

I Love You

By Pete Malicki

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I Love You

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Cast

Leon – a quiet man in his early thirties

Theresa – a friendly woman in her late twenties

Cop – Detective Wendy Holmes, a stoic policewoman

Stage

A dining room with table, plates, wine glasses, cutlery.

Scene One

Leon and Theresa, after dinner

THERESA: Leon, that was fabulous. You are so talented.

LEON: Thank you. Another drink?

THERESA: I can't. I've already had enough.

LEON: (*taking the plates*) You are more than welcome to stay. The spare bed's already made.

THERESA: I'd better not. I have all my work things at home.

LEON: I could drive you there in the morning. You're really not that far out of my way.

THERESA: No, Leon. It's okay. (*beat*) But I'd love a coffee. Do you have anything?

LEON: I already have a pot brewing, just in case you said that!

THERESA: That was thoughtful.

Leon leaves with the plates. Theresa takes out her phone and texts.

THERESA: He probably rented my top ten favourite movies, too.

Leon returns with the coffees.

LEON: Real Italian beans. Best coffee in the country.

THERESA: Lovely.

They sip their drinks.

LEON: Tell me, Tess. Are you happy in your job?

THERESA: Yeah, sure. It's okay. Pays my way, you know. Passes the time.

LEON: But I mean, *really* happy? Is it satisfying you?

THERESA: (*uncomfortable with the questions*) Yes Leon. It's not fantastically interesting but it's steady, and the people are nice. I'd love more responsibility but I am very much happy.

LEON: It's just that, well, I put in a good word for you with my brother Daniel. He runs Smith, Reynolds and Fincher. He's looking for a legal secretary who's interested in career advancement. Someone who can work towards office and finance management. I told him I only know you on a personal level but am really happy to vouch for you.

THERESA: Wow. Um, look, that's super sweet of you, but I really *am* happy where I am. You don't have to be so kind to me just because of Jenny.

LEON: It has nothing, *nothing*, to do with her, Theresa. I don't base my friendship with you on the relationship I used to share with someone else.

THERESA: That's not what I was implying.

They sip coffee for a long, awkward moment.

LEON: I just want to be a nice person. There doesn't have to be an agenda.
THERESA: I know. *(another long beat; gets up)* I'm really tired, Lee. Thank you so much for talking to your brother for me. The job does sound good and I'll definitely consider it. Give me a call sometime soon, okay?

Theresa embraces Leon and pecks his cheek. He nods and watches her go, then just as she's leaving calls out.

LEON: Tess, hold up.

She stops.

LEON: I... there's something I'd like to say. If you'll hear me out. *(beat)* I'm really into you.

THERESA: You're *into* me? What's that supposed to mean?

LEON: Sorry, that sounds crude. I didn't want to sound clichéd by telling you...

THERESA: Are you coming onto me?

LEON: No, not at all. Well, yes. I love you.

THERESA: What?

LEON: Yeah. I really do. It's not a sex thing – I mean, of course you're gorgeous – it's a deep, passionate love. You fill me with life, Theresa. Your smile makes my sun rise. You're the bubbles in my champagne.

THERESA: Leon, you're such a sweet, thoughtful friend. But I just don't share those feelings.

LEON: Well... I'm so sorry. I've ruined everything.

THERESA: Rubbish. You've ruined nothing, Lee. I'm happy to pretend you never said any of that. Let's forget about it.

LEON: I can't. I'm happy to pretend I didn't tell you, but I can't forget my feelings.

THERESA: I'm going to leave now, Leon. I'm really tired. I'll see you soon.

Leon steps forwards and holds Theresa.

LEON: Please, stay the night.

Theresa looks at Leon, then kisses him on the lips.

THERESA: No. Please don't ever ask me that again. I'm going now.

Theresa leaves. Leon sits down at the table.

LEON: She kissed me. I love her and she kissed me.

Scene Two

Leon, in the morning

There is a knocking. A pause. Another knocking. Leon enters, wearing the same clothes as the previous scene and looking dishevelled. There is one more knock and Leon opens the door to reveal Detective Wendy Holmes.

COP: Leon Fincher?

LEON: Yes.

COP: My name is Detective Wendy Holmes from Parklands Police Department. May I come in?
LEON: What's this about?
COP: Do you know a woman named Theresa Brook Major?
LEON: Sure, of course. She's a very close friend.
COP: May I come in?
LEON: Sure.

Wendy enters.

COP: I'm terribly sorry to tell you that Theresa died at two fourteen AM this morning. She was in an automobile accident last night at around nine oh five PM.
LEON: Ha ha. No, that's *not* funny. Who are you? A friend? Are you Heather?
COP: I can assure you that I'm not joking, Leon. I'm terribly sorry.
LEON: Stop it. That's a cruel thing to do. Get out of my house.
COP: I'd like to ask you some questions first, Leon.

Leon stares at the cop, who matches his gaze steadily. He realises she is sincere and begins to breathe heavily. He screams into his hands, then drops down into a crouch, hitting his knees and screaming 'No' repeatedly. He wears himself out and sobs on the ground.

