

# Jenni's Feedback

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

*Summary: Nate and Julie dated as teenagers in 1980. In 2015, Julie's teenage daughter, Bee, is facing criminal charges for killing a man while driving and texting. Bee finds a diary her mother gave Nate back in high school, with a few lines written in it by her mother, expressing regret for how things ended. Bee adds an entry of her own to the diary, and the next day discovers that Nate has written back to her from 1980. Bee and Nate strike up a friendship across time. Then Bee finds out that Nate died of AIDS in 1986.*

Pages are extracted from the middle of the story.

Dear Nate--

I didn't believe Bee at first, when she told me that you were here again. Well, not here, not in 2015, but there, in March, 1980, enduring math class and Pete's stupid jokes again. For me, it's a distant memory, and, somehow, you're ~~re~~ there, at Upper Lyme High, doodling in Study Hall and writing to my daughter across all those decades.

I can tell you that Pete's going to grow a beard down to his chest one day. ~~And farm~~ <sup>herd</sup> goats. I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years. ~~But~~ I have proof. ~~If~~ <sup>if</sup> you can even believe it. God, Nate, it would make you laugh so hard, ~~and~~ I would give almost anything to make you laugh that hard. I don't know if what Bee is telling me can possibly be true. But she knows things that happened to us, things no one else knows. ~~And no one else knows those things.~~ So maybe it's true, and you'll ~~will~~ get this letter. ~~And~~ <sup>But</sup> if I tell you too many things that haven't happened to you yet, it may change them, and ~~people~~ <sup>Bee</sup> might get hurt. So I have to be careful.

Commented [RJL1]: ????

I guess the only thing I can do is tell you now what I didn't know how to tell you then. I fell in love with you hard and fast, Nate. We were only sixteen, and people say ~~that~~ what happens to you when you're ~~are~~ sixteen doesn't matter much. Except it does. One thing I've learned is that pieces of high school stick with you, like a splinter in your heel. You can walk on

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

it for most of the day without noticing, but if you step the wrong way, if “Jack and Diane” comes up on your playlist, or if a woman at work is rude in the ladies room—, in the same way that CeCe was rude junior year, refusing to say hello—, that high school splinter gives you a sharp jab, to remind you it’s still with you. Yeah, Julie, maybe no one here likes you.

Commented [RJL2]: He won't know what a playlist is.

Commented [RJL3]: Who's Julie?

I don’t want you to think that things never change after high school. They do. They change constantly. Everyone grows up and moves on and treats each other better. The guy who wrote “Jack and Diane” did a show in Las Vegas recently, and CeCe dropped out of college and became a nail technician. I think she moved down south somewhere. And I told you about Pete. Everyone has changed.

But little pieces stick.

Do you remember that day sophomore year that you walked me home in the rain? I missed the bus because I was staying later for grammar help, and you had stayed late for Chess Club, and you offered to walk with me. It was only sprinkling when we left the school, but halfway through town it started pouring and by the time we got to my street we were both soaking wet, and you were telling me some silly story about Pete at summer camp when you were ten, and then you reached over and took my hand. All I could think as we walked the half block to my house was that I wished you had taken my hand sooner, so that I could have held it all the way through town. We got to my house, and I asked you in, but you just shook your head ~~hard~~, like a dog, spraying me with even more rain, and jumped off the porch into a puddle, and I laughed at you. But when I went in the house, I ran upstairs to my room and ~~peeked~~ <sup>peeked</sup> behind my curtains so that I could watch you walk away down the street, ~~from behind my curtains~~.

I fell in love with you hard and fast and you never fell in love with me, and for a long time I didn’t understand that. When we were dating, I thought you were shy. Or maybe insecure.

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

A couple of times, I thought I made you nervous. Once, we were over at my house, and you followed me up to my room, so I could get that strange vampire book we were reading. ~~you~~ You stopped at the doorway, like there was some invisible force field keeping you from crossing the threshold. I told you my dad was still at work, but you wouldn't come in. Part of me loved that I made you nervous. Part of me hated it.

Remember the time you almost totaled your mother's car avoiding a squirrel, the first week you got your license? It sounds stupid now, but I thought you wanted to be alone with me, and I was so excited about that, and about the thought of closing my eyes and letting you kiss me. And then you swerved to miss that squirrel and we ended up in a ditch with the front fender smashed against a tree, and you You were grounded for three weeks.

