

TANGLED NET

An Internet Love Story
(for 3 actors)

By
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TANGLED NET

A few comments, before we begin:

- *The play is intended to be a modern-times mini-melodrama (ie exaggerated emotions). I think of it as “Jane Austin meets the Internet”.*
 - *It has to be played fast. There’s a lot to get through (if you want to keep it under 10 minutes) which means there’s no time for dramatic pauses.*
 - *Words underlined are being typed (and are spoken out loud, of course); words in <pointy braces> are “email commands” and should also be spoken out loud.*
 - *When the symbol “//” is encountered, the next line is spoken starting at that point (for overlapping dialogue; I stole “//” from Caryl Churchill).*
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Lights up on Edward, sitting at a desk on which is a computer. He is about to type a very important letter.

EDWARD:

Dear Mr Wetherby,

I trust that this correspondence finds you in good health.

As you know, your daughter Amanda and I have been friends since childhood.

She has been so long a part of my life that I simply cannot imagine my future

without her. Frankly, I love her with all my heart.

So it is with some trepidation and much joy that I ask for your permission to

marry your daughter.

Yours Sincerely,

Edward James Milson

<send>

Lights down on Edward, and up on Mr Wetherby, sitting at a desk with a computer.

MR WETHERBY:

Dear Edward,

I most certainly do not give you permission to marry my daughter.

You are a cretin.

Sincerely yours,

Alfred Wetherby

<send>

Lights down on Mr Wetherby and up again on Edward.

EDWARD:

Dearest Amanda,

Terrible news! Your father has refused to give his permission.

All my love,

Edward

<send>

Lights down on Edward, and up on Amanda, sitting at a desk with a computer.

AMANDA:

Dear Edward,
Of course my father has refused to give his permission. He thinks you are a cretin. I told you that would happen. In fact, if you'll recall, I told you not to ask him.
Amanda
<send>

Lights up on Edward. Lights remain up on both Edward and Amanda.

EDWARD:

Dearest Amanda,
Will you marry me anyway, despite your father?
<send>

AMANDA:

Edward,
My father has nothing to do with my answer, which is still no.
When will you listen to me? I will never marry you. Stop asking!
<send>

EDWARD:

In that case, how would you feel about a wedding in April?
<send>

AMANDA:

My father was right. You are a cretin.
Leave me and my family alone!
<send>

EDWARD:

Or we could elope! Wouldn't that be romantic?
<send>

AMANDA:

<delete>

EDWARD:

Amanda?
<send>

AMANDA:

<delete>

EDWARD:

Darling?

<send>

AMANDA: <delete>!

EDWARD: <send>

AMANDA: <delete>!

EDWARD: <send>

AMANDA: <delete>!

<delete>! <delete>!

<delete>! <Delete>! <DELETE>!

Lights down on Amanda, leaving only Edward lit.

EDWARD:

Dear Mr Wetherby,

I can't seem to reach Amanda. I wonder if I could prevail upon you to ask her to contact me, as all I want to do is set things right. I love her very much, Mr Wetherby, and I would give anything to make her happy.

<send>

Lights down on Edward and up on Mr Wetherby.

MR WETHERBY:

Dear Cretin, – (but then he has a change of heart)

Dear Edward,

I don't usually do this, but let me give you some advice.

When I was a lad about your age, I too suffered from unrequited love. I fell for a girl who worked for me. I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't help myself. My broken heart mended eventually, but it might have been easier if someone had told me what I'm about to tell you: Let her go, son. It's for the best.

<send>

Lights down on Mr Wetherby and up on Edward.

EDWARD:

Dear Amanda,

Did you know your father had an affair? He told me so himself – see:

"I fell for a girl who worked for me. I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't help myself."

<send>

Lights up on Amanda and down on Edward.

AMANDA:

Father-

Is it true? Did you have an affair?

<send>

Lights up on Mr Wetherby (and stay up on Amanda).

