

Love is Mute

written by

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Second Draft

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EXT. SCHOOL ALLEY - DAY

A horde of screaming school kids crowd around something. BULLY #1, a fat kid in a striped shirt, yells into camera.

BULLY #1

Go ahead, say something! Or are you too chicken!

BULLY #2, a wirey snot with spikey hair, makes chicken wings with his arms.

BULLY #2

Yeah, buck buck buck buck!

BULLY #3, a muscular brat with a mullet, shouts into camera.

BULLY #3

What's that?? Speak up! We can't hear you.

YOUNG CONNOLLEY (7), a quiet, sweet-looking kid with glasses, backs up.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

To be honest, I don't even remember what this fight was about.

The gang continues lobbing insults at him as they approach menacingly.

BULLY #1

Let's pound him till he squeals.

BULLY #2

Yeah!

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

But it couldn't've been because I said something... because I can't.

Young Connolley opens his mouth to shout, but nothing comes out.

Freeze frame on his face.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Connolley's the name. And if you haven't figured it out yet, I'm a mute.

Unfreeze.

The bullies all draw closer as the shouting grows louder. Young Connolley scoots back up against the wall afraid as the boys advance.

In a flash, YOUNG SARAH (8), a sprightly girl with a ponytail and more spunk than good sense, jumps between him and the bullies defiantly.

Freeze frame on her face.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oh, and this... is Sarah. She's
the furthest thing from mute you
can get.

Unfreeze.

Young Sarah talks with a lisp.

YOUNG SARAH
Leave him alone, Buster, you sad
excuse for a fart head! Or I'll
punch the skittles out of you!

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
In fact, if anyone had the gift of
gab, it was her.

INT. BUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Young Sarah, speaking at lightspeed, sits next to an overwhelmed Young Connolley on the back of the bus.

YOUNG SARAH
Wow, I really saved your stuffin'
back there. What would you have
done without me—I'm practically a
super hero!

She gasps with glee at the thought of a new topic to talk about.

YOUNG SARAH (CONT'D)
Speaking of super heroes!

INT. LUNCH TABLE - DAY

Young Connolley, halfway through his Lunchables box, sits quietly at the lunch table.

Young Sarah swings open her lunchbox, still yammering away at breakneck speed.

YOUNG SARAH

What's your favorite beanie baby?
Mine's Puncher the Lobster because
he's red and has the big pinchers
and-

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Young Connolley walking down the hall, trying to keep to himself. Young Sarah following him closely.

YOUNG SARAH

Gracey told Stephanie that she
thinks the best Spice Girl is Posh
Spice but there's no way because
she's-

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - EVENING

Young Sarah and Young Connolley stand together with kids playing foursquare in the background.

YOUNG SARAH

I wonder how long I can talk on a
single breath.

POWERZOOM: She inhales massively. Freeze frame.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

Anyways, where do I start?
(beat)
Oh yeah...

HOME VIDEO VHS FOOTAGE:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

MOM (30s), lying in the hospital bed, pushing through full-blown contractions, waves the camera away.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

Three pounds, four ounces. That's
what I weighed. I guess I was a
premie, cuz for some reason I got
shipped out without a vocal box.
At least that's how pops explained
it.

DAD (30s), frazzled and dressed in a sweater and jeans, turns the camera around and hands it off to a friend offscreen.

Dad, now holding BABY CONNELLY, smiles, and talks to him.

END HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE**MOTION GRAPHIC:**

A diagram of a baby in utero fills the screen. We zoom to the larynx.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
They call it psychogenic aphonia.
It's a genetic disorder where the
vocal folds, quote, 'fail to
adduct to the midline during
phonation,' unquote.

The vocal cords in the diagram vibrate but don't touch.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Basically a bunch of scientific
mumbo jumbo that boils down to
just an inability to speak.

A big circle with a line through it appears over the larynx.

END MOTION GRAPHIC**INT. KITCHEN - MORNING**

Dad feeds Baby Connolley at the kitchen table, slowly sounding out words.

DAD
Foooo-ood. Food.

Mom collects her things for work in the background.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
My mom took the news pretty good,
but it frustrated my dad some...

DAD
Coooff-eee. Coffee.

Baby Connolley coughs.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, I think he—!

MOM
(unfazed)
No.

DAD
But maybe...

MOM
No, honey.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 Dad was a speech pathologist.
 (beat)
 Was.

Dad hangs his head.

INT. BABY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Baby Connolley stands gripping the bars of his crib. Tears run down his face, mouth agape, but not a sound.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 But on the bright side, I also
 couldn't cry, so... that was a
 plus. Take the good with the bad,
 I suppose.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dad and Mom sound asleep in their bed.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Mom and Dad, sit in front of a marbled 90s photo backdrop, with TODDLER CONNOLLEY seated between them.

An artsy PHOTOGRAPHER, with messy crimped hair, adjusts their clothes and scuffles out of frame.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 Anyways, my parents didn't have
 any more kids after that. I think
 they were afraid it would end up
 like me...