I was able to convince myself that you didn't kiss me that whole time because of the damn squirrel.

It was hard for me to know, then, how it was possible for me to be so in love with you and for you not to be in love with me at all. I assumed there was something wrong with me. I couldn't figure out what it was. There were days I desperately wanted you ~~desperately~~ to explain it to me, even though I knew it would hurt. I wanted you to tell me you wouldn't kiss me because my nose was too big, or my laugh was embarrassing, or because I didn't get a high enough grade in Chemistry. Any of those things would have made sense to me.

You taking my hand in the rain, ~~you~~ and asking to be my boyfriend and then never not kissing me didn't make sense.

After we broke up, my mom told me that no one stays with their high school boyfriend, and that I would eventually see that it wasn't that important. I never told her what happened at Prom. I couldn't tell her how it felt, my heart pounding in the dark of the hotel parking lot, to

Commented [R1L4]: I know these are diary entries, but try to break these up into smaller sentences to help clarify. The long sentences get confusing.

long

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

make myself reach over and undo your bowtie, hands shaky with that stupid bright pink nail polish on them. Or how I held my breath and leaned over and kissed you the way I'd been wanting to. I was terrified, Nate, but I was also so sure of us. I knew it would be fine.

I thought you might tease me for bumping noses with you. I thought you might tell me you loved me. I never imagined that you would flinch like I had slapped you. I hadn't thought you would push me away, and stammer out how sorry you were, but that you would never fall in love with me at all, not even a little, not even if I got a nose job or a Chemistry tutor.

Pieces stick.

When I was just out of college, I dated a nice guy. Nate, he was funny and smart and he knew how to jump start a car with a screwdriver, and mix a perfect gin and tonic. For my birthday, he brought me a bouquet of red roses. They were lovely. I thanked him and put them in water and watched them bloom and then fall apart over the next week before I broke up with him. He didn't know they were supposed to be pink.

I don't think I'm saying any of this right. I didn't know then, and I'm not sure I've learned since, but this might be my only chance. So that's what I want to say, Nate, from 2015: That's my biggest regret: That I couldn't talk to you, and you couldn't talk to me in a way that I now know is the only way for two people to really get to know each other. I wanted to tell you to kiss me. You wanted to tell me that you were gay. And after Prom night, when we both finally said what we meant, we never spoke again. That stuck. I have never stopped regretting it.

Bee has an appointment with her lawyer. I have to get ready for work. I have no idea if I'll get another chance to talk to you.

Nate, none of it was your fault, or my fault. It was just the way it was in 1980. Don't give up on it. Don't give up on yourself. The world—your world, my world—but especially yours,

Vary sentence starters.

Commented [RUL5]: Hot wire?

what was said?

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

is changing in ways you don't know yet. It gets scary before it gets better. Take care of yourself.

Go to a city. Find your soulmate. He's out there. He's waiting to meet you, Nate.

And no matter what happens in 1980, no matter what you think you've done wrong or messed up, or what bad news you get, know that you never leave my heart, you just change corners.

Also, Nate, this is the most important thing--you always have to use---

I really like the premise of this story. I hope you're weaving in a lot of the great stuff from the 80's: the fashion, the technology, you touch on the music. One of the great things about the show "Stranger Things" is the combo of current times and the 80's. So I'm guessing the mom is around 50, but her writing doesn't sound like a 50 year old. She still sounds a little like a teenager, although I do like the splinter in the heel metaphor. Assuming 18-year-old Nate writes back to her, he may make fun of her because she doesn't talk like an 80's teen and that could add some levity and authenticity. Although I do understand that there are some heavy issues being covered here with the texting and driving, and the AIDS epidemic in the 80's.

Julie

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

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Mention that reverse Bee's predicament?

B+N strike up friendship - but J is writing here?

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(type in) for said

- Read first as ASD not word.

I can tell you that Pete's going to grow a beard down to his chest one day. And farm goats. I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years, but I have proof. If you can even believe it. God, Nate, it would make you laugh so hard, and I would give almost anything to make you laugh that hard. I don't know if what Bee is telling me can possibly be true. But she knows things that happened to us. And no one else knows these things. So maybe it's true, and you will get this letter. And if I tell you too many things that haven't happened to you yet, it may change them, and people might get hurt. So I have to be careful.

