsettled.

7 INT. SAVANNAH TIMES - DAY 7

A WHIRLWIND OF ACTIVITY... WE WIND AND WEAVE through the busy news room... searching... and finding Peyton, who sits at her cluttered desk in the corner staring at her computer... swaying slightly... to music in her iPod earphones... *

PEYTON: serenity hits her... and she types -- WE RUSH PAST HER AND WHIP AROUND TO--

THE COMPUTER SCREEN: as the letters spell out: "Dear Readers,"

PEYTON (V.O.)
How do you say love?

The news room flurries in SILENCE as our CELLO takes over.

8 INT. AIRPORT - TERMINAL RAMP - DAY 8

The door to a jetliner opens with a RELEASE OF PRESSURE.

PEYTON (V.O.)
With chocolates and roses? Breakfast in bed? With a clean house? With money in the bank? Is saying "I love you" enough?

A THRONG of passengers file out of the plane and up the tunnel.

PEYTON (V.O.)
Children say it all the time, with every smile, with every wide-eyed curious look. For children, love is time. Having all of it in the world.

Peyton, with a tote over her shoulder, joins the procession.

PEYTON (V.O.)
For the elderly, it's also time. Time running out and savoring every precious minute.

FACES: people of all ages, shapes and sizes shake off the trip as they march with an air of anxious anticipation.

PEYTON (V.O.)
For teenagers, love is trust. For
parents, sometimes love is saying "no".

9 INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

9

The passengers spill out into the airport, greeting and embracing their loved ones. Peyton stops. Stands alone.

PEYTON (V.O.)
Beyond words, love is something tangible,
demonstrable and sincere. Or is it?

A COUPLE kisses then walks off arm in arm.

A SISTER chases her BABY BROTHER.

A HUSBAND takes his WIFE's carry-on luggage.

TWO COOL CATS touch fists and strut off.

A FAMILY greets GRANDMA, surrounding her wheel chair.

PEYTON (V.O.)
What would you say to a loved one if you
had only a few seconds to impart one
final message?

Peyton watches them.

PEYTON (V.O.)
Would you say anything at all?

Several DRIVERS stand off to the side, holding hand-written signs with names on them. One has a twinkle in his eye and holds a sign that reads "Peyton MacGruder". Peyton steps up to him.

PEYTON
Hi there, I'm Peyton.

10 INT. TOWN CAR - MAGIC HOUR

10

Peyton sits in the back. Out the windows, TRAFFIC trudges under dusky, darkening skies.

DRIVER
My baby girl told me the funniest joke
this morning.

Peyton catches his eye in his mirror as he chuckles to himself.

DRIVER
You want to hear it?

Peyton flashes a polite smile.

PEYTON
Honestly, I'm just trying to gather my thoughts here.

DRIVER
My bad. Never mind me, I'll just drive.

PEYTON
Thanks.

Peyton turns her attention to the legal pad in her lap, picking up the pen on top of it. She doodles as she studies it.

NOTEPAD: Peyton's pen decorates a large "T" on the page... near the "T" are names: "Reverend Timothy Manning", "Taylor Crowe", and "Tanner Ford"... as she doodles, CHUCKLES rise up front.

DRIVER
I'm sorry. It's just so funny, I can't help myself.

Peyton puts down her pen.

PEYTON
Go ahead, tell it to me.

DRIVER
Do you have any kids?

PEYTON
Is this part of the joke?

DRIVER
No-no. It's just that you might not find it as funny as I do. She hangs the moon for me, you see?

PEYTON
Daddy's little girl, I understand.

DRIVER
So, there's these two muffins sitting in an oven.

The Driver glances over his shoulder at Peyton with a twinkle.

DRIVER

And one muffin says to the other muffin,
"is it getting hot in here?" And the
other muffin screams, "ahhhh, a talking
muffin!"

A smile creeps across Peyton's lips.

DRIVER

She's only 5 years old and absolutely
brilliant!

The Driver beams with pride as he drives. Peyton stares out.

PEYTON (V.O.)

First, let me share my condolences.

11 INT. CHURCH - OFFICE - EVENING

11

Peyton sits attentive with her hands tightly folded in her lap.

