

# **THE OPTION**

Written by

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FADE IN:

**INT. BARGAIN BOOK STORE - DAY**

Small, charming store. Sells only used books, which are essentially thrown about wherever space can be found.

JOSH, 27, lanky with a mop top of hair, wanders the store, searching the shelves with a curious eye.

The high-pitched RING of an old-fashioned door bell announces the entrance of another client. Josh gives a sideways glance and notices BECCA, 26, long-haired and fresh-faced, enter.

Something about how Becca looks, how she moves, captures his fancy. She wanders down an aisle, her fingers gently caressing the book bindings as she passes.

Josh pretends to glance through a novel as he walks down an aisle, slyly watching her through the bookshelf.

She stops and pulls a well worn edition of "Pride and Prejudice" from a shelf and cradles it as she rounds the aisle corner.

Josh turns the corner at the exact same time and bumps into Becca, knocking the book from her arms.

JOSH  
I'm so sorry.

BECCA  
It's okay. Really.

He bends over and picks up the book. Examines it before he turns it over to her.

JOSH  
"Pride and Prejudice." The book  
that launched a billion  
misconceptions about relationships  
between men and women.

Becca's brow furrows at this pronouncement. Josh senses he needs to retreat quickly.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Funny thing, the original name for  
the book was "First Impressions."  
Seemed fitting.  
(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)

It was also the first book that was really about a search for one's self in a time where privilege and class were sometimes more of a motivating factor than love and companionship.

BECCA

You seem to know a lot about women's literature. Or is that just a clever way of introducing yourself to women that are browsing alone in a book store?

JOSH

That's your first impression of me?  
(with faux indignation)  
I'll have you know I was an English literature major in college, which made me highly unemployable upon graduation.

Becca appears smitten by this guy.

BECCA

Educated and broke. You're really living the dream. So what does a broke English lit major do?

JOSH

Substitute teach high school English lit. Wait tables. I also write screenplays in my spare time. Mostly I starve.

BECCA

Screenplays? Interesting. How's that working out for you... um... sorry, didn't get your name.

JOSH

Josh.

BECCA

Becca.

JOSH

It's working out. Sort of. I optioned a screenplay recently. So that's something.

BECCA

How exciting!

JOSH

The option part is. The money part isn't. I got the amazing sum of one dollar for the option.

BECCA

Wow, broke just oozes from you.

JOSH

It's a sucker deal, I know. But I'm kind of betting on myself, hoping the producer has found the next Aaron Sorkin. If so, maybe he's willing to produce my script and pay me big then. It's a dream, but where would the world be without dreamers?

The store's door bell rings again, and LOGAN, a gym rat with three-day old stubble, enters. He doesn't even bother looking around before yelling out:

LOGAN

Becca? We gotta go! Duke's playing Florida in like thirty minutes!

The shouting prompts an eye roll from Becca.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Becca! Where are you? Let's get going before I miss the game!

Josh nods his head in Logan's direction. Becca shakes her head, calls back to him.

BECCA

Hang on! I'm coming!  
(to Josh)  
Well, gotta go, Josh-the-screenwriter. Nice to meet you. Good luck on those dreams.

JOSH

Nice to meet you, too.

She puts the book back, and she's off. Josh leans back against the bookshelf, let's out a big sigh.

**EXT. PARK - DAY**

It's chilly. Very few people are out. Becca holds a leash on a labradoodle that scampers out in front of her.

She probably needs another leash on Logan, who walks aimlessly behind them, constantly texting on his phone.

BECCA  
You making dinner reservations for Valentine's Day?

LOGAN  
(distracted by the phone)  
What? We're having dinner? Where?

BECCA  
You tell me, Romeo. Valentine's Day is a week from Friday. I'm giving you a head start so you don't leave me hanging like last year.

Logan looks truly pained.

LOGAN  
That's not true. We went bowling, remember? And ate at that place.

BECCA  
Well, I guess Dave and Buster's is technically a "place."

LOGAN  
What do you want? Roses and a heart-shaped box of chocolates? That's such a cliché. I was trying to give you a fun night out, and you make it seem like I've done the worst thing in the history of dating.