The family stares directly at the camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER
 Say "Cheese!"

MOM AND DAD
 CHEESE.

Flash.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Toddler Connolley, sitting at his play table, draws a scene with a paper and crayon...

A family of four.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 Which was a bummer because I
 would've really liked a brother.
 (beat)
 If only I could've told them.

Mom steps in and crouches down, picking up his drawing.

MOM
 What is this? A shadow sweetie?
 Very nice.

The tea-kettle starts squealing.

MOM (CONT'D)
 Oh!

Mom gets up, leaving the drawing behind.

Toddler Connolley looks down at the paper.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 But I digress. Where was I?
 (beat)
 Oh yes. Sarah.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

PRE-TEEN CONNOLLEY, sits at his schooldesk looking forward in class. The teacher (O.S.) drones on, when someone passes Pre-teen Connolley a note from behind.

He takes it and looks over his shoulder.

PRE-TEEN SARAH, still cute as a button, hunches over her desk to hide herself from the teacher as she stifles a laugh.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 We'd been friends for as long as I
 can remember.

He smiles back at her.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Which, I guess, is why I took the
 news so hard.

SPLITSCREEN: INT. SARAH'S ROOM / INT. CONNOLLEY'S ROOM

TEENAGE SARAH holds a huge wireless home phone to her ear.

TEENAGE CONNOLLEY holds a corded phone to his ear.

TEENAGE SARAH

Oh my gosh, guess what? Bryce and I are going steady! I thought he was going with Brianna but then I heard....

She keeps talking but her audio fades out.

Connolley looks shellshocked.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

Yeah, that sucked.

Her audio comes back.

TEENAGE SARAH

...so he kissed me behind the bleachers! Isn't that exciting?

Silence.

Sarah squeals and continues on in delight.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

Made junior prom super awkward. I had to go with my cousin.

END SPLITSCREEN.

INT. JUNIOR PROM - NIGHT

Teenage Connolley dances with someone that doesn't matter. He watches Sarah across a sea of dancers.

Teenage Sarah laughs with BRYCE, a douchey-looking jock.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

But anyways, that whole thing ended when she found out that Bryce was cheating on her with Tabatha...

INT. JUNIOR PROM - NIGHT

Teenage Sarah and Teenage Connolley sit on folding chairs in an empty gym with streamers and confetti strewn about the floor. Still in her beautiful prom dress, Teenage Sarah cries on his shoulder.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

...I know. What a name...
'Tabatha.' Blech. Only time I've ever been happy to not be able to say a word. 'Tabatha.'

Sarah blows her nose and then buries her head into Connolley's shoulder again.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This happened more than once, come
to think of it.

MATCH CUT:

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Teenage Sarah (16), dressed as a megaphone for Halloween, cries on the shoulder of Teenage Connolley who is dressed as a mime.

EXT. BLEACHERS - LATE AFTERNOON

Teenage Sarah (17), in cheerleader clothes and holding pom poms, cries on Teenage Connolley's shoulder.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE - LATE NIGHT

Teenage Sarah (18), wearing a Peter Pan costume, cries on Teenage Connolly who is wearing a Nana costume (the dog from Peter Pan).

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
Senior year was rough.

The sound of APPLAUSE builds.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION - DAY

Teenage Connolley applauds with the crowd of soon-to-be graduates. He sits up in his chair as...

Teenage Sarah walks across the stage to receive her diploma.

He smiles, happy for her.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
Anyways, I really liked her.... a
lot I suppose.
(beat)
But you know life...

INT. FRAT PARTY - NIGHT

A can of beer forced into unprepared hands.

Teenage Connolley, holding the beer and seated on a seedy frat house couch, looks around the raucous party.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 We both got accepted to different colleges. I studied literature... obviously. And she went on to study communications. Kind of lost touch in the college scene...

Two college girls sit down next to Teenage Connolley on the couch. One to his left and right.

GIRL 1
 Don't like to talk much, huh?

GIRL 2
 Ooo, a man of mystery?

They get a little too close for comfort and Teenage Connolley gets up and hurries away, looking back over his shoulder nervously at them.

GIRL 1
 Hey, where are you going? Come back!

GIRL 2
 Freak.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

CONNOLLEY (early 20s) is dressed to the nines, nervously tapping his foot and gripping his folder.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
 Anywho, graduated. Got a job.

Someone calls his name. Connolley smiles and gets up.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Gosh it sounds so easy when you say it like that. It wasn't.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

INTERVIEWER
 So...

The Interviewer looks somewhat frantically through a stack of papers on his disorganized desk to find a name...

Success.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)
 Connelly.
 (MORE)

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)
What would you say is your
greatest weakness?

Connolley looks down at his notes and then up at the
Interviewer.

A long awkward pause. You can hear the clock on the
interviewer's desk ticking.

The Interviewer leans forward in his chair and looks at
Connolley.

They stare at each other.

The Interviewer smiles suddenly and sits back in his chair.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)
A man of few words... I like that.

