

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

An old worn out SHOE BOX lays at the bottom of a MOVING BOX. A hand grabs the shoe box, TILTING up to GAGE, 20s.

WIDEN to reveal ELLA, 20s, in the background struggling to drag a heavy COUCH by herself, little by little.

Gage opens the shoe box, discovering old LOVE NOTES.

ELLA
Gage...little help please!

Gage still in his own little world, grabs a note, reads it.

ELLA (cont'd)
What are you doing? Get over here
jackass!

GAGE
Such a charmer.

Ella trips and falls while moving the bulky couch. The CRASH startles Gage back to focus.

GAGE (cont'd)
Sorry! You ok?

Gage helps Ella up, sits her on the couch. Checks her for injuries but she's fine.

ELLA
You said you'd help me unpack.

GAGE
I'm sorry, I got distracted by... um-
(re: box)
What is this?

Gage picks out another note, reads it out loud.

GAGE (cont'd)
"I love the way that you touch me?"
What the shit?

Ella rolls her eyes. Gage discards it, grabbing another.

GAGE (cont'd)
*"You really are just a cool dude with
long hair."* Uh. Is there something you
want to tell me Ella?

Gage chuckles, while Ella's a little embarrassed.

ELLA

It's my memory box. I experimented back in the day... seeing how many boys I could get to fall in love with me. I had to do my research!

GAGE

You didn't sleep with all these guys did you? Not that I care, or that I'm judging...

ELLA

Ew. Not even. Are you jealous, G?

GAGE

(nervously)

No, no. More curious than anything else. We're friends! ...just friends.

Awkward beat. Ella shrugs, sitting down next to Gage. He scoots over to accommodate her.

ELLA

You say that like it's a bad thing?

GAGE

Not what I meant.

Gage grabs another note card to change subjects.

GAGE (cont'd)

Ooh. Check this one out-- "*You are the kind of girl I see myself marrying.*"

ELLA

I'm not settling down for a while. Not my style.

Gage nervously chuckles. He picks up another note.

GAGE

You got arrested? How did I not know this?

ELLA

Some drunk idiot I was dating came at me screaming with his hands up in my face so I punched him one time. It was just a jab-- what a pussy. I don't know why I stayed to take care of him. Obviously that bit me in the ass.

GAGE

You sure know how to pick winners.

Ella grabs a note she recognizes from the box.

ELLA

This one is from you!

GAGE

Wait, what?

ELLA

It's not even opened. We have to!

Gage quickly grabs the note and plays keep-away from Ella.

GAGE

Naw, let's not. It's probably some stupid angsty note about our emo phase. No need to rehash.

ELLA

Come on!

Gage puts the note between his teeth. He picks her up and playfully throws her on the couch to get her to stop. She laughs. He hides away the note, frantic to change subjects.

GAGE

Moving on. Memory game! Hit me with a memory. Any memory...First thing that pops into your mind.

Ella looks at Gage suspiciously, but decides to play along.

ELLA

Well, one time there was this guy who I met in third grade. I liked him, but he never wanted to give me the time of day.

Ella shares a glance with Gage, if only for a moment.

ELLA (cont'd)

He was my very first crush...

Gage is taken aback. He knows she is talking about him.

ELLA (cont'd)

Thank God that's over.

GAGE

Yeah.

(conflicted sarcasm)

Thank god.

She nudges Gage playfully. He smiles begrudgingly.

ELLA

If I recall, I complimented him on his backpack and he told me to leave him alone because I was "yuck".

GAGE

You still haven't forgiven me for that?

ELLA

Forgiven, but not forgotten. I guess you did make it up to me when you threw a football at Timmy's head when he called me a wet rat.

GAGE

That's right. I've always had your back, Ella. Still do.

Gage and Ella's eyes meet, eye contact lingers. Both are wanting to say something but are afraid.

ELLA

Do I look like a wet rat?

GAGE

No. You're beautiful.

ELLA

Tell me something I don't know.

GAGE

...on the inside. Fuckin' narcissist.

ELLA

You kiss your mother with that mouth?

Gage stops in his tracks, a sensitive subject clearly. BEAT.

ELLA (cont'd)

I'm so sorry. I didn't mean- Listen... I heard about the cancer. Fuck cancer.

GAGE
 She'll pull through. If she could
 survive raising me she can survive
 anything.

ELLA
 True, you were an asshole.
 (beat)
 But seriously, are you ok?

Ella rests a hand on Gage's arm. Gage clocks this, enjoys it
 but then stands, beginning to pace around the room.

GAGE
 I'm surviving, I guess. Making jokes
 to jerks like you about it.

Ella stares Gage down. He senses this.

GAGE (cont'd)
 Look, I don't really wanna talk about
 it. I'm trying so hard to be
 optimistic. I just need to..