BECCA  
Logan, it's not about flowers and chocolates, although those would be nice to get, just once. It's the thought behind the gesture. We went to Dave and Buster's because all your gym bros wanted a place to drink and shoot pool. This year, I want a nice meal, at a nice place, where I get to dress up and order a nice wine that doesn't get poured from a box. Just the two of us.

He shrugs as if he's got no choice.

LOGAN  
Fine. I'll take care of it. What about Leonardo's? You like that place, right?

BECCA  
Leonardo's would be lovely.

Logan's phone CHIRPS. He reads a text, holds up the phone.

LOGAN  
The guys want me to come down for a  
pickup basketball game at the gym.

Now it's Becca's turn to shrug as if she has no choice.

LOGAN (CONT'D)  
I'll call you later.

Becca watches him leave. The disapproval on her face evident.  
She turns to Mookie.

BECCA  
What do you think of that?

Mookie circles around in the grass and finally starts to do  
her business. Becca sighs.

BECCA (CONT'D)  
Eh, you're preaching to the choir  
here. All right, hurry it up. I've  
got somewhere to go.

**INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - DAY**

It's a cluttered mess. Books stacked on books. Empty plates  
and food bags strewn about.

Josh sits at a table, his face buried in his laptop. He looks  
utterly perplexed.

He jumps up from the table and paces the room. Clearly  
something is on his mind. Finally, he grabs a coat off a  
nearby chair and dashes out the door.

**INT. BARGAIN BOOK STORE - DAY**

Josh enters the store, takes a quick glance around. Only a  
couple of patrons can be seen.

He walks the length of the store, up and down aisles, but his  
search comes up empty. He ends up at the spot where he first  
bumped into Becca.

Frustrated, he contemplates his next move, then smiles as an  
idea strikes him.

Scanning the shelves, he finds the well-worn copy of "Pride and Prejudice" that Becca had held when they met. He takes the book to the front desk and happily hands it to the clerk.

JOSH

Do you have a spare piece of paper  
and a pen?

**EXT. BARGAIN BOOK STORE - CONTINUOUS**

Josh exits the store, heads down the sidewalk, and enters a coffee shop. As he does, a car pulls up in front of the book store. Becca gets out and goes inside.

**INT. BARGAIN BOOK STORE - DAY**

Becca enters, hopeful, but is quickly hit with the realization that Josh isn't to be found here.

Disappointed, she walks back to the shelves where she originally found "Pride and Prejudice", but it's missing.

Her shoulders drop. Nothing is going right today. She's about to turn and leave when:

CLERK (O.S.)

You Becca, by any chance?

Becca is startled by the inquiry. She notices the clerk holding the copy of the book.

BECCA

Yes, why do you ask?

CLERK

(hands her the book)

Guy was in here maybe ten minutes ago and bought it. Described you and said to give you this if you happened to come in.

A huge smile crosses Becca's face.

BECCA

Oh my gosh. Thanks so much.

Becca holds the book like it's the most precious gift she's ever received. Looking closer, she notices a piece of paper protruding just inside the front cover.

She pulls the paper out. It's a handwritten note.

JOSH (V.O.)

Becca, I took a chance you might come back here for this. Call me foolish, but I haven't stopped thinking about you since that day we met. I can only hope you feel the same -- always go with your first impression, right? If you feel the same, call or text me at the number below.

Becca tucks the note back in the book. She beams and happily walks out of the store, clutching her treasure.

As she heads to her car, she places the book in her purse, but as she does, the note slips out and falls to the sidewalk. The wind catches it and blows it away.

Oblivious, Becca gets in the car and drives away.

**INT. BECCA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON**

The place is the opposite of Josh's. Neat. Everything in its place. Tastefully decorated.

Becca pulls the phone out of her purse, along with the book. Mookie comes and sits in front of her.

BECCA

Mook! Look what Josh gave me!  
 (holds up the book)  
 And he left me a sweet note and I'm going to... I'm...

She realizes the note isn't in the book. She digs furiously through her purse, then dumps all the contents on a table. The note is nowhere to be found.

**EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

The shrill sound of Becca's scream can be heard out in the parking lot. It can probably be heard three states over.