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you made

JULIE

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILNSKY

playlist, or if a woman at work is rude in the ladies room, in the same way that CeCe was rude junior year, refusing to say hello, that high-school splinter gives you a sharp jab, to remind you it's still with you. Yeah, Julie, maybe no one here likes you.

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Sweet memory

I fell in love with you hard and fast and you never fell in love with me, and for a long time I didn't understand that. When we were dating I thought you were shy. Or maybe insecure. A couple of times I thought I made you nervous. Once, we were over at my house and you

Repeat P.I. Reword?

Julie

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

followed me up to my room so I could get that strange vampire book we were reading, you stopped at the doorway, like there was some invisible force field keeping you from crossing the threshold. I told you my dad was still at work, but you wouldn't come in. Part of me loved that I made you nervous. Part of me hated it.

Remember the time you almost totaled your mother's car avoiding a squirrel, the first week you got your license? It sounds stupid now, but I thought you wanted to be alone with me, and I was so excited about that, and about the thought of closing my eyes and letting you kiss me. And then you swerved to miss that squirrel and we ended up in a ditch with the front fender smashed against a tree and you were grounded for three weeks.

I was able to convince myself that you didn't kiss me that whole time because of the damn squirrel.

It was hard for me to know, then, how it was possible for me to be so in love with you and for you not to be in love with me at all. I assumed there was something wrong with me. I couldn't figure out what it was. There were days I wanted you desperately to explain it to me, even though I knew it would hurt. I wanted you to tell me you wouldn't kiss me because my nose was too big, or my laugh was embarrassing or because I didn't get a high enough grade in Chemistry. Any of those things would have made sense to me.

You taking my hand in the rain, you asking to be my boyfriend and then not kissing me didn't make sense.

After we broke up my mom told me that no one stays with their high school boyfriend and that I would eventually see that it wasn't that important. I never told her what happened at Prom. I couldn't tell her how it felt, my heart pounding in the dark of the hotel parking lot, to make myself reach over and undo your bowtie, hands shaky with that stupid bright pink nail

Where were they  
kissed? A  
party? An  
empty P-lot?



Julie

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

polish on them. Or how I held my breath and leaned over and kissed you the way I'd been wanting to. I was terrified, Nate, but I was also so sure of us, I knew it would be fine.

I thought you might tease me for bumping noses with you. I thought you might tell me you loved me. I never imagined that you would flinch like I had slapped you. I hadn't thought you would push me away, and stammer out how sorry you were, but that you would never fall in love with me at all, not even a little, not even if I got a nose job or a Chemistry tutor.

Pieces stick.

When I was just out of college I dated a nice guy. Nate, he was funny and smart and he knew how to jump start a car with a screwdriver and mix a perfect gin and tonic. For my birthday he brought me a bouquet of red roses. They were lovely. I thanked him and put them in water and watched them bloom and then fall apart over the next week before I broke up with him. He didn't know they were supposed to be pink.

I don't think I'm saying any of this right. I didn't know then, and I'm not sure I've learned since, but this might be my only chance. So that's what I want to say, Nate, from 2015: That's my biggest regret: That I couldn't talk to you and you couldn't talk to me in a way that I now know is the only way for two people to really get to know each other. I wanted to tell you to kiss me. You wanted to tell me that you were gay. And after Prom night, when we both finally said what we meant, we never spoke again. That stuck. I have never stopped regretting it.

Bee has an appointment with her lawyer. I have to get ready for work. I have no idea if I'll get another chance to talk to you.

Nate, none of it was your fault, or my fault. It was just the way it was in 1980. Don't give up on it. Don't give up on yourself. The world--your world, my world--but especially yours, is

1 word

Delete  
or  
move  
to end.

At the date Nate is  
reading this entry,  
is he comfortable  
sharing his  
screwdriver  
orientation?

JULIE

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

changing in ways you don't know yet. It gets scary before it gets better. Take care of yourself.

Go to a city. Find your soulmate. He's out there. He's waiting to meet you, Nate.

And no matter what happens in 1980, no matter what you think you've done wrong or messed up, or what bad news you get, know that you never leave my heart, you just change corners.