PEYTON

I was there when the plane went down...
left me heartsick. I can only imagine
what you must have felt.

Before her, behind a large mahogany desk, sits REVEREND TIMOTHY
MANNING, 30s, a slight man who seems almost too young to be
sitting behind such an important desk.

BROTHER TIM

Yes, it was a terrible thing. Pop was
very special to us.

PEYTON

I'm sure he was. Um, Reverend Manning--

BROTHER TIM

Please, call me Brother Tim. Or Tim.

PEYTON

Sir, before I show you the note, I need
you to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Peyton pulls some paperwork from her tote.

BROTHER TIM

Sure. Not a problem.

He pulls out a nice pen from a drawer as Peyton slides him a
piece of paper which he signs without reading and slides back.

PEYTON

Thank you.

BROTHER TIM

What makes you think this note is for me?

PEYTON

Your name begins with a T.

Peyton pulls out a clear, plastic baggie with a ziplock top that appears to have a piece of paper inside. She places it on the desk in front of Brother Tim. He leans over it, very curious.

NOTE: inside the bag a handwritten message can clearly be read on the paper inside, it reads:

BROTHER TIM (O.S.)

"T. I love you. All is forgiven. Dad."

PEYTON

Keep in mind, the handwriting may be a little off. I imagine the person who wrote this was pretty scared.

Brother Tim swivels back in his big chair, quelling his emotions. He gathers himself with a deep breath.

BROTHER TIM

I loved my father, Ms. MacGruder. He wasn't a saint, but he was a good man.
(beat)

I do wish I could help you, but Pop didn't write that note.

PEYTON

Are you sure?

Brother Tim rises and strolls to a side table laden with framed family photos. One appears to be his father, but is treated like the others as Brother Tim adjusts to keep them orderly and neat.

BROTHER TIM

First of all, he would have never signed a note "Dad". Let alone addressed one to me with "T". He was "Pop" to us and most everyone who knew him.

PEYTON

You never called him "Dad"?

BROTHER TIM

Not much since my kids were born. He's "Pop-Pop" to them, "Pop" to me. Besides, that's not his handwriting. Not at all.

PEYTON

This note was scrawled under duress.

Brother Tim folds his arms with a warm, magnetic smile.

BROTHER TIM

I'll say this, it certainly makes one wonder and reflect.

(tenderly)

Look, we were on good terms. With no outstanding debts. Only thing we ever fought about was the Cardinals chances for the pennant and even that was just good fun. Honestly, we were very close.

PEYTON

Perhaps you're overlooking something?

His smile fades slightly as he gives it some thought.

BROTHER TIM

Perhaps. I'm sure if Pop had the chance to offer a final word, he would. This just isn't it. Sorry.

Peyton deflates a bit.

PEYTON

Well, thank you for your time, Reverend-- Brother Tim. I really do appreciate it.

Peyton packs up the note and her papers Brother Tim has a seat on his desk, legs dangling, right in front of her.

BROTHER TIM

What about *your* father?

PEYTON

What?

BROTHER TIM

You traveled so many miles to learn a little bit about me, I'd hate to think after all that I didn't have the chance to learn a little bit about you.

Peyton shoulders her tote as she stands and meets him eye to eye.

PEYTON

What you see is what you get.

Brother Tim's big brown eyes smile back at her.

BROTHER TIM

You sell yourself short, I'm sure. And what about your father?

Peyton hesitates, then politely smiles back at him.

PEYTON

Not everyone has a Pop like yours. I'll leave it at that. Thanks again.

Peyton sticks out her hand. Brother Tim shakes it, then gently smothers it with his other hand.

BROTHER TIM

Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

Peyton fails to wilt. She releases his grip.

PEYTON

With all due respect, Reverend, the Bible isn't going to fix this one. Good day.

She spins and strides for the door.

BROTHER TIM

That wasn't from the Bible, Ms. MacGruder. Comes from Mark Twain.

Peyton stops on a dime. She looks back.

PEYTON

I'm just not ready to shed, okay?

BROTHER TIM

Who said you were the violet?

Peyton stiffens, the air escaping her. The door swings wide behind her and a schoolmarmy SECRETARY steps in.

