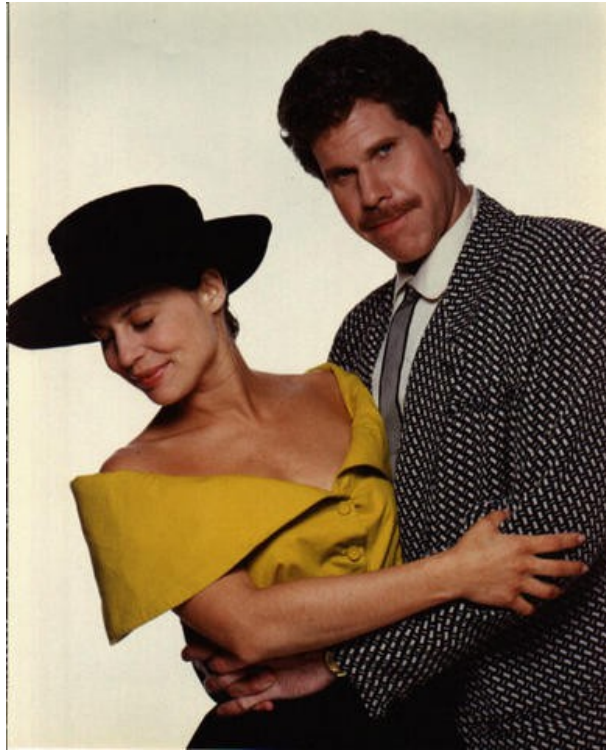
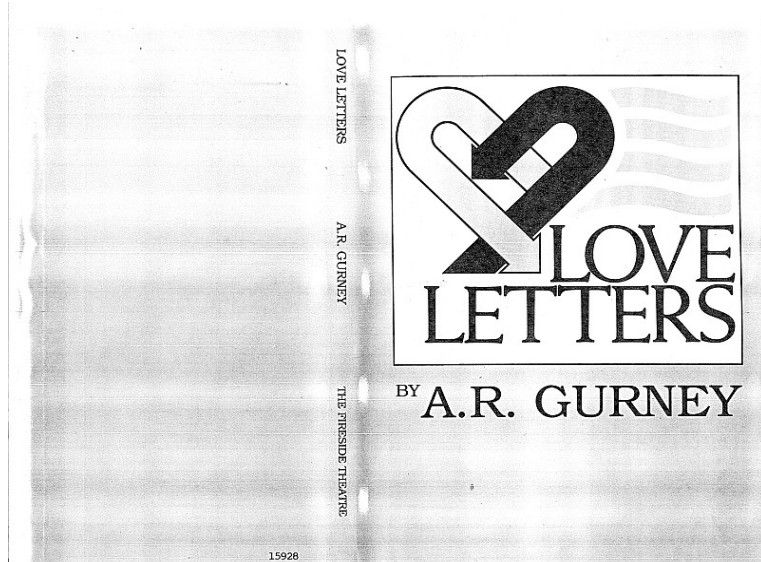


# Love Letters

*Performed by Ron Perlman and Linda Hamilton*





### Author's Note

This is a play, or rather a sort of a play, which needs no theatre, no lengthy rehearsal, no special set, no memorization of lines, and no commitment from its two actors beyond the night of performance. It is designed simply to be read aloud by an actor and an actress of roughly the same age, sitting side by side at a table, in front of a group of people of any size. The actor might wear a dark grey suit, the actress a simple, expensive-looking dress. In a more formal production, the table and chairs might be reasonably elegant English antiques, and the actor's area may be isolated against a dark background by bright focused lights. In performance, the piece would seem to work best if the actors didn't look at each other until the end, when Melissa might watch Andy as he reads his final letter. They *listen* eagerly and actively to each other along the way, however, much as we might listen to an urgent voice on a one-way radio, coming from far, far away.

### Part One

#### ANDY

Andrew Makepeace Ladd, the Third, accepts with pleasure the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Channing Gardner for a birthday party in honor of their daughter Melissa on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937, at half past three O'clock...

#### MELISSA

Dear Andy: Thank you for the birthday present. I have a lot of Oz books, but not *The Lost Princess of Oz*. What made you give me that one? Sincerely yours, Melissa.

ANDY

I'm answering your letter about the book. When you came into second grade with that stuck-up nurse, you looked like a lost princess.

MELISSA

I don't believe what you wrote. I think my mother told your mother to get that book. I like the pictures more than the words. Now let's stop writing letters.

\* \* \*

ANDY

I will make my l's taller than my d's.

MELISSA

I will close up my a's and my o's.

ANDY

I will try to make longer p's. Pass it on.