Also, Nate, this is the most important thing--you always have to use--

Hmm. What advice will she share?  
It would really help to know how far into the novel this scene falls.  
When does Bee write to Nate?  
How does Julie discover that?  
Where are we in Bee's trial proceedings?  
I'm curious how Julie's and/or Bee's messages change the outcome of Nate's life -- if they do at all.

INTERESTING PREMISE -- time travel  
OR time communication  
IS THE WHOLE NOVEL TOLD THROUGH THE DIARY EXCHANGES  
OR ARE THERE ALTERNATING CHAPTERS OF CURRENT DAY  
JULIE AND BEE'S LIVES.  
HOW DOES THE NOVEL START?  
IS THIS JULIE'S LAST ENTRY IN NATE'S DIARY?  
OR, DO WE LEARN HER ADVICE...?  
JENNIFER AND TOM, DO YOU TWO WRITE TOGETHER OR  
PASS THE COPY BACK AND FORTH?

Ed

*Summary: Nate and Julie dated as teenagers in 1980. In 2015 Julie's teenage daughter Bee is facing criminal charges for killing a man while driving and texting. Bee finds a diary her mother gave Nate back in high school, with a few lines written in it by her mother, expressing regret for how things ended. Bee adds an entry of her own to the diary, and the next day discovers that Nate has written back to her from 1980. Bee and Nate strike up a friendship across time, when Bee finds out that Nate died of AIDS in 1986.*

Pages are extracted from the middle of the story.

This is really sweet! March 2015

Dear Nate--

I didn't believe Bee at first, when she told me that you were here again. Well, not here, not in 2015, but there, in March, 1980, enduring math class and Pete's stupid jokes again. For me it's a distant memory, and, somehow, you're there, at Upper Lyme High, doodling in Study Hall and writing to my daughter across all those decades.

I can tell you that Pete's going to grow a beard down to his chest one day. And farm goats. I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years, but I have proof. If you can even believe it. God, Nate, it would make you laugh so hard, and I would give almost anything to make you laugh that hard. I don't know if what Bee is telling me can possibly be true. But she knows things that happened to us. And no one else knows those things. So maybe it's true, and you will get this letter. And if I tell you too many things that haven't happened to you yet, it may change them, and people might get hurt. So I have to be careful.

I guess the only thing I can do is tell you now what I didn't know how to tell you then. I fell in love with you hard and fast. We were only sixteen and people say that what happens to you when you are sixteen doesn't matter much. Except it does. One thing I've learned is that pieces of high school stick with you, like a splinter in your heel. You can walk on it for most of the day without noticing, but if you step the wrong way, if Jack and Diane comes up on your

—so evocative of youth + school.

playlist, or if a woman at work is rude in the ladies room, in the same way that CeCe was rude junior year, refusing to say hello, that high school splinter gives you a sharp jab, to remind you it's still with you. Yeah, Julie, maybe no one here likes you.

I don't want you to think that things never change after high school. They do. They change constantly. Everyone grows up and moves on and treats each other better. The guy who wrote Jack and Diane did a show in Las Vegas recently, and CeCe dropped out of college and became a nail technician. I think she moved down south somewhere. And I told you about Pete. Everyone has changed.

But little pieces stick.

Do you remember that day sophomore year that you walked me home in the rain? I missed the bus because I was staying later for grammar help, and you had stayed late for Chess Club, and you offered to walk with me. It was only sprinkling when we left the school, but halfway through town it started pouring and by the time we got to my street we were both soaking wet, and you were telling me some silly story about Pete at summer camp when you were ten, and then you reached over and took my hand. All I could think as we walked the half-block to my house was that I wished you had taken my hand sooner, so that I could have held it all the way through town. We got to my house and I asked you in, but you just shook your head hard, like a dog, spraying me with even more rain and jumped off the porch into a puddle, and I laughed at you. But when I went in the house, I ran upstairs to my room so that I could watch you walk away down the street from behind my curtains.

I fell in love with you hard and fast and you never fell in love with me, and for a long time I didn't understand that. When we were dating I thought you were shy. Or maybe insecure. A couple of times I thought I made you nervous. Once, we were over at my house and you

followed me up to my room so I could get that strange vampire book we were reading, you stopped at the doorway, like there was some invisible force <sup>force?</sup> field keeping you from crossing the threshold. I told you my dad was still at work, but you wouldn't come in. Part of me loved that I made you nervous. Part of me hated it.