MR. WETHERBY:

Amanda,

No, of course it's not true. Where did you hear such nonsense?

<send>

AMANDA:

From Edward.

<send>

MR WETHERBY: What?!?!?

What lies are you telling my daughter? If you do not stop at once, I'm warning you, there will be dire consequences!

<send>

Lights up on Edward (and stay up on the other two).

EDWARD:

Dear Amanda,

I believe your father is threatening my life. See:

"I'm warning you, there will be dire consequences."

<send>

Lights down on Edward.

AMANDA:

Who was the girl, Father? And why are you threatening Eddie?

<send> !

MR WETHERBY:

There was no girl! That cretin doesn't know what he's talking about!

<send> !

AMANDA: Don't you call Eddie a cretin!

MR WETHERBY: I don't know why you still associate // with him!

AMANDA: At least he cares about me // and he's...

MR WETHERBY: He's been nothing but trouble // ever since...

AMANDA: He's always been there // for me.

MR WETHERBY: I can't let him besmirch // my...

AMANDA: You leave Eddie alone!

AMANDA & MR WETHERBY: <SEND>!

Lights down on Mr Wetherby, and up wider on Amanda. Edward is standing near her.

EDWARD: Hello.

AMANDA: Edward!

EDWARD: Your front door was open, so I let myself in.

AMANDA: You shouldn't be here.

EDWARD: But I love you.

AMANDA: Edward – (this is not a good idea.)

EDWARD: Anyway, that's not why I'm here. I think your computer might be broken. You seem to not be receiving the messages I'm sending.

AMANDA: My computer is fine.

EDWARD: You may have accidentally set a block or something.

AMANDA: I haven't changed anything since you set it up for me.

EDWARD: Oh. I see.

AMANDA: You have to go now, Eddie.

EDWARD: Very well. But before I do... (*He gets down on one knee.*) Amanda, will you – (marry me?)

AMANDA: No.

EDWARD: But I – (love you.)

AMANDA: No!

EDWARD: Won't you – (reconsider?)

AMANDA: No, No, No, for the last time, NO! I will not marry you! I will not reconsider! I will not change my mind! I will not *ever* marry you!

EDWARD: But I love you.

AMANDA: You don't love me the way Richard does!

EDWARD: Richard?

AMANDA: Oops.

EDWARD: Who's Richard?

AMANDA: You have to go now.

EDWARD: Amanda! Who's Richard?

AMANDA: Richard is my fiancée.

Amanda and Edward freeze.

Lights down on Amanda and Edward. Lights up on Mr Wetherby.

MR WETHERBY:

Dear Mamby-Pamby,

I'm sorry for all the terrible things I wrote before. I didn't mean them. I rather lost my temper. I believe I know what happened. I'm forwarding copies of what I wrote to Edward. It all happened long before I met mummy.

Please forgive me,

Your loving daddy.

<send>

Lights down on Mr Wetherby and up again on Edward and Amanda. They unfreeze.

EDWARD: He's your what?

AMANDA: My fiancée. He's from America. We met a few months ago in a salon on the internet, and ever since we've been chatting every day for hours and hours and yesterday he asked me to marry him and I said yes!

EDWARD: Does your father know?

AMANDA: Of course not! You know how much my father hates Americans! Oh, Eddie, Richard is the most wonderful man! He's going to fly out here and we're going to elope! Isn't that romantic?

EDWARD: When will he get here?

AMANDA: On the next available flight. He's making the travel arrangements right now, and he's going to send me the details. *(checks her computer, or glances at it)* Look! I've got a new message! Oh. It's from Father.

EDWARD: What's it say?

AMANDA: How sweet! He wants me to forgive him. Oh – and look. You misquoted him terribly, Eddie.

EDWARD: I did not!

AMANDA: Don't try to deny it, Edward. You've already caused enough trouble.

Dear Father,

Of course I forgive you. Guess what? Edward is here with me. And he'd like to apologise to you.