MELISSA

You're funny.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Will you be my valentine?

MELISSA

Were you the one who sent me a valentine saying "Will you be my valentine?"

ANDY

Yes I sent it.

MELISSA

Then I will be. Unless I have to kiss you.

\* \* \*

ANDY

When it's warmer out, can I come over and swim in your pool?

MELISSA

No you can't. I have a new nurse named Miss Hawthorne who thinks you'll give me infantile paralysis.

ANDY

Will you help me go down and get milk and cookies during recess?

MELISSA

I will if you don't ask me to marry you again.

BOTH

I will not write personal notes in class, I will not write personal notes in class, I will not...

\* \* \*

ANDY

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Love, Andy Ladd.

MELISSA

I made this card myself. It's not Santa Claus. It's a kangaroo jumping over a glass of orange juice.  
Do you like it? I like YOU. Melissa.

ANDY

My mother says I have to apologize in writing. I apologize for sneaking into the girls' bath-house while you were changing into your bathing suit. Tell Miss Hawthorne I apologize to her, too.

MELISSA

Here is a picture of you and me without our bathing suits on. Guess which one is you. Don't show this to ANYONE. I love you.

ANDY

Here is a picture of Miss Hawthorne without her bathing suit on.

MELISSA

You can't draw very well, can you?

\* \* \*

ANDY

Thank you for sending me the cactus plant stuck in the little donkey. I've gotten lots of presents here in the hospital and I have to write thank-you notes for everyone. I hate it here. My throat is sore all the time from where they cut out my tonsils. They give me lots of ice cream, but they also take my temperature the wrong way.

\* \* \*

MELISSA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Why did they send you to another school this year?

ANDY

Merry Christmas. They think I should be with all boys.

\* \* \*

MELISSA

You made me promise to send you a postcard. This is it.

ANDY

You're suppose to write personal notes on the backs of postcards. For example, here are some questions to help you think of things to say. Do you like Lake Saranac? Is it fun visiting your grandmother? Are your parents really getting divorced? Can you swim out into the deep part of

that lake or does Miss Hawthorne make you stay in the shallow part where it's all roped off? Is there anybody there my age? I mean boys. Please write answers to all these questions.

MELISSA

No. No. Yes. Yes. No.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Dear Melissa. Remember me? Andy Ladd? They've sent me to camp so I can be with all boys again. This is quiet hour so we have to write home, but I've already done that, so I'm writing you. There's a real Indian here named Iron Crow who takes us on Nature walks and teaches us six new plants a day. This is O.K., except he forgot about poison ivy. I won the backstroke, which gives me two and a half gold stars. If I get over fifty gold stars by Parent's Day, then I win a Leadership Prize which is what my father expects of me. I'm making a napkin-ring in shop which is worth four stars which is either for my mother or for you. I hope you'll write me back, because when the mail comes every morning, they shout out our names and it would be neat to walk up and get a letter from a girl.

MELISSA

Help! Eeeek! Yipes! I can't write LETTERS! It took me HOURS just to write "Dear Andy." I write my father because I miss him so much, but to write a BOY! Hell's Bells and Oriental Smells! I'm sending you this picture I drew of our cat instead. Don't you love his expression? It's not quite right, but I tried three times. I drew those jiggle lines around his tail because sometimes the tail behaves like a completely separate person. I love that tail. There's a part of me that feels like that tail. Oh, and here's some bad news. My mother's gotten married again to a man named Hooper McPhail. HELP! LEMME OUTA HERE!

ANDY

I liked the cat. Is that the cat you threw in the pool that time when we were playing over at your house in third grade?

MELISSA

No, that was a different cat entirely.

\* \* \*

ANDY

This is a dumb Halloween card and wouldn't scare anyone, but I'm really writing about dancing school. My parents say I have to go this year, but I don't see why I have to. I can't figure out why they keep sending us away from girls and then telling us we have to be with them. Are you going to dancing school also? Just write Yes or No, since you hate writing.

MELISSA

Yes.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Dear Mrs. McPhail. I want to apologize to you for my behavior in the back of your car coming home last night from dancing school. Charlie and I were just goofing around and I guess it just got out of hand. I'm sorry you had to pull over to the curb and I'm sorry we tore Melissa's dress. My father says you should send me the bill and I'll pay for it out of my allowance.

MELISSA

Dear Andy. Mummy brought your letter up here to Lake Placid. She thought it was cute. I thought it was dumb. I could tell your father made you write it. You and I both know that the fight in the car was really Charlie's fault. And Charlie never apologized, thank God. That's why I



like him, actually. As for you, you shouldn't always do what your parents WANT, Andy, Even at dancing school you're always doing just the RIGHT THING all the time. You're a victim of your parents sometimes. That was why I picked Charlie to do the rumba with me that time. He at least hacks around occasionally. I'm enclosing a picture I drew of a dancing bear on a chain.