COP: Leon, I know this is difficult but I need to...
LEON: I loved her! She *made* me. I am nothing without her. Nothing!
COP: Would you be more comfortable talking at the station. It might help to be in a neutral setting.
LEON: I don't want to talk *anywhere*. I want to die! Shoot me.
COP: Mr Fincher, I understand that you're upset, but no one is going to be shooting anyone. I can give you a few minutes to calm down but then I will have to ask you a few things.

Leon moves offstage and returns with a knife.

LEON: I'll do it to myself. I swear I will. (*beat; points the knife at Wendy*) Maybe I should kill you. I can go on a rampage. Stab all my horrible neighbours. I will *massacre* fifty people then do myself in.

Wendy sits down at the table.

COP: Leon, what you are saying actually makes a criminal offence. I could arrest you for threatening the lives of myself and others.
LEON: Well why don't you?
COP: No, I'm not going to bother, Leon. I just want to talk to you. Put the knife down, okay?

Leon complies, then sits with Wendy.

LEON: I'm so sorry, detective. I... I loved her so much.
COP: (*nods*) Leon, was Miss Major with you last night?
LEON: Yes. I had her round for dinner. We... (*trails off*)
COP: I know this is difficult. I'm sorry. But I have to find out what happened to her. What time did she leave your house?
LEON: I don't know. Around nine. A little before, maybe.

COP: How would you describe your relationship with Miss Major? You were obviously close to her.
LEON: Of course. We were in love. I declared it just last night and she... she kissed me.
COP: Were you drinking? How much did she have?
LEON: Just a glass of wine each. She refused to have more because she was driving.
COP: Did you take any recreational drugs?
LEON: What? Don't be ridiculous. I don't touch drugs, and I'm positive Tess would never do anything like that either.
COP: Did you give her anything, Leon? Slip something in her wine?
LEON: I'm sorry, are you accusing me of something? Are you saying I *drugged* the woman I love? How dare you!
COP: Miss Major drove into a wall on the A3 last night. We believe she passed out, as there was no attempt made to brake. We found traces of the drug GHB in her system. Do you know what that is, Mr Fincher? It's a date rape drug.

Leon stares coldly at Wendy. He gets up and turns away.

LEON: If your laboratory people haven't made some dumb mistake, then she must have taken it herself after she left. I know nothing about it.
COP: That doesn't seem likely, Leon. The effects of the drug are not that fast-acting. She must have taken it *well* before nine PM.
LEON: Maybe she left sooner than I remembered. You know, now I think about it, it was probably closer to eight thirty.
COP: Theresa Major sent a text message to her boyfriend at eight fifty eight PM saying that she was leaving your...
LEON: Boyfriend? Boyfriend!? She was in love with *me*. She kissed *me*. There's no way she was seeing someone else.
COP: I'm afraid you're incorrect. Mr John Temperson was with Theresa at the hospital this morning when she passed away. He showed the local constable text messages she'd sent him last night.
LEON: You're a liar. (*screaming*) You're a fucking liar! How dare you call her a slut. She was in love with me!

Wendy stands, impassive, as Leon picks up the knife and approaches her.

COP: Put the knife down, Leon. If you do that, right now, I will forget about your threatening behaviour.
LEON: Why don't you just take out your gun and shoot me? Please.
COP: You know what I want to know, Leon? When you gave her the GHB, did you want to rape her or kill her?

Leon screams and jumps at Wendy. She pulls her gun but he knocks it to the ground. He slashes wildly with his knife and she backs off. He takes the gun, cocks it, and aims it at her.

LEON: Get on your knees.
COP: Leon, this isn't going to...
LEON: Get on your knees!

Wendy kneels.

LEON: Tell me, detective. Do you love me?
COP: What?

LEON: Do you love me, Detective Wendy Holmes? Do you want me, and love me, and need me?
COP: I... I hardly know you.
LEON: Is that a no?
COP: It's a 'I don't know.'
LEON: I want a yes or a no. Or would you prefer your brains to decorate my walls and floor?
COP: Uh, well... yes. I think I do. I think I love...
LEON: You slut! You dirty, filthy prostitute. Only Theresa can love me. How dare you try to take her place. Do you think you're better than her? Huh? Do you? Open your mouth.

Leon has come close to Wendy. He puts the gun near her.

COP: No.

Leon grabs her throat.

LEON: Open.

Wendy opens her mouth and Leon puts the gun in.

LEON: Get to your feet. Now. (*cop stands*) Now, back against the wall.

Wendy, with the gun in her mouth, backs towards the wall. The lights dim, and the next bit of action is in slow motion. Wendy slips backwards so the gun comes out of her mouth, then she moves forwards and uses one forearm to deflect it away from her. With her other arm she hits Leon in the bridge of the nose with her palm, a fatal move in martial arts. The lights and time return to normal and Leon collapses. Wendy stares down at him, then chokes back a sob. She puts her face in her hands, turns away, and takes out her radio. After a few deep breaths, she talks.

COP: Darren? It's Wendy Holmes. I need some backup, urgently... Yes! Please...

Wendy puts her radio away, leans against the wall, and slumps down to the ground. The lights fade.