

# Love Letters

A.R. Gurney

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## Who?

Producer: Clarabel Chen

Director: Sam Ahn

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## What?

Melissa Gardner (she/her) and Andrew Makepeace Ladd III (he/him) have written letters to each other since they were children. *Love Letters* follows their correspondences over the decades — and subsequently, their triumphs and failures, their quarrels and reconciliations, and most importantly, their love story.

Melissa says towards the end: *“I keep thinking about that strange old world we grew up in. How did it manage to produce both you and me? A stalwart upright servant of the people, and a boozed out, cynical, lascivious old broad. The best and the worst, that’s us”*

It’s a line that has me thinking about the high-achieving, rise-up-the-system mindset with which Asian immigrant children grow up. Hearing an Asian person talk about themselves rising up the ranks of the U.S. Senate, hearing an Asian person talk about their mental health struggles when they don’t succeed in that “strange old world” — I think it’s a strange mix of cognitive dissonance and catharsis that I feel and that I think many Asian Americans would feel watching the two sides of this story unfold.

This all-Asian production of *Love Letters* poses three questions:

- (1) What does it mean for Asian people, who were few in numbers in the U.S. before the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 (which marks approximately the halfway point of the play’s time period) to play these roles that take wealth and belonging in America for granted?
- (2) What does it mean to succeed coming out of elite institutions like Yale?
- (3) What does it mean for a young person to speak the words of an older, future self?

**This show is not time intensive. Minimal rehearsal time (see “Time Commitment”).** It consists of two actors sitting side-by-side reading off scripts. **First time theatermakers are especially encouraged to audition!**

We’re casting multiple actors for the two roles – different actors for different performances! E.g., Actor 1 and Actor 2 will perform on Thursday and Saturday matinee, and Actor 3 and Actor 4 will perform on Friday and Saturday night. Something along those lines.

This show is sponsored by the Asian American Collective of Theatermakers (AACT). Sign up for the AACT mailing list here: <https://forms.gle/dLaj8afuEiRkmxNv5>

### When?

Date of First Rehearsal: March 8  
Current Tech Week Dates: April 2-5  
Performance Dates: April 6-8  
Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance): March 8-April 8

### Time Commitment

Weekly Estimated Time Commitments (in Hours):

- Week of March 6: we'll read through the script and discuss it.
- Spring Break: rehearse on your own!
- Week of April 2nd: maybe like 5 hours of rehearsal (two runs)

### Content Warnings

Mentions of childhood molestation, implied suicide

### Audition Expectations

Film a self-tape of you reading the side of a character below. You can record this anywhere! These are chill and low-stakes. The most important thing is to have fun! **Please don't memorize. Just read it!**

An example of how to set up a self-tape: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8mHtlbSj6E>

#### How to submit your self-tape:

1. Email Clarabel at [clarabel.chen@yale.edu](mailto:clarabel.chen@yale.edu) with your video file and name it: Role\_Name, e.g., Andrew\_Sam Ahn.
2. Fill out this audition form: <https://forms.gle/NHA735zwDMxz8iaYA>
3. Self-tapes due by Wednesday, January 25, 11:59 PM!

We may have some in-person callbacks the week of January 23rd to see how pairs would work together.

**\*\*\* denotes the passage of time. Read these plain and simple!**

**ANDREW SIDE (read from “I have to tell you this” to “Sincerely, Andy Ladd”)**

*(He’s probably in middle school at this point — I wanna say eighth grade)*

I have to tell you this, right off the bat. I'm really goddam mad at you. I invite you up here for the only dance my class has been able to go to since we got here, I meet you at the train and buy you a vanilla milkshake and bring you out to school in a taxi, I score two goals for you during the hockey game the next afternoon, I buy you the eight dollar gardenia corsage, I make sure your dance card is filled with the most regular guys in the school, and then what happens? I now hear that you sneaked off with Bob Bartram during the Vienna Waltz, and necked with him in the coatroom. I heard that from two guys! And then Bob himself brought it up yesterday at breakfast. He says he French-kissed you and touched BOTH your breasts. I tried to punch him but Mr. Enbody restrained me. I'm really sore, Melissa. I consider this a betrayal of everything I hold near and dear. Particularly since you would hardly even let me kiss you goodnight after we had cocoa at the Rector's. And you know what I'm talking about, too! So don't expect any more letters from me, or any telephone calls either during spring vacation. Sincerely yours.

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*(~Forty years later — ANDREW writes to MELISSA’s mother after MELISSA has died)*

Dear Mrs. Gardner: I think the first letter I ever wrote was to you, accepting an invitation for Melissa's birthday party. Now I'm writing you again about her death. As you may know, Melissa and I managed to keep in touch with each other most of our lives, primarily through letters. We had a complicated relationship, she and I, all our lives. We went in very different directions. But somehow over all those years, I think we managed to give something to each other. Most of the things I did in life I did with her partly in mind. And if I said or did an inauthentic thing, I could almost hear her groaning over my shoulder. But now she's gone, I really don't know how I'll get along without her. The thought of never again being able to write to her, to connect to her, to get some signal back from her, fills me with an emptiness which is hard to describe. I don't think I've ever loved anyone the way I loved her, and I know I never will again. She was at the heart of my life, and already I miss her desperately. I just wanted to say this to you and to her. Sincerely, Andy Ladd.

**MELISSA SIDE (read from “Sorry, sorry, sorry” to “whole fucking family”)**

*(Probably in middle school at this point, maybe eighth grade)*

Sorry, sorry, sorry. I AM! I HATE that Bob Bartram. I hated him even when I necked with him. I know you won't believe that, but it's true. You can be attracted to someone you hate. Well, maybe you can't, but I can. So all right, I necked with him, but he never touched my chest, and if he says he did, he should be strung up by his testicles. You tell him that, for me, at breakfast! Anyway, I got carried away, Andy, and I'm a stupid bitch, and I'm sorry. I felt so guilty about it that I didn't want to kiss you after the cocoa.

And besides, Andy. Gulp. Er. Ah. Um. How do I say this? With you it's different. You're like a friend to me. You're like a brother. I've never had a brother, and I don't have too many friends, so you're both, Andy. You're it. My mother says you must never say that to a man, but I'm saying it anyway and it's true. Maybe if I didn't know you so well, maybe if I hadn't grown up with you, maybe if we hadn't written all these goddamn LETTERS all the time, I could have kissed you the way I kissed Bob Bartram.

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*(~Forty years later; She's just received ANDY's family Christmas letter mass sent to friends that just goes on and on about how well the family is doing)*

Dear Andy. If I ever get another one of those drippy Xeroxed Christmas letters from you, I think I'll invite myself out to your ducky little house for dinner, and when you're all sitting there eating terribly healthy food and discussing terribly important things and generally congratulating yourselves on all your accomplishments, I think I'll stand up on my chair, and turn around, and moon the whole fucking family!