That's you, Andy. Sometimes. I swear.

ANDY

I know it seems jerky, but I like writing actually. I like writing compositions for English, I like writing letters, I like writing you. I wanted to write that letter to your mother because I knew you'd see it, so it was like talking to you when you weren't here. And when you couldn't *interrupt*. (Hint, hint.) My father says everyone should write letters as much as they can. It's a dying art. He says letters are a way of presenting yourself in the best possible light to another person. I think that, too.

MELISSA

I think you sound too much like your father. But I'm not going to argue by MAIL and anyway the skiing's too good.

ANDY

Get well soon. I'm sorry you broke your leg.

MELISSA

Mummy says I broke it purposely because I'm a self-destructive person and went down Whiteface Mountain without asking permission. All I know is I wish I had broken my arm instead so I'd have a good excuse not to write LETTERS. I'm enclosing a picture I drew of the bed pan. I'm SERIOUS! Don't you love it's shape?

\*

\*

\*

ANDY

Andrew M. Ladd, III, accepts with pleasure the kind invitation of Mrs. R. Ferguson Brown for a dinner in honor of her granddaughter Melissa Gardner before the Children's Charity Ball.

MELISSA

I'm writing this letter because I'm scared if I called you up, I'd start crying, right on the telephone. I'm really MAD at you, Andy. Don't you know that when you're invited to a dinner before a dance, you're supposed to dance with the person giving it at least TWICE. And I don't mean my grandmother either. That's why they *give* dinner parties. So people get *danced* with . I notice you danced with Ginny Waters, but you never danced with me once. I just think it's rude, that's all. Straighten up and fly right, Andy. How do you expect to get anywhere in life if you're rude to women? Nuts to you, Andy, and that goes double on Sunday!

ANDY

I didn't dance with you because I've got a stretched groin. If you don't know what that means, look it up some time. I was going to tell you in person but I got embarrassed. I stretched it playing hockey last week. The only reason I danced with Ginny Waters is she takes tiny steps but you always make me do those big spins and we could have gotten into serious trouble. I tried it out at home with my mother first, and it hurt like hell. That's why I didn't dance with you. I'm using a heating pad now and maybe we can dance next week at the junior assemblies.

MELISSA

I don't believe that hockey stuff. I think Ginny Waters stretched your groin. And next time you cut in, I'm going to stretch the other one.

ANDY

Huh? You obviously don't know what a groin is.

MELISSA

You obviously don't know what a joke is.

\* \* \*

MELISSA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Guess what? I'm going to a psychiatrist now. My mother says it will do me a world of good. Don't tell anyone, though. It's supposed to be a big secret.

ANDY

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I have a question and would you please write the answer *by mail*, because sometimes when you call, my mother listens on the telephone, and when she doesn't my little brother does. Here's the question: do you talk about sex with the psychiatrist?

MELISSA

I talk about sex all the time. It's terribly expensive, but I think it's worth it.

ANDY

If I went to a psychiatrist, I'd talk about you. Seriously. I would. I think about you quite often.

MELISSA

Sometimes I think you like me because I'm richer than you are. Sometimes I really have that feeling. I think you like the pool, and the elevator in my grandmother's house, and Simpson in his butler's coat coming in with ginger ale and cookies on a silver tray. I think you like all that stuff just as much as you like me.

ANDY

All I know is my mother keeps saying you'd make a good match. She says if I ever married you, I'd be set up for life. But I think it's really just physical attraction. That's why I liked going into the elevator with you at your grandmother's that time. Want to try it again?

\* \* \*

MELISSA

HELP! LEMME OUTA HERE! They shipped me off to this nunnery! It's the end of the absolute WORLD! We have to wear these sappy middy-blouses, and learn POSTURE in gym, and speak French out LOUD in class. "Aide-moi, mon chevalier!" Oh God, it's crappy here. All the girls squeal and shriek, and you can hear them barfing in the bathroom after the evening meal. We can only go to Hartford one day a week IF we can find a chaperone, and there are only two dances with boys a year, and if we're caught drinking, even *beer*, it's wham, bam, on to the next train home, which is WORSE! Can you come visit me some Sunday afternoon? We can invite boys to tea from four to six. There are all these biddies sitting around keeping watch, but if the weather's good, we could walk up and down the driveway before we have to sign in for evening prayers. They've made me room with this fat, spoiled Cuban bitch who has nine pairs of shoes, and all she does is lie on her bed and listen to Finian's Rainbow. "How are Thinks in Glocca Morra?" Who gives a shit how things are *there*? It's here where they're miserable. The walls of this cell are puke-green, and you can't pin anything up except school banners and pictures of your stupid family. What family? Am I supposed to sit and look at a picture of Hooper McPhail? Come save me, Andy, or at least WRITE! Just so I hear a boy's voice, even on paper.