**INT. BARGAIN BOOK STORE - DAY**

Josh walks into the store. The clerk he gave the book to recognizes him and waves him down.

CLERK

Hey, there you are. So?

JOSH

So what?

CLERK

She came in right after you did. I gave her the book. She didn't call? That was a week ago!

Josh looks sick. The romantic gesture loses out to real life. He quickly exits the store.

**INT. LEONARDO'S RESTAURANT - EVENING**

The Italian restaurant is not exceedingly upscale, but it's not red-checkered table cloths, either. It's a busy night.

Josh, dressed in a white dress shirt, skinny tie and black pants, takes an order from a couple in the corner, then disappears into the kitchen.

As he's in the back, Becca enters. Alone. She wears a red dress -- not too sexy, but it captures her figure well. She looks around, checks her watch, then greets the HOSTESS.

BECCA

Hi. Had a reservation for two. Would be under Logan, I think?

The hostess scans the reservations.

HOSTESS

Here we are. Your table is ready.

The hostess leads her to a table off to the side. Becca sits with a view to the front door. She quickly types a text on her phone as a STAFF WORKER pours her water.

She waits for a response, and after a few moments, the phone PINGS. Becca reads the text and curses under her breath.

She gets up from the table and quickly heads into the ladies room, just missing --

Josh, who returns from the back, a couple of drinks in his hand. He drops them off at another table and sees the Staff Worker putting bread on Becca's table and walks over.

JOSH

Someone sitting here?

STAFF WORKER

(shrugs)

They were a minute ago.

Josh goes to another table and picks up a plate from a customer finishing their dinner.

As he passes, the ladies room, Becca comes barreling out, head down, and runs into Josh, hard. The plate flies out of his hand and crashes on the floor, breaking.

Becca doesn't realize who she's run into, as he's already on the floor, picking up plate pieces, his back to Becca.

BECCA

I'm so sorry. Let me help.

Josh starts to wave her off, but he stops himself. That voice. He recognizes it immediately. Josh quickly turns and sees Becca standing over him.

Her eyes grow wide when she recognizes him, and tears suddenly fill the corners of her eyes.

JOSH/BECCA

It's you!

And they're suddenly talking all over each other:

BECCA

I'm such an idiot! I got your wonderful note and I was rushing home to call but when I got there the note was gone and I told Mookie it must have fallen out -- after I screamed for five minutes -- and I went back and spent an hour in the bookstore parking lot looking for it and yes, I do feel the same way!

JOSH

I can't believe I was so impetuous to do something like write you a note but there was just something about you when you walked in that store that made me say I've got to meet this person and maybe take a chance and I know, I know my first impression was right, and wait -- who's Mookie?

BECCA

Mookie's my dog.

JOSH

Thought he was your boyfriend.

BECCA

That was so ten minutes ago. That loser got offered front row seats for the Knicks' game. So guess who got the shaft? Of all days?

JOSH

Maybe he actually did you a favor.

BECCA

Yeah. Maybe he did.

JOSH

Look, I can't sit and have a meal with you for obvious reasons, but let me wait on you. Meal's on me.

BECCA

That's so sweet, Josh, but I've kind of lost my appetite after what I've been through.

JOSH

Got it. How about just a dessert? I'll bring it right out.

Becca smiles, nods and walks over to her table. The tears are long gone. Josh disappears in the back.

In a moment, he returns. In one hand, he holds a plate with a chocolate dessert. In the other is a vase with a single rose. He places both on the table in front of her as she beams.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Chocolate raspberry torte. Enjoy.

As she takes a bite, he notices a couple motioning for him.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Listen, I've have to get back to work -- I'll come back in a little bit and get your number, ok?

She nods, savoring the dessert and he rushes away. The night gets busy and Josh has difficulty getting back to her table.

LATER --

Josh returns to the table, but Becca is gone. The disappointment on his face is evident.

The only thing remaining is a single dollar bill with a note that reads:

"I believe in you, and in first impressions, so I'm picking up your option. Here's a dollar. Call me and we'll close the deal. Love, Becca. 555-661-1212."

Josh pockets the dollar bill like a prized possession. He can't dial the phone fast enough.

FADE OUT.