

Three Little Words

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INT. PETE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

PETE and NICOLE are snuggled up on the couch, watching the TV.

A FEW BEATS of silent channel surfing. Pete looks at Nicole with...

PETE

I love you.

BEAT of silence. Nicole has a blank look on her face.

PETE (CONT'D)

Wow. Okay.

NICOLE

I'm sorry. It's just that...

PETE

No. It's okay if you're not ready to say it yet. I just thought you should know that I love you.

ANOTHER BEAT.

Pete's hurt but he covers. Nicole changes channels.

ANOTHER BEAT. It's uncomfortable now...

NICOLE

(re: TV screen)

Have you seen this episode?

PETE

No.

NICOLE

It's pretty good.

(beat)

This season is the best so far.

ANOTHER BEAT! He can't take it anymore. He's sincere with:

PETE

Why won't you say it back?

NICOLE

What? Oh. I don't know.

(beat)

I...I don't know.

PETE

What am I'm doing wrong?

NICOLE

Nothing. It's just, I can't say a word as strong as "love" unless I'm sure. Know what I mean?

PETE

I guess.

(beat)

I said it...and I meant it.

NICOLE

Stop...

PETE

It's true. I do love you.

A COUPLE BEATS WITH NO WORDS --

Nicole makes an attempt to watch the TV. Pete is starting to look devastated...

PETE

Girls always say they want a guy who's sensitive, but I guess that's not true.

NICOLE

It's not about you. I told you.

PETE

Of course it is. Something must be wrong with me.

NICOLE

Why are you acting like this?

PETE

I mean, I just put my heart out there and you kinda left me hanging. It feels like shit.

NICOLE

Do you want me to lie to you?

PETE

I want you to LOVE me...like I love you.

PAUSE --

-- Those words again! He's looking at her DESPERATELY.

A BEAT of eye contact, then:

PETE (CONT'D)
You won't say it?

NICOLE
Pete. This is a lot of pressure.

PETE
What can I do to make you love me?

NICOLE
It doesn't work like that.

Nicole stands and slips on her shoes. She's can't look at him as she's breaking his heart...

NICOLE (CONT'D)
We need to take a break.

PETE
A break?

NICOLE
Like, from being a couple. I think we both need some time alone.

Nicole grabs her bag and heads out the door.

PETE
Nicole. What did I do? Please...

NICOLE
I'm sorry.

PETE
'Cause I said I love you?

NICOLE
'Cause you won't stop.

She's gone. Pete's alone. Crushed by the feeling of inadequacy. Vulnerable like a little kid.