ANDY

Just got your letter. They shipped me off too. Last minute decision. Your mother told my mother it would do me good. She said I was a diamond in the rough. I'll write as soon as I'm smoother.

MELISSA

Dear Diamond. You, too? Oh, I give up. Why do they keep pushing us together then pulling us apart? I think we're all being brought up by a bunch of foolish farts. Now we'll *have* to write letters which I hate. But don't let them smooth you out, Andy. I like the rough parts. In fact, sometimes I think you ought to be a little rougher. Love Me.

ANDY

I'm very sorry to be so late in replying but I haven't had much time. I also have a lot of obligations. I have to write my parents once a week, and three out of four grandparents, separately, once a month, and Minnie, our cook, who sent me a box of fudge. Plus I have all my schoolwork to do, including a composition once a week for English and another for history. My grandmother gave me a new Parker 51 and some writing paper with my name on it as a going-away present, but still, that's a lot of writing I have to do. Last week I was so tied up I skipped my weekly letter to my parents, and my father called the school long-distance about it. I had to go up on the carpet in front of the Rector and say I wasn't sick or anything, I was just working, and so I had to write my parents three pages to make up for the week I missed. So that's why I haven't written till now. (Whew!) School is going well, I guess. In English, we're now finishing up Milton's Paradise Lost. In history, we're studying the causes and results of the Thirty Years War. I think the Catholics caused it. In Latin, we're translating Cicero's orations against Catiline. "How long, O Catiline, will you abuse our patience?" When I get home, I'm going to pray that on my little brother. In French, we have to sit and listen to Mr. Thatcher read out loud all the parts in Andromache, by Jean Racine. It's supposed to be a great masterpiece, but the class comes right after football practice, so it's a little hard to stay awake. In Sacred Studies, we have to compare and contrast all four gospels. It's hard to believe they're all talking about the same guy. In Math, we're trying to factor with two unknowns. Sometimes I let X be me and Y be you, and you'd be amazed how it comes out.

My grades are pretty good. They post your weekly average outside study all and last week I got 91.7 overall average. Not bad, eh? I got a letter from my grandfather telling me not to be first in my class because on the Jews are first. I wrote him and told him I wasn't first, but even if I was there are no Jews here. We have a few Catholics, but they're not too smart, actually. I don't think you can be smart and Catholic at the same time.

I was elected to the Student Council and I'm arguing for three things: one, I think we should have outside sports, rather than keeping them all intramural. I think it would be better to play with Exeter than just play with ourselves. Two, I think we should have more than one dance a year. I think female companionship can be healthy occasionally, even for younger boys. And three, I think we should only have to go to chapel once on Sunday. I think it's important to pray to be a better guy, and all that, but if you have to do it all day long, you can get quite boring. And if you get boring to yourself, think of how boring you must be to God.

I'm playing left tackle on the third team, and I'll be playing hockey, of course, this winter, and I think I'll try rowing this spring since I always stunk at baseball. Now I have to memorize the last five lines of Paradise Lost. Hold it . . . Back in a little while . . . There. That wasn't so hard, maybe because it reminds me of you and me, sent away from home. I'll write it down for you:

Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon;  
The World was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:  
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

There you are. I wrote that without looking at the book, and it's right, too, because I just checked it, word by word. It's not so bad, is it? In fact, it sounds great if you recite in the bathroom, when no one is in the shower or taking a dump. Love, Andy.

MELISSA

Thanks for your letter which was a little too long. I guess you have a lot of interesting things to say, Andy, but some of them are not terribly interesting to me. I want to hear more about your FEELINGS. For instance, here are MY feelings. This place STINKS, but I don't want to go back home because Hooper McPhail stinks, and I haven't heard of another boarding school that DOESN'T sink, which means that LIFE stinks in general. Those are my feelings for the week. Write soon. Love, me.

ANDY

One feeling I have almost all the time is that I miss my dog, Porgy. Remember him? Our black cocker who peed in the vestibule when you patted him when you came back to our house after the skating party. I miss him all the time. Some of the masters up here have dogs, and when I pat them I miss Porgy even more. I dream about him. I wrote a composition about him for English called "Will He Remember?" and got a 96 on it. It was about how I remember him, but will he remember me? I have a picture of him on my bureau right next to my parents. By the way, could I have your picture, too?