INT. FULFILLMENT CENTER - NIGHT

Alone in a giant warehouse, Connolley moves boxes and listens
to something on his earbuds.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
But anyways, got a job. And it was
kind of perfect for me actually.

INT. CONNOLLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Coming home from work, he sets down his coat, picks up some
mail and sorts through it. He stops at...

A decorated envelope.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
Life was going pretty good, I
suppose, when, out of the blue, I
got a letter.

He tears it open, revealing a Save the Date for "The Wedding of
Sarah M. Newton and Trent R. Gillespie. La Jolla, CA."

He looks at it, emotionless. Then he looks up with a thought.

INT. CONNOLLEY'S APARTMENT OFFICE - NIGHT

In front of the computer, Connolley clicks open Facebook.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
Apparently she met some douchebag
in college.

Into the search bar, he types "Trent R. Gillespie."

He clicks on the first one located in La Jolla.

Connolley looks through the photos.

In all the photos, Trent looks like a ken doll.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I mean just look at the guy. What
a tool.

Connolley sees, "Engaged to Sarah M. Newton."

He pauses and thinks for a moment, then he clicks her name,
pulling up her profile.

Her profile picture is absolutely adorable.

He looks on, sadly, for a moment.

The cursor moves to the "Add Friend" button.

He looks down and then back up at the screen.

He clicks.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But I went to the wedding anyway,
cuz... I loved her.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The wedding ceremony. The processional music begins.

TRENT, the groom, stands at the front... dressed like a douche.

Connolley stands watching him.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
Douche.

The crowd begins to turn to the back doors of the church.
Connolley turns.

Sarah walks up the aisle, absolutely sublime.

Connolley watches her walk down the aisle.

She walks up to meet Trent.

The congregation sits.

The PRIEST says something without audio.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And then it happened. The moment.

PRIEST

If anyone here has a reason why
these two should not be wed, speak
now or forever hold your peace.

Connolley sits up in his chair about to speak...

But he pauses. He just looks at her.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

I don't know that I would've said
anything even if I could. I wanted
to...

She is radiant.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But she just looked so happy...

She looks into Trent's eyes and smiles. Slow motion.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And when you love someone... you
want them to be happy.

He sits back slowly with a teary-eyed smile.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

Sarah SQUEALS as she runs in, grinning ear to ear, a glass of
champagne in hand.

Connolley is taken aback as she gives him a big hug.

SARAH

Oh my goodness, Con! Thank you for
coming.

He smiles at her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I didn't think you'd make it.

His smile softens sadly.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And I can't believe we weren't
Facebook friends! We gotta catch
up sometime, let me give you my
number.

She writes it down on a napkin and hands it to him.

GUEST (O.S.)

Sarah!

Sarah notices a GUEST, off screen, and waves at them as she looks back at Connolley.

SARAH

Oh, I'm so glad you're here! Make sure to have a good time.

She squeezes his arm as she runs off to greet another guest, smiling effervescently.

Connolley looks down at the napkin with her number and then off to her.

INT. CONNOLLEY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

An alarm clock BUZZES.

Connolley hits the snooze button.

INT. CONNOLLEY'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - MORNING

Dressed in a robe and rocking some serious bedhead, he scuffles into the kitchen and pours himself a pitiful cup of coffee.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)

So anyways, yeah...

As he's pouring, he picks up an oatmeal container and looks at the heart-healthy icon on the packaging.

He sits at the kitchen table eating oatmeal, looking out the open window.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'd pretty much resigned myself to living a pitiful monastic life of silence... and celibacy... forever.

A bird SINGS freely just outside his window.

He throws the oatmeal container at the bird, which flies away.

He settles back into his chair and picks up his phone.

He scrolls through Facebook a bit as he takes a sad bite of oatmeal from his bowl.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But then, I saw it.

He stops scrolling.

Sarah's relationship status is now single.

He thinks for a moment, then puts down his spoon and opens up a new message.

He types in Sarah's name. Her contact name is "Sarah **do not text.**"

He types out a message.

"Hey Sarah, I saw something on Facebook and wanted to see if you were doing alright?"

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

He sits staring out the window at a coffee shop when he hears something and looks towards the door.

She comes through the door looking for him.

He sees her and smiles.

She smiles a sad smile and comes over to see him.

EXT. PARK - DAY

They sit on a park bench, takeout coffee cups in hand. She's talking, but slowly, barely keeping it together.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
And... it was really good
actually.

She starts crying.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just like old times.

He puts his arm around her.

MATCH CUT TO:

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EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Sarah buries her head in his shoulder.

He rests his head on hers.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.)
But better.

She looks up into his eyes.

He looks into hers.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Because sometimes... you don't
have to say I love you...

She smiles.

He smiles softly back.

CONNOLLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...to say I love you.

He holds her tenderly as she sinks into his embrace.

FADE OUT:

CREDITS

Photo of their wedding interspersed with the credits:

At the altar with Sarah, Connolley holds a card that says,
"I Do."

At reception, they cut the cake together laughing.

In the honeymoon car, they kiss.