

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Dear Nate
a very short holiday play by Ali Keller

NATE, 33, is sitting in the snow holding a Christmas card outside a modest home on Long Island. He is wearing an ugly Christmas sweater and a Santa hat with the name "Cookie" written across the white part in glitter puffy paint. CHARLIE, a female in her 20s, also wearing an ugly Christmas sweater, walks outside and plops down next to Nate. They make an odd, but complementary pair.

Nate We're at a party.

Charlie Actually we're outside a party.

Nate You should be inside. You wouldn't want our colleagues to think we're friends.

Charlie I'll go back when I know you're okay.

Nate Because you care so much.

Charlie So much.

Nate If that's true, then you really suck at making cards.

Charlie I thought it was pretty clear.

Nate Nothing says you care like (*reading from the card*) "Dear Nate, I'm friend dumping you – Merry Christmas."

Charlie I guess it's really more direct than clear.

Nate Why are you out here?

Charlie Because when a grown man walks away from the drunk co-worker dressed like slutty Mrs. Claus who's throwing herself at him to sit in the snow, alone, somebody should make sure he's okay.

Nate I'm fine. You can go back to your *friends* now.

Charlie Don't be so dramatic.

Nate Dramatic? You could have told me you were mad at me last night at the bar, or last week at the movies, or at any day at work, but you decided to end our friendship

with a construction paper Christmas card you gave me during a party I'm hosting. I can't even leave. Why didn't you just tell me?

Charlie I wanted to be the one to end our friendship.

Nate When did we decide it was ending?

Charlie When you couldn't bring yourself to hold my hand.

Nate looks at her like he doesn't know what she's talking about.

Charlie *(cont'd)* On the LIRR. *(beat)* After I put my head on your shoulder, you got so tense I thought you stopped breathing. *(beat)* Then you went to hold my hand and changed your mind.

Nate I just didn't want you to read anything into it. You've been so moody lately.

Charlie I've been moody because you refuse to be alone with me anymore at the bar or the movies. For the past two weeks the only time we've been alone it's been at morning update meetings and even then you keep the door open.

Nate I never refused to be alone with you – it's not like you've asked for one-on-one time.

Charlie You said, "we both need to work on controlling ourselves," which meant I need to work on controlling myself.

Nate I said "we."

Charlie But you meant me.

Nate You don't know that for sure. You're only twenty-four, you don't know everything.

Charlie I know how old I am.

Nate Do you? When I was twenty-four–

Charlie Yes, I know, you were twenty-four before I was, congratulations. Pointing that out all the time is really annoying.

Nate You don't get to end our friendship because you're annoyed at yourself for not being able to handle a few drunken mistakes.

Charlie You may be older, but you don't know everything either, like maybe using the word mistake might not be the best choice ever. And having sex five times, which is more than a few, is not why our friendship is ending.

Nate Well nothing else has changed—

Charlie I changed.

Nate You said you could handle casual sex.

Charlie I can, but I didn't realize that's not what this was for me.

Nate You should have told me you had feelings before we slept together the first time.

Charlie I didn't know.

Nate How could you not know? It's not like the sex was so good it changed your mind.

Charlie Oh I know. If it was, we'd be having a different conversation right now.

Nate You don't know that.

Charlie Maybe you don't.

Nate Because you know me so well.

Charlie No, because I've seen you have that conversation with people you don't even like.

Nate You haven't been around most of the women I've dated.

Charlie It's the only positive thing you say about the women I have been around for. The ones I've watched you convince yourself to keep dating.

Nate It doesn't mean that if our sex was better I'd want to date you.

Charlie Sure.

Nate It also doesn't mean we can't be friends.

Charlie I know.

Nate Then why is this happening?

Charlie I told you, I wanted to be the one to end our friendship.

Nate We just agreed that it doesn't have to end.

Charlie It doesn't have to, but it's going to.

Nate What are you even saying right now?

Charlie My feelings aren't why this is ending. Bad sex is not why this is ending. This is ending because you suspecting I have feelings for you makes you awful. It's like you second-guess everything you say or do around me.

Nate Well now I know—

Charlie The idea that I maybe, might, have feelings for you has made you act like a terrified dog but now that you know for certain that I have feelings for you, it's going to make you totally normal again?

Nate I'm just trying to make things easier for you.

Charlie I've had my heart broken before, I'll bounce back. It's the lack of faith you have in my ability to do that that hurts.

Nate Well I'll try to stop doing that, just give me a little time to adjust.

Charlie Every time you tense up to make me feel better, it's a reminder that you're ashamed that we happened and of me.

Nate opens his mouth to respond but stops himself. Charlie waits.

Nate I won't freeze up again, I promise.

Charlie You can't make a promise like that.

Nate Let me do something.

Charlie There's nothing to do.

They sit in silence for a moment before Charlie moves to get up.

Nate So for the past two weeks you've—

Charlie I tried to verbalize it – at the bar, at the movies, hell I even tried at work, but even with all your insane behavior you still look at me the same way. Like you’ve been waiting for me.

Nate Right.

Charlie I’m too twenty-four to stand up against the look.

Nate You’re a mature twenty-four.

Charlie I ended a friendship via a Christmas card, I’m not that mature.

Nate If you change your mind–

Charlie You’ll be waiting?

Nate Yea.

Charlie kisses Nate on the forehead and leaves. Nate watches her walk down the street until she’s out of view. He waits.

END OF PLAY.