MELISSA

Here's a picture of me taken at the Hartford bus station. I was all set to run away and then decided not to. This is all I get till I get my braces off Christmas vacation. Don't look at my hair.

I'm changing it. By the way, do you know a boy there named Spencer Willis? There's a girl here, Annie Abbott, who met him in Edgertown last summer and thinks he's cute. Would you ask him what he thinks of her?

ANDY

Spencer Willis says Annie Abbott is a potential nympho. I'm sorry to tell you this, but it's true.

MELISSA

Annie says to tell Spencer he's a total turkey. Tell him she'd write and say so herself but she's scared of barfing all over the page.

ANDY

Do you get out for Thanksgiving? We don't, because of the war.

MELISSA

We do, but I don't. I've been grounded just for smoking one lousy Chesterfield out behind the art studio. So now I have to stay here and eat stale turkey with Cubans and Californians. That's all right. I was supposed to meet Mummy in New York, but it looks like she can't be there anyway because she's going to Reno to divorce Hooper McPhail. Yippee! Yay! He was a jerk and a pill, and he used to bother me in bed, if you must know.

\* \* \*

ANDY

I like seeing you Christmas vacation, particularly with your braces off. I really liked necking with you in the Watsons' rumpus room. Will you go steady with me?

MELISSA

I don't believe in going steady. It's against my religion. I hated that stuff with all those pairs of pimply people in the Watsons's basement, leaning on each other, swaying to that dumb music with all the lights off. If that's going steady, I say screw it. My mother says you should meet as many boys as you can before you have to settle down and marry one of them. That way you'll make less of a mistake. It didn't work for her but maybe it will work for me.

ANDY

Can we at least go to the movies together during spring vacation?

MELISSA

I don't know, Andy. I like seeing you, but I don't want to go home much any more. My mother gets drunk a lot, if you must know, and comes into my room all the time, and talks endlessly about I don't know what because she slurs her words. The only really good time I had was when I came over to your house Christmas Eve. That was fun. Singing around the piano, handing up the stockings, playing Chinese Checkers with your brother, helping your mother with the gravy. I liked all that. You may not have as much money as we have, but you've got a better family. So spring vacation I'm going to visit my grandmother in Palm Beach. Ho hum. At least I'll get a tan. P.S. Enclosed is a picture I drew of your dog Porgy who I remember from Christmas Eve. The nose is wrong, but don't you think the eyes are good?

ANDY

I'm stroking the 4<sup>th</sup> crew now. Yesterday, I rowed number 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Tomorrow I may row number 6 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or number 4 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Who knows? You get out there and work your butt off, and the launch comes alongside and looks you over, and the next day they post a list on the bulletin board saying who will row what. They never tell you what you did right or wrong, whether you're shooting your slide or bending your back or what. They just post the latest results for all to see. Some days I think I'm doing really well, and I get sent down two crews. One day I was obviously hacking around, and they moved me UP. There's no rhyme or reason. I went to Mr. Clark who is the head of rowing and I said, "Look, Mr. Clark. There's something wrong about this system. People are constantly moving up and down and no one knows why. It doesn't seem to have anything to do with whether or not you're good or bad, strong or weak, coordinated or uncoordinated. It all seems random, sir." And Mr. Clark said, "That's life, Andy." And walked away. Well maybe that's life, but it doesn't have to be life. You could easily make



rules which made sense, so the good ones moved up and the bad ones moved down, and people knew what was going on. I'm serious. I'm thinking about going to law school later on.

MELISSA

Your last letter was too much about rowing. Do you know a boy there named Steve Scully. I met him down in Florida, and he said he went to your school, and was on the first crew. He said he was the fastest rower in the boat. Is that true, or was he lying? I think he may have been lying.

ANDY

Steve Scully was lying. He doesn't even row. And if he did, and rowed faster than everyone else in the same boat, he'd mess the whole thing up. He said he got to second base with you. Is that true?

MELISSA

Steve Scully is a lying son of a bitch, and you can tell him I said so.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Will you be around this summer? I think I've got a summer job caddying, so no more camp, Thank God.

MELISSA

I'll be visiting my father in California. I haven't seen him in four years. He has a new wife, and I have two half-sisters now. It's like going to find a whole new family. Oh I hope, I hope...

ANDY

Do you like California?

\* \* \*

Write me about California. How's your second family?

\* \* \*

Did you get my letters? I checked with your mother, and I had the correct address. How come you haven't answered me all summer?