Remember the time you almost totaled your mother's car avoiding a squirrel, the first week you got your license? It sounds stupid now, but I thought you wanted to be alone with me, and I was so excited about that, and about the thought of closing my eyes and letting you kiss me. And then you swerved to miss that squirrel and we ended up in a ditch with the front fender smashed against a tree and you were grounded for three weeks.

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You taking my hand in the rain, you asking to be my boyfriend <sup>o</sup> and then not kissing me didn't make sense.

After we broke up <sup>o</sup> my mom told me that no one stays with their high school boyfriend and that I would eventually see that it wasn't that important. I never told her what happened at Prom. I couldn't tell her how it felt, my heart pounding in the dark of the hotel parking lot, to make myself reach over and undo your bowtie, hands shaky with that stupid bright pink nail

polish on them. Or how I held my breath and leaned over and kissed you the way I'd been wanting to. I was terrified, Nate, but I was also so sure of us, I knew it would be fine.

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Pieces stick.

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YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

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And no matter what happens in 1980, no matter what you think you've done wrong or messed up, or what bad news you get, know that you never leave my heart, you just change corners. ?

*font* → Also, Nate, this is the most important thing--you always have to use---

Snow Sisters, 2018  
YA, Romance, LGBT

Susan

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

21

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7 mystery?

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Commented [SD1]: Em dash (x2)

For me, it's a distant memory, and, somehow, you ~~you~~'re there, at Upper Lyme High, doodling in Study Hall and writing to my daughter across all those decades.

I can tell you that Pete's going to grow a beard down to his chest one day. And farm goats. I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years, but I have proof. If you can even believe it. God, Nate, it would make you laugh so hard, and I would give almost anything to make you laugh that hard. I don't know if what Bee is telling me can possibly be true. But she knows things that happened to us. And no one else knows those things. So maybe it's true, and you will get this letter. And if I tell you too many things that haven't happened to you yet, it may change them, and people might get hurt. So I have to be careful.

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YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

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Remember the time you almost totaled your mother's car avoiding a squirrel, the first week you got your license? It sounds stupid now, but I thought you wanted to be alone with me, and I was so excited about that, and about the thought of closing my eyes and letting you kiss me. And then you swerved to miss that squirrel and we ended up in a ditch with the front fender smashed against a tree and you were grounded for three weeks.

I was able to convince myself that you didn't kiss me that whole time because of the damn squirrel.

It was hard for me to know, then, how it was possible for me to be so in love with you and for you not to be in love with me at all. I assumed there was something wrong with me. I couldn't figure out what it was. There were days I wanted you desperately to explain it to me, even though I knew it would hurt. I wanted you to tell me you wouldn't kiss me because my nose was too big, or my laugh was embarrassing, or because I didn't get a high enough grade in Chemistry. Any of those things would have made sense to me.

You taking my hand in the rain, you asking to be my boyfriend and then not kissing me didn't make sense.

After we broke up, my mom told me that no one stays with their high school boyfriend, and that I would eventually see that it wasn't that important. I never told her what happened at Prom. I couldn't tell her how it felt, my heart pounding in the dark of the hotel parking lot, to make myself reach over and undo your bowtie, hands shaky with that stupid bright pink nail

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polish on them. Or how I held my breath and leaned over and kissed you the way I'd been wanting to. I was terrified, Nate, but I was also so sure of us. I knew it would be fine.

I thought you might tease me for bumping noses with you. I thought you might tell me you loved me. I never imagined that you would flinch like I had slapped you. I hadn't thought you would push me away, and stammer out how sorry you were, but that you would never fall in love with me at all, not even a little, not even if I got a nose job or a Chemistry tutor.

Pieces stick.

When I was just out of college, I dated a nice guy. Nate, he was funny and smart, and he knew how to jump start a car with a screwdriver and mix a perfect gin and tonic. For my birthday, he brought me a bouquet of red roses. They were lovely. I thanked him and put them in water and watched them bloom and then fall apart over the next week before I broke up with

him. (He didn't know they were supposed to be pink.)? *good*

I don't think I'm saying any of this right. I didn't know then, and I'm not sure I've learned since, but this might be my only chance. So that's what I want to say, Nate, from 2015: That's my biggest regret: That I couldn't talk to you and you couldn't talk to me in a way that I now know is the only way for two people to really get to know each other. I wanted to tell you to kiss me. You wanted to tell me that you were gay. And after Prom night, when we both finally said what we meant, we never spoke again. That stuck. I have never stopped regretting it.

