THE TEST

(Rainy Sunday Afternoon)

Written by:

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Cast of Characters

1. **NATE:** Late 20s to early 30s. Witty, tightly wound, masking a deep reservoir of nervous terror with comedy and cinematic bravado.
2. **RACHAEL:** Late 20s to early 30s. Grounded, sharp-witted, the calm eye of Nate's hurricane.

Place

Nate and Rachael’s apartment

Time

A rainy Sunday afternoon

Setting: Nate and Rachael's suburban apartment living room. A television is visible playing a football game in the background.

At Rise: NATE is relaxing and watching football. RACHAEL enters, looking incredibly nervous.

NATE

What's wrong, Rach? You look nervous.

RACHAEL

You know why. Check the app.

(NATE adjusts to be more present. He scrolls through his phone to check the date on an app.)

NATE

It's only a day out, babe. Last month it was two days, *(Confirms with his phone)* and the same the month before. Are you sure you want to put yourself through that today?

RACHAEL

I feel like I should. I know I probably shouldn't…

(She pauses)

It's just, my chest has been sore all morning, and coffee made me super nauseous…and I know, I know I shouldn't be tracking my symptoms, but it feels a little different today.

NATE

Rach, coffee on an empty stomach…..

RACHAEL

I know. Don’t let me get my hopes up.

NATE

Whatever you want to do, we got this.

RACHAEL

I think I’m gonna do it.

NATE

Then do it!

RACHAEL

I’m not sure I can handle that disappointment today. I just hate planning my whole day around a stupid fucking plastic stick.

NATE

However you want to do it. I’m here.

RACHAEL

At least I’ll know and we can get on with our Sunday. Are you ready?

NATE

(slips into John Wayne)

“I was born ready.”

RACHAEL (Playfully)

Oh my God, you're SUCH a loser!

NATE

(Sings Beck's "Loser")

That's right! "I'm a loser, baaaabbbyyy, so why don't you kill meeeeeee!"

RACHAEL (Lovingly annoyed)

GOD! I hate you… sooooo much.

NATE (Teasingly)

I know you do. Especially when I do THIS!

(NATE makes a strange face and opens his mouth wide like Dracula going for RACHAEL's neck.)

RACHAEL

Knock it off!

NATE

(As a bad Dracula)

But your indecisiveness smells delicious!

(They play fight until they embrace, looking at each other.)

RACHAEL

I’m going to do this before I lose my nerve.

(NATE kisses her forehead.)

NATE

I think you should.

RACHAEL

I love you.

NATE

I love you… even if I am a loser.

RACHAEL

(Sarcastically)

Here we go!!

(They break their embrace. RACHAEL exits off-stage toward the bathroom.)

(The football announcer is heard on the TV.)

TV ANNOUNCER

And with two minutes left, will we see the New York Football Giants make the comeback? We’ll find out after this short break from our sponsors...

(A timer with a 5-minute countdown appears on stage. The TV audio fades out.)

RACHAEL (O.S.)

By the way, we need to hit the store for more ovulation kiiitttsss—damn it, I got my hand! You'd think I'd be a pro at this by now.

NATE

WASH YOUR HANDS!!

RACHAEL (O.S.)

Never! I now have a biohazard weapon!

(The toilet flushes; water runs. RACHAEL enters sneakily behind NATE sitting on the couch, and rubs her wet hands on his face.)

RACHAEL

OHHHH NOoooOoo! I DIDN'T WASH MY HAAANDS!

NATE

STOP! NO! DON'T!

(RACHAEL laughs maniacally. NATE wrestles her off, and they sink into a side-cuddle.)

NATE

Ugh, that is soooooo gross. Why would you do that to me?

RACHAEL

Mostly, because you deserve it.

(Stage focus shifts to the clock. Time accelerates to 2:30.)

NATE

Rach... if it isn't today...

RACHAEL

Don't.

NATE

I wasn't going to say anything.

RACHAEL

Yes. Yes, you were.

NATE

(At a loss)

Well… I…

RACHAEL

We always say "next month."

NATE

I was just...

RACHAEL

You don’t have to explain. We got this.