\* \* \*

Back at school now. Hope everything's O.K. with you. Did you get my letters out in California, or did you have a wicked step-mother who confiscated them?

MELISSA

I don't want to talk about California. Ever. For a while I thought I had two families, but now I know I really don't have any. You're lucky, Andy. You don't know it, but you are. But maybe I'm lucky, too. In another way. I was talking to Mrs. Wadsworth who comes in from Hartford to teach us art. She says I have a real talent both in drawing and in painting, and she's going to try me out in pottery as well. She says some afternoon she's going to take me just by myself to her studio in Hartford, and we'll do life drawings of her lover in just a jock-strap! Don't laugh. She says art and sex are sort of the same thing.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Dear Melissa. I have four questions, so please concentrate. One: will you come up to the mid-winter dance? Two, if so, can you arrive on the eleven-twenty-two Friday night train? Three,

Does the Rector's wife have to write your Headmistress telling her where you will be staying?  
Four. Does the Rector's wife also have to write your mother?

MELISSA

The is yes, except for my mother, who won't care.

\* \* \*

ANDY

I have to tell you this, right off the bat. I'm really goddam mad at you. I invite you up here for the only dance my class has been able to go to since we got here, I meet you at the train and buy you a vanilla milkshake and bring you out to school in a taxi, I score two goals for you during the hockey game the next afternoon, I buy you the eight dollar gardenia corsage, I make sure your dance card is filled with the most regular guys in the school, and then what happens? I now hear that you sneaked off with Bob Bartram during the Vienna Waltz, and necked with him in the coatroom. I heard that from two guys! And then Bob himself brought it up yesterday at breakfast. He says he French-kissed you and touched BOTH your breasts. I tried to punch him but Mr. Enbody restrained me. I'm really sore, Melissa. I consider this a betrayal of everything I hold near and dear. Particularly since you would hardly even let me kiss you goodnight after we had cocoa at the Rector's. And you know what I'm talking about, too! So don't expect any more letters from me, or any telephone calls either during spring vacation. Sincerely yours.

MELISSA

Sorry, sorry, sorry. I AM! I HATE that Bob Bartram. I hated him even when I necked with him. I know you won't believe that, but it's true. You can be attracted to someone you hate. Well, maybe you can't, but I can. So all right, I necked with him, but he never touched my chest, and if he says he did he should be strung up by his testicles. You tell him that, for me, at breakfast! Anyway, I got carried away, Andy, and I'm a stupid bitch, and I'm sorry. I felt so guilty about it that I didn't want to kiss you after the cocoa.

And besides, Andy. Gulp. Er. Ah. Um. How do I say this? With you it's different. You're like a friend to me. You're like a brother. I've never had a brother, and I don't have too many friends, so you're both, Andy. You're it. My mother says you must never say that to a man, but I'm saying it anyway and it's true. Maybe if I didn't know you so well, maybe if I hadn't grown up

with you, maybe if we hadn't written all these goddam LETTERS all the time, I could have kissed you the way I kissed Bob Bartram.

Oh, but PLEASE let's see each other over spring vacation. Please. I count on you, Andy. I NEED you. I think sometimes I'd go stark raving mad if I didn't have you to hold onto. I really think that sometimes. Much love.

\* \* \*

Happy Easter! I know no one sends Easter cards except maids, but here's mine anyway, drawn with my own hot little hands. I drew those tears on the corny bunny on the left because it misses you so much, but maybe I've just made it all the cornier.

\* \* \*

Greetings from Palm Beach. Decided to visit my grandmother. Yawn, yawn. I'm a whiz at backgammon and gin-rummy. Hear you took Gretchen Lascelles to see Quo Vadis and sat in the loges and put your arm around her and smoked! Naughty, naughty!

\* \* \*

Back at school, but not for long, that's for sure. Caught nipping gin in the woods with Bubbles Harriman. Have to pack my trunk by tonight and be out tomorrow. Mummy's frantically pulling strings all over the Eastern Seaboard for another school. Mrs. Wadsworth, my art teacher, thinks I should chuck it all and go to Italy and study art. What do you think? Oh, please write, Andy, PLEASE. I need your advice, or are you too busy thinking about Gretchen Lascelles?

\* \* \*

ANDY

To answer your question about Italy, I think you're too young to go. My mother said she had a roommate once who went to Italy in the summer, and the Italians pinched her all the time on the rear end. Mother says she became thoroughly over stimulated. So I think you should go to another school, graduate, go to college, and maybe after that, when you're more mature, you could go to Italy. That's my advice, for what it's worth, which is probably not much, the way things are going between you and me.