Ella interrupts.

ELLA
 Gage.

GAGE
 I just need to forget for a little
 while, so leave it.

Gage nudges the bed a couple of inches over.

GAGE (cont'd)
 This looks better here.

Ella stands to confront him, refusing to let things go.

ELLA
 We've been through everything
 together. I'm your Mav...
 (exasperated beat)
 Talk to me, Goose.

Gage is overcome with a sudden burst of sadness.

GAGE
 No.

He moves past her, somberly walking toward the dining table.

ELLA
 Don't shut down on me.
 (thoughtful)
 I care about you.

GAGE
 I know. She's just...my mom, you know?
 Fuck.

Gage sits at the table, straddling one of the chairs. He begins to speak more erratically with each breath.

GAGE (cont'd)
 I mean-- she's had her health problems but she shouldn't be hooked up to all that shit in the hospital. I don't know what I'd do if she...

Ella moves over to Gage, grabbing him by the shoulders to shake him out of his funk.

ELLA
 GAGE! You're ok. Mom is going to be ok. She's the strongest woman I know.
 (beat)
 Remember when she got drunk with us on Mother's Day? What a boss! She was knocking back our Jell-O shots like there was no tomorrow. If she can survive that...

Gage laughs and finally loosens up.

GAGE
 She can survive anything. Yeah, that was pretty hysterical. You got her pretty messed up.

Gage chuckles to himself, finally loosening up.

ELLA
 Are you going to see her soon?

GAGE
 Tomorrow. Scares the shit out of me.

Ella lovingly pulls Gage into her arms like a big sister. They hold each other, chair between them.

ELLA
 Then let's focus on today. Get up.

Ella pulls at Gage to get him to stand. Gage resists.

GAGE

What?

Ella turns off the room lights and plugs in a disco ball. As lights flash around the room, Ella turns on some music.

ELLA

I know you love this song.

She cranks the volume up and starts dancing around. Gage is hesitant but soon gives in to the moment. He stands and unplugs the gaudy disco ball, but then cracks a smile and starts dancing with her.

TRANSITION TO:

MONTAGE --

- Ella and Gage sing, dance and laugh together.
- Notes thrown in the air then flutter down around them.
- Gage uses a BOTTLE OF TEQUILA as a microphone.
- Ella and Gage share a moment of happiness.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - LATER

We TILT up from a the empty bottle of tequila. Gage and Ella slam the last SHOT GLASSES on the coffee table.

GAGE

I don't know what I'd do without you.
You're my home. My best friend.
(beat)
My lady.

Ella bites a LIME and makes a face. Gage is a little tipsy.

ELLA

Your lady?

GAGE

Well... I don't know... you're my ride
or die, like in the Fast & Furious
kind of way.

Ella does her best Vin Diesel impression.

ELLA

FAMILY.

Gage puts his hand on top of Ella's. They share a glance.

GAGE
Nothing is more important to me than
family. And family...

Gage nervously rambles, wanting to confess his love but can't pull the trigger... Ella leans in closer.

ELLA
...family is everything.

GAGE
Ella, you're everything.

Gage sweats anxiously, didn't mean to let that slip.

ELLA
There something you want to tell me?
(beat)
You're looking like you either want to
kiss me or eat me alive.

GAGE
I, uh...I can't decide.

ELLA
You've heard me dropping hints, right?

GAGE
What? I thought you just wanted to be
friends?

ELLA
Is that what you want?

BEAT as Gage thinks over his next move. All or nothing now.

GAGE
I want to kiss you Ella.

ELLA
Then kiss me.

Gage grabs Ella fiercely and they finally kiss.

She jumps into his arms and they fall down onto the couch. Gage flips her over onto her back, laying on top of her.

Ella likes it. After a moment, Gage pulls away.

GAGE
Wow, so this is happening.

ELLA
You're welcome.

GAGE
Come here.

Ella smiles as they kiss again, longer and more passionately.

Out of nowhere, Gage's phone starts VIBRATING. He pulls away to read a text message. Gage jumps up and down.

GAGE (cont'd)
She's coming home... My mom's officially in remission! She's fucking coming home tonight!

Ella starts jumping with him. *They are so happy together.*

ELLA
I called it. She's indestructible.

They look longingly into each others eyes.

GAGE
I know, thanks for the faith. Will you come pick her up with me? I'm sure she would love to see you.

He kisses her before she has a chance to respond.

GAGE (cont'd)
How did I get so lucky?

ELLA
Why did I have to wait so long?

GAGE
Do you really want to get into it?

ELLA
Say less.

They go back to making out, clothes fly off as it gets hot and heavy quickly.

Gage picks up Ella and takes her to the bedroom.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLES: ELLA UNPACKS