(A long, heavy silence.)

NATE

Look, I know I’m not supposed to say it right now, but I still like the name Ophelia.

RACHAEL

I know you do, dummy. We have a list, remember?

NATE

Here I am, just trying **not** to make it **even** weirder.

RACHAEL

It’s fine… It is weird, but you’re only bringing this up because you're nervous.

NATE

Well, it’s worked at least the last six times.

RACHAEL

No. No, it hasn’t.

NATE

Then at least five… four?

(Pause)

It distracted us…

(RACHAEL rests her head on NATE’s chest. NATE sighs deeply.)

(After a long pause)

NATE

...but honestly, babe, I don't care what we call her… as long as she has your eyes.

RACHAEL

(Resigned)

She can have my eyes.

(Beat)

She needs your vision, though. Do you even know how expensive glasses are?

NATE

(Raises hands to his brow and speaks like a 1940s gangster superhero hybrid)

Not with these eyes, lady! I can read the bottom line at the doctor like it's nobody's business, see. Eagle Eyes, some would say, see.

RACHAEL

Sometimes I can't believe I actually married you. You're SUCH a dork.

NATE

I'm the biggest dork!

RACHAEL

But you're MY dork.

NATE

(Silly English accent)

That I am, m'lady.

(Silence on stage. The clock accelerates to 1:00.)

NATE

When is it appropriate to start reading Lord of the Rings as a bedtime story? Do you think we could start that like, early, early?

RACHAEL

Your Honor, I present more evidence of dork-dom.

NATE

Seriously though, these are the stupid things I think about!

RACHAEL

What?

NATE

Bedtime stories. First day of school. Which parent will they hate first? That kind of stuff.

RACHAEL

They're not stupid thoughts.

NATE

I know, I know…I guess…. I guess, it just it feels stupid after a while.

(Beat.)

RACHAEL

(Letting her armor slip)

It didn't feel stupid to me this morning.

NATE

No?

RACHAEL

When I woke up today and felt sore… and sick, I actually let myself think about it. The first day of school, the bedtime stories, our list of names, all of it.

NATE

I'm glad we both still think about it.

RACHAEL

Of course, I just can't put my thoughts there every month.

NATE

Me too Rach, Me too.

RACHAEL

Anyway….. let's see if we can make it past late-night feedings before we introduce Gollum.

NATE

(Pets her head, imitating Gollum)

Yes, my precious.

(Changing course)

I've often wondered how that all works. Is it like Gremlins rules—nothing after midnight?

RACHAEL

Ha! Exactly! And never get them wet! And if they cry, you feed them, change them, and pray to the good Lord.

NATE

This IS what all the books say.

RACHAEL

Seems like a lot of work at 1 AM.

NATE

A Mogwai might be easier…

RACHAEL

I can't with you and your pop culture today.

NATE

You love it! It's why I'm your dork.

RACHAEL

(Sighs heavily, gets up and stretches)

I think this is the longest two minutes of football I've ever witnessed.

NATE

Two minutes is never actually two minutes in football, you know this… and two minutes is like thirty if this was basketball.

(RACHAEL heads off-stage to check the test.)

RACHAEL

You know what's messed up?

NATE

What's that?

RACHAEL

Part of me already knows.

NATE

And?

RACHAEL

And I still look every time.

(The clock hits 0:00. Focus shifts to the TV.)

TV ANNOUNCER

And it’s caught at the 40-yard line! He breaks the tackle! To the 35! The 30! He’s got an open field in front of him! The 20! The 10! TOUCHDOWN, NEW YORK FOOTBALL GIANTS! With the go-ahead score as time runs out!! What a catch! What a run!! What a—

NATE

THEY WON!! THEY ACTUALLY—

(NATE turns, arms raised, but freezes as he sees RACHAEL standing in the doorway)

(The TV audio fades into ringing silence. RACHAEL enters stage and stops halfway to NATE)

NATE

(Softly)

...Rach?

(RACHAEL shakes her head “no.” Her posture collapses.)

(NATE goes to RACHAEL, embraces her, and the test falls from her hands.)

BLACKOUT