\* \* \*

MELISSA

Here I am at Emma Willard's Academy for Young Lesbians. Help! Lemme outa here! "Plus ca change, plus c'est le same shit." Are you coming straight home this June because I am. I want to see you. Or are you still in love with Gretchen Lascelles?

ANDY

For your information, I'm not taking Gretchen Lascelles out any more. I brought her home after the Penneys's party, and my father caught us on the couch. He told me that he didn't care what kind of girls I took out, as long as I didn't bring them around my mother. Even though my mother was up in bed. Still, I guess Gretchen can be embarrassing to older people.

MELISSA

I hope to see you in June, then.

ANDY

Can't come home in June. Sorry. I have to go and be a counselor at the school camp for poor kids from the urban slums. I'm Vice President of my class now, and I'm supposed to set an example all through July. I'll be writing you letters, though, and I hope you'll write me.

MELISSA

I don't want to write letters all the time. I really don't. I want to see you.

ANDY

You just need more confidence in your letter-writing ability. Sometimes you manage to attain a very vivid style.

MELISSA

Won't you please just stop writing about writing, and come home and go to the Campbells' sports party before you go up to that stupid camp? PLEASE! I behave better when you're around. IN PERSON! PLEASE!

\* \* \*

ANDY

Greetings from New Hampshire. This card shows the town we're near, where we sneak in and buy beer. We're cleaning the place up now, and putting out the boat docks, and caulking the canoes, because the kids arrive tomorrow. Gotta go. Write soon.

MELISSA

I miss you. I really wish you had come to the Campbells' sports party.

ANDY

Dear Melissa. Sandy McCarthy arrived from home for the second shift here at camp, and he told me all about the Campbells' sports party. He said you wore a two piece bathing suit and ran around goosing girls and pushing boys into the pool. Do you enjoy that sort of crap? He said the other girls were furious at you. Don't you want the respect of other women? Sandy also said you let Bucky Zeller put a tennis ball into your cleavage. Are you a nympho or what? Don't you ever just like sitting down somewhere and making conversation? Sandy says you're turning into a hot box. Do you like having that reputation? Hell, I thought there was a difference between you and Gretchen Lascelles. Maybe I was wrong. Don't you care about anything in this world except hacking around? Don't you feel any obligation to help the poor people, for example? Sometimes I think your big problem is you're so rich you don't have enough to do, and so you start playing grab-ass with people. I'm sorry to say these things, but what Sandy told me made me slightly disgusted, frankly.

\* \* \*

I wrote you a letter from New Hampshire. Did you receive it?

\* \* \*

Are you there, or are you visiting your grandmother, or what?

\* \* \*

Are you sore at me? I'll bet you're sore at me.

\* \* \*

I'm sorry. I apologize. I'm a stuffy bastard sometimes, aren't I?

\* \* \*

The hell with you, then.

MELISSA

Oooh. Big, tough Andy using four – letter words like hell.

ANDY

Screw you!

MELISSA

Don't you wish you could!

ANDY

Everyone else seems to be.

MELISSA

Don't believe everything you read in the papers.

\* \* \*

Dear Andrew Makepeace Ladd, the Turd: I just want you to know you hurt me very much. I just want you to know that. Now let's just leave each other ALONE for a while. All right? All right.

\* \* \*

ANDY

Dear Melissa: My mother wrote me that your grandmother had died. Please accept my deepest sympathies.

MELISSA

Thank you for your note about my grandmother. I loved her a lot even though she could be a little boring.

ANDY

Congratulations on getting into Briarcliff. I hear it's great.



MELISSA

Thank you for your note about Briarcliff. It's not great and you know it. In fact, it's a total pit. But it's closer to New York and I can take the train in and take drawing at the Institute three days a week. And in two years, if I stick it out, Mummy's promised that I can go live in Florence. I hope you like Yale.

ANDY

Would you consider coming to the Yale-Dartmouth game, Saturday, Oct 28<sup>th</sup>?

MELISSA

I'll be there.

ANDY

Uh-oh. Damn! I'm sorry, Melissa. I have to cancel. My parents have decided to visit that weekend, and they come first, according to them. My mother says she'd love to have you come with us, but my father thinks you can be somewhat distracting.

MELISSA

You and your parents. Let me know when you decide to grow up.

ANDY

How about the Harvard game, November 16<sup>th</sup>?

MELISSA

Do you plan on growing up at the Harvard game?

ANDY

Give me a chance. I might surprise you.

MELISSA

O.K. Let's give it a try. You should know that I'm even richer now than when you said I was rich, thanks to poor Granny. I plan to drive up to the front gate of Calhoun College in my new red Chrysler convertible, and sit there stark naked, honking my horn and drinking champagne and flashing at all the Freshmen.