Amanda looks to Edward, who shakes his head.

AMANDA: Eddie?

EDWARD: No!

AMANDA: Edward!

EDWARD: Why didn't you tell me about Richard?

AMANDA: Because I knew you'd react this way! Will you please apologise to Father? I want everything to be set right.

EDWARD:

Dear Sir,

I apologise for any misquotation I may have made. I would never deliberately do anything that might cause trouble.

By the way, did you know Amanda is engaged to an American?

She met him on the internet.

<send>

AMANDA: You didn't.

EDWARD: I did.

AMANDA: What have you done? Father wasn't supposed to know! You've ruined everything!

EDWARD: Well, you ruined everything first! We were supposed to be engaged by now, but you kept saying "no"! Now I don't know when we'll be engaged. It could take months for your Richard infatuation to exhaust itself.

AMANDA: Exhaust itself? I love Richard, and I plan to marry him!

EDWARD: You met him on the internet. You don't know who he is!

AMANDA: Well, I know who you are! You've been impossible ever since you became obsessed with marrying me.

EDWARD: Obsessed? I love you!

AMANDA: If you really loved me, you'd want me to be happy!

EDWARD: I do want you to be happy!

AMANDA: Then why did you ruin my plans to elope with Richard?

EDWARD: I want you to be happy with *me*!

AMANDA: Well, *I* want to be happy with *Richard*! You must let go, Eddie. Please.

EDWARD: It would be enough for me if you told me you loved me. Just once.

AMANDA: Eddie – (*notices, on her computer*) Look! I've got a new message! Oh! It's from Father!

EDWARD: Maybe he won't react as harshly as we expect.

Lights up on Mr Wetherby.

MR WETHERBY:

Amanda –

If I find out you're really engaged to an American, I'll disinherit you! And if I find out you met him on the internet, I have no daughter!

Lights down on Mr Wetherby.

EDWARD: It's not too late to break off your engagement and save your inheritance.

AMANDA: This is ridiculous! I'm going to talk to Father. I'm going to tell him all about Richard. I can't let Father stand between me and my happiness!

EDWARD: Do you want me to come too?

AMANDA: No, Edward, you've done quite enough already.

Amanda leaves. Edward is on his own.

EDWARD: But you left your mailbox open. And you've got a new message. It's from Richard!

Lights down on Edward, lights up on Richard. (Richard is played by the same actor as Mr Wetherby, with a simple but quick costume change, and an American accent.)

RICHARD:

Dearest Amanda,

I have booked my flight, and attached the details. I am so excited, beloved, I can't wait to meet you in person. Please tell me you'll be there at the airport to greet me.

All my love,

Richard

Lights down on Richard, lights up on Edward, still at Amanda's desk. He types...

EDWARD:

Dear Richard,

This is Amanda. I have changed my mind. You are a cretin!

(but then he has a change of heart)

No...

Dear Richard,

This is Amanda's friend, Edward.

I just thought you ought to know that you are a very lucky man, to have won the heart of Amanda. She loves you very much, and I suggest you take very good care of her, particularly since I now have your address.

<send>

Dear Mr Wetherby,
This is Edward again, using Amanda's mailbox.
I'm afraid I've made another misquotation. Amanda is not engaged to anyone,
American or otherwise.
<send>

Dear Amanda,
This is Edward. I told your father that you are not engaged to an American, so
now your plan to elope with Richard should succeed. There's no need to thank
me. I just want you to be happy.
Sincerely yours,
Edward
<send>

After a moment, the heartbroken Edward finds a way to console himself.

EDWARD:

Dear Edward,
This is me, Amanda. I know you love me, Eddie, and I'd like to love you back,
but you see, I'm damaged by an overprotective father and a deep suspicion of
honest people like yourself. It's best you move on, as I'll only hurt you again
and again.
All my love, that I can never admit to,
Amanda
<send>

<log out>

Lights down.
End.