} This could be the letter; the rest could be the scene in the letter

Bee has an appointment with her lawyer. I have to get ready for work. I have no idea if I'll get another chance to talk to you.

> ~~the~~ writing this guy - almost no mention of Bee, of what's going on w/ her

Nate, none of it was your fault, or my fault. It was just the way it was in 1980. Don't give up on it. Don't give up on yourself. The world—your world, my world—but especially yours,

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

is changing in ways you don't know yet. It gets scary before it gets better. Take care of yourself.

Go to a city. Find your soulmate. He's out there. He's waiting to meet you, Nate.

And no matter what happens in 1700, no matter what you think you've done wrong or messed up, or what bad news you get, know that you never leave my heart, you just change corners.

Also, Nate, this is the most important thing--you always have to use---

I think I would like this more if the letter were a scene. It would bring us closer to Nate. So it could still be a letter, but a letter that brings us to a scene.

how long were they together? was it only 3 weeks?

~~no~~ ~~no~~

little mention of Bee

YA NOVEL: JENNIFER STERNICK AND TOM WILINSKY

*Jenn and Tom, I don't read the summaries. The story has to be told by the story and not the summary.*

*This is a very sensitive and heartbreaking section of, what I imagine, is a much longer story. We have a love story that could never be. Always, a winning theme. We hope that both Nate and Julie have found happiness, albeit, without each other. Julie's airing of her soul these many years since the relationship has ended is no less heartbreaking given the time barrier. I think that the story has some legs and could be a topical story for general YA kids.*

*Good luck with the story.*

*Dave*

*BTW- the story told the story without the summary. Good work.*

**Summary: Nate and Julie dated as teenagers in 1980. In 2015 Julie's teenage daughter Bee is facing criminal charges for killing a man while driving and texting. Bee finds a diary her mother gave Nate back in high school, with a few lines written in it by her mother, expressing regret for how things ended. Bee adds an entry of her own to the diary, and the next day discovers that Nate has written back to her from 1980. Bee and Nate strike up a friendship across time, when Bee finds out that Nate died of AIDS in 1986.**

**Pages are extracted from the middle of the story.**

*(Perhaps begin with a date to orient the reader)*

Dear Nate--

I didn't believe Bee at first, when she told me that you were here again. Well, not here, not in 2015, but there, in March, 1980, enduring math class and Pete's stupid jokes again. For me it's a distant memory, and, ~~somehow~~, you're there, at Upper Lyme High, doodling in Study Hall and writing to my daughter across all those decades.

I can tell you that (*, after high school,*) Pete's going to grow a beard down to his chest ~~one day~~. And farm goats. (*and grow goats down to his chest? Try to be more specific*) I haven't seen him or spoken to him in years, but I have proof (*of what?*). If you can even believe it. God Nate, it would make you laugh so hard, and I would give almost anything to make you laugh that hard. I don't know if what Bee is telling me can possibly be true. *But she knows things that happened to us. And no one else knows those things. So maybe it's true, and you will get this letter. And if I tell you too many things that haven't happened to you yet, it may change them, and people might get hurt. So I have to be careful. (confusing section.)*

I guess the only thing I can do is tell you now what I didn't know how to tell you then. I fell in love with you hard and fast Nate. We were only sixteen and people say that what happens to you when you are sixteen doesn't matter much. Except it does. One thing I've learned is that pieces of high school stick with you, like a splinter in your heel. ~~You can walk on it for most of the day without noticing, but if you step the wrong way, if Jack and Diane comes up on your playlist, or if a woman at work is rude in the ladies room, in the same way that CeCe was rude junior year, refusing to say hello, that high school splinter gives you a sharp jab, to remind you it's still with you. Yeah, Julie, maybe no one here likes you.~~ *(Just referencing a splinter in your heel is a good enough image. Don't overwrite. Trust your readers.)*

I don't want you to think that things never change after high school. They do. They change constantly. Everyone grows up and moves on and treats each other better. The guy who wrote Jack and Diane did a show in Las Vegas recently, and CeCe dropped out of college and became a nail technician. I think she moved down south somewhere. And I told you about Pete. Everyone has changed.