ANDY

Here's the schedule. We'll have lunch at Calhoun around noon. Then drive out to the game. Then there's a Sea-Breezy party at the Fence Club afterwards, and an Egg Nog brunch at Saint Anthony's the next day. I'll reserve a room for you at the Taft or the Duncan, probably the Taft, since the Duncan is a pretty seedy joint.

MELISSA

Make it the Duncan. I hear the Taft is loaded with parents, all milling around the lobby, keeping tabs on who goes up in the elevators. Can't WAIT till the 16<sup>th</sup>

ANDY

The Duncan it is. Hubba hubba, Goodyear rubba!

\* \* \*

MELISSA

Dear Andy. This is supposed to be a thank you note for the Yale-Harvard weekend, but I don't feel like writing one, and I think you know why. Love, Melissa.

ANDY

Dear Melissa. I keep thinking about the weekend I can't get it out of my mind. It wasn't much good, was it? I don't mean just the Duncan, I mean the whole thing. We didn't really click, did we? I always had the sense that you were looking over my shoulder, looking for someone else, and ditto with me. Both of us seemed to be expecting something different from what was there.

As for the Hotel Duncan, I don't know. Maybe I had too many Sea-Breezes. Maybe you did. But what I really think is that there were too many people in that hotel room. Besides you and me, it seemed my mother as there, egging us on, and my father shaking his head, and your mother zonked out on the couch, and Miss Hawthorne and your grandmother, sitting on the sidelines, watching us like hawks. Anyway, I was a dud. I admit it. I'm sorry. I went to the Infirmary on Monday and talked to the Doctor about it, and he said these things happen all the time. Particularly when there's a lot of pressure involved. The woman doesn't have to worry about it so much, but the man does. Anyway, it didn't happen with Gretchen Lascelles. You can write her and ask her if you want.

MELISSA

You know what I think is wrong? These letters. These goddamn letters. That's what's wrong with us, in my humble opinion. I know you more from your LETTERS than I do in person. Maybe that's why I was looking over your shoulder. I was looking for the person who's been in these letters all these years. Or for the person who's NOT in these letters. I don't know. All I know is you're not quite the same when I see you, Andy. You're really not. I'm not saying you're a jerk in person. I'm not saying that at all. I'm just saying that all this letter-writing has messed us up. It's a bad habit. It's made us seem like people we're not. So maybe what was wrong as that there were two people missing in the Hotel Duncan that night: namely, the real you and the real me.

ANDY

Whatever the matter is, we're in real trouble, you and I. That I realize. So now, what do we do about it? Maybe we should just concentrate on dancing together. Then we can still hold each other and move together and get very subtly sexy with each other, and not have to deliver the goods all the time, if you know what I mean. Come to think of it, maybe that's why they sent us to dancing school in the first place. Maybe that's why dancing was invented.

MELISSA

At least we should stop writing LETTERS for a while. You could start telephoning me, actually. Here is our dorm number: WILSON 1-2486.

ANDY

I hate talking to you on the telephone. Yours is in the hall and ours is right by the college dining room. People are always coming and going and making cracks. Telephoning is not letter-writing at all.

MELISSA

I called the telephone company and they've put in a private phone in my room. ROGERS 2-2403. It's sort of expensive, but at least we can TALK!

\* \* \*

ANDY

The reason I'm writing is because your phone's always busy. Or else ours is. And I can't afford a private one. Maybe we should just start writing letters again.

MELISSA

No letters! Please! Now order that telephone! I'll lend you the dough. Just think about it. You can talk back and forth, and hear someone's real voice, and get to know someone in LIFE, rather than on WRITING PAPER, for God's sake! Now get that phone! Please!

\* \* \*

ANDY

I'm writing because when I telephoned, you just hung up on me. One thing about letters: you can't hang up on them.

MELISSA

You can tear up letters, though. Enclosed are the pieces. Send them to Angela Atkinson at Sarah Lawrence.

ANDY

What the hell is the matter?

MELISSA

I hear you're now writing long letters twice a week to Angela Atkinson, that's what's the matter.

ANDY

O.K. Here goes. The reason I'm writing Angie Atkinson is because I just don't think I can stop writing letters, particularly to girls. As I told you before, in some ways I fell most alive when I'm holed up in some corner, writing things down. I pick up a pen, and almost immediately everything seems to take shape around me. I love to write. I love writing my parents because then I become the ideal son. I love writing essays for English, because then I am for a short while a true scholar. I love writing

\*\*\*\*\*Still working on typing out copy of the script \*\*\*\*\*