SECRETARY

There's a TV crew outside.
(to her boss)
They say they want to talk to you.

Brother Tim hops of the desk.

BROTHER TIM

Some of your people?

Peyton looks at the both of them, completely bewildered.

PEYTON

No. I came alone.

The secretary steps forward, a business card between her fingers. *

SECRETARY

Unless you need me I am going home for
the night.

Brother Tim calmly takes the card.

BROTHER TIM

That'll be fine... Thanks, Beverly...
(he looks up from the card
to Peyton)
Julie St. Claire...

PEYTON

Son of a---

BROTHER TIM

Now what would the World News Network
want with me??

JULIE (O.S.)

Pastor Manning!

12 EXT. FIRST FUNDAMENTAL CHURCH - NIGHT

12

BLINDING BRIGHT LIGHTS chaotically rush towards us.

Peyton shields her eyes as Brother Tim escorts her out of the
church and down the front steps. A radiant beauty, poised and
professional, meets them with a microphone:

JULIE

Julie St. Claire from the World News
Network, Pastor Manning, can you please
share with us what you now know about
Flight 848?

Brother Tim flashes a saintly smile.

BROTHER TIM

I teach what I know on Sundays, you are
more than welcome to join us.

Julie gives Peyton a quick, cold look, then fires again:

JULIE

Pastor, did Peyton MacGruder show you a
note recovered from Flight 848?

THUNDER rumbles in the night sky.

BROTHER TIM

Ms. MacGruder's reasons for visiting our church are personal. I'm sure you don't want to pry.

*
*

Julie drops her mic.

JULIE

Okay, fine! Off the record. What the hell is going on here?!

*

Brother Tim just keeps grinning at her. Peyton squints.

PEYTON

Julie, I didn't realize you were such a fan of my column.

*
*

JULIE

Don't flatter yourself. Apparently, corporate sees merit in the bigger picture even if you don't.

*
*

(to Brother Tim)

Pastor, I'm sure you can appreciate us reaching the largest audience possible.

*

THUNDER rumbles again.

BROTHER TIM

Ms. St. Claire, I believe you and your crew are on private property. I'd like you to leave before passersby think something improper is occurring at our church... good evening.

*
*
*
*
*

Julie remains composed and professional.

JULIE

(to Peyton)

I'm not letting go. This story is mine.

*

Julie twiddles her fingers to the crew and they retreat. Brother Tim and Peyton watch them go as thunder rumbles in the distance.

*
*

BROTHER TIM

I'll be praying you find what you are looking for.

*
*

PEYTON

Thank you, Tim. Thank you.

*

13 INT. TOWN CAR - LATER

13

The Driver sneaks a peek at Peyton in his mirror, keeping quiet.

Peyton looks down at her

NOTEPAD: she puts a line through the name "Reverend Timothy Manning"... she adds another underline under "Taylor Crowe" and "Tanner Ford"... doodles the "T" some more...

Peyton taps her notepad, lost in thought. After a moment, she pulls out her cell phone.

CELL PHONE: Peyton scrolls through the names in her contacts, stopping on "Dad".

She stares at the phone as heavy drops of RAIN pelt the car. Tears surface in her eyes. She takes a deep, nervous breath... then changes her mind, tossing the phone back in her tote.

The Driver hits the windshield wipers as the RAIN picks up.

PEYTON (O.S.)
Tell me about your daughter.

The Driver twinkles back at her in his mirror.

DRIVER
Don't get me started now. You have a plane to catch.

PEYTON
You said she was 5?

DRIVER
5 years old and brilliant! Let me tell you something. Every day, she amazes me. Every day, she teaches me something new. Every day!

Peyton cries softly to herself as she listens.

DRIVER
And to hear her sweet laugh is to have died and gone to heaven. Just the other day she said to me, "Daddy. . ."

As the Driver continues, a snappy percussion of RAIN drowns out the sound inside the town car and our CELLO now croons with hope.

PEYTON: wipes away her tears and lays her head back.

WINDSHIELD: in rhythm, the wipers ardently fight the tempest amidst the twinkle and blur of the world beyond.

13.

PEYTON (V.O.)
How do you say love?

FADE OUT.

THE END