But little pieces stick.

Do you remember that day sophomore year that you walked me home in the rain? I missed the bus because I was staying later for grammar help, and you had stayed late for Chess Club, and you offered to walk with me. It was only sprinkling when we left the school, but halfway through town it started pouring and by the time we got to my street we were both soaking wet, and you were telling me some silly story about Pete at summer camp when you were ten, and then you reached over and took my hand. All I could think as we walked the half block to my house was that I wished you had taken my hand sooner, so that I could have held it all the way through town. We got to my house and I asked you in, but you just shook your head

hard, like a dog, spraying me with even more rain and jumped off the porch into a puddle, and I laughed at you. But when I went in the house, I ran upstairs to my room so that I could watch you walk away down the street from behind my curtains

I fell in love with you hard and fast ~~and~~ (*but*) you never fell in love with me, and for a long time I didn't understand that. When we were dating I thought you were shy. Or maybe insecure. A couple of times I thought I made you nervous. Once, we were over at my house and you followed me up to my room so I could get that strange vampire book we were reading, ~~you~~ (*You*) stopped at the doorway, like there was some invisible force field keeping you from crossing the threshold. I told you my dad was still at work, but you wouldn't come in. Part of me loved that I made you nervous. Part of me hated it.

Remember the time you almost totaled your mother's car avoiding a squirrel(↔) the first week you got your license? It sounds stupid now, **but** I thought you wanted to be alone with me, **and** I was so excited about that, **and** about the thought of closing my eyes **and** letting you kiss me. **And** then you swerved to miss that squirrel **and** we ended up in a ditch with the front fender smashed against a tree **and** you were grounded for three weeks. (*Too many conjunctions: and, but, or nor. If you want to have the spacy, run-on feel to it, try to keep it to a minimum.*)

I was able to convince myself that you didn't kiss me that whole time because of the damn squirrel.

It was hard for me to know, then, how it was possible for me to be so in love with you and for you not to be in love with me at all. I assumed there was something wrong with me. I couldn't figure out what it was. There were days I wanted you desperately to explain it to me, even though I knew it would hurt. I wanted you to tell me you wouldn't kiss me because my nose was too big, or my laugh was embarrassing or because I didn't get a high enough grade in

Chemistry. Any of those things would have made sense to me. (*Good sense of disclosure. Very adolescent. Very accurate.*)

You taking my hand in the rain, you asking to be my boyfriend and then not kissing me didn't make sense.

After we broke up my mom told me that no one stays with their high school boyfriend and that I would eventually see that it wasn't that important. I never told her what happened at Prom. I couldn't tell her how it felt, my heart pounding in the dark of the hotel parking lot, to make myself reach over and undo your bowtie, hands shaky with that stupid bright pink nail polish on them. Or how I held my breath and leaned over and kissed you the way I'd been wanting to. I was terrified, Nate, but I was also so sure of us, I knew it would be fine.

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Pieces stick. (*Brilliant comment*)

When I was just out of college I dated a nice guy. Nate, he was funny and smart and he knew how to jump start a car with a screwdriver and mix a perfect gin and tonic For my birthday he brought me a bouquet of red roses. They were lovely. I thanked him and put them in water and watched them bloom and then fall apart over the next week before I broke up with him. He didn't know they were supposed to be pink.

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now know is the only way for two people to really get to know each other. I wanted to tell you to kiss me. You wanted to tell me that you were gay. And after Prom night, when we both finally said what we meant, we never spoke again. That stuck. **I have never stopped regretting it.** (*I don't understand the regret. Was it the saying or the never speaking again. Sad in either case.*)

Bee has an appointment with her lawyer. I have to get ready for work. I have no idea if I'll get another chance to talk to you.

Nate, none of it was your fault, or my fault. It was just the way it was in 1980. Don't give up on it. Don't give up on yourself. The world--your world, my world--but especially yours, is changing in ways you don't know yet. It gets scary before it gets better. Take care of yourself. Go to a city. Find your soulmate. He's out there. He's waiting to meet you, Nate.

And no matter what happens in 1980, no matter what you think you've done wrong or messed up, or what bad news you get, know that you (*'ll*) never leave my heart, you just change corners.

Also, Nate, this is the most important thing--you always have to use--- (*Too bad the sentence ends here. I would have liked to know what he had to use.*)