

WYWH

Settings

A teenage girl's room, 2023
A telegraph office, 1881

Characters

CHLOE ANDREWS, 15, a modern teenager
MONTANA OLSON, 15, Chloe's best friend

WOODROW SHERMAN, 20s, a telegraph operator
NELSON GARRETT, 20s, Woodrow's coworker

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(Split stage. Stage right is CHLOE's room, with typical teenage girl décor. Stage left is dark. CHLOE and MONTANA sit in her room, typing on laptops.)

CHLOE

Hey, Montana, do you have your history book on you?

MONTANA

No, I'll just do the assignment in homeroom. Why?

CHLOE

I wanted to look something up.

MONTANA

Since when do you care about history, Chloe?

CHLOE

Since, like, forever. I mean, it's important, right? It's how we got to where we are now.

MONTANA

Not buying it. (MONTANA sneaks a peek at CHLOE's laptop.) And what are you doing anyway? Are you on Discord?

(CHLOE swiftly turns the laptop screen away from MONTANA.)

CHLOE

No. (pause) Maybe. (pause) Yes.

MONTANA

(playfully poking)

Whatcha doin' in there?

CHLOE

So, well, I met somebody. A guy.

MONTANA

Online? Or IRL?

CHLOE

Online. I haven't been able to meet him in person, he's too far away.

MONTANA

Chloe, what is the point of hanging out with people you'll never meet?

CHLOE

You just have to believe it'll all work out. L-C-A!
Love conquers all!

MONTANA

So where is he?

(LIGHTS UP on the other half of the stage. It's a telegraph office in 1881. WOODROW taps away at the telegraph. Both CHLOE and WOODROW speak their conversations as they type them.)

WOODROW

(types)

Are you present, darling Chloe?

CHLOE

(types)

Yes, Woodrow.

(MONTANA has moved over to look at CHLOE's screen.)

MONTANA

Woodrow?

WOODROW

(types)

Please, you can call me Woody.

CHLOE

(types)

K.

WOODROW

(types)

K, question mark.

CHLOE

(types)

O-K. (to MONTANA) He's not very good with the abbreviations.

MONTANA

Old-fashioned?

CHLOE

You could say that. (Types.) How R U?

WOODROW

(types)

Bad. Kicked by horse on way to work.

MONTANA

What?

CHLOE

(types)

OMG! R-U-O-K?

WOODROW

(types)

Sore. Doc gave me whiskey.

CHLOE

(types)

SRSLY?

WOODROW

(types)

Question mark.

CHLOE

(types)

Seriously.

MONTANA

Whiskey? How old is he?

CHLOE

Dunno, haven't asked. (Types) How old R U?

WOODROW

22. H-O-A-Y?

CHLOE

Hoe-Ay? Oh, how old are you. Um, (types) 18 or over.
L-O-L. That means laugh out loud.

MONTANA

So how long has this been going on?

CHLOE

He showed up on Discord a week ago. We've chatted
every day since then. I think he likes me.

MONTANA

Like, he likes you likes you?

CHLOE

Maaaaaybe.

MONTANA

Well. So where is he?

CHLOE

Oh, he's in Baltimore in 1881.

MONTANA

Um ... W-T-F?

CHLOE

Yeah, it's weird, the wi-fi's been kind of screwy
lately.

MONTANA

Chloe, what the hell are you talking about?

WOODROW

(types)

How is your day going, dearest?

MONTANA

Chloe.

CHLOE

(sighs, types)

B-R-B. That means I'll be right back.

MONTANA

Chloe. You know, some people on the internet aren't
who they claim to be.

CHLOE

Duh.

MONTANA

I think this is probably one of those times.

CHLOE

You don't know.

MONTANA

How is he even online?!

CHLOE

He works in a telegraph office. It's all just typing, right? Words flying into space?

MONTANA

(shaking her head)

Shaking my head. I mean, that's not really how it works...

CHLOE

So maybe our router got struck by lightning. Just be happy for me, huh?

MONTANA

Okay, whatever. He's in the past? Then let's use him. For an R-A-K.

CHLOE

A random act of kindness! Great idea! I know! We can stop them from killing Lincoln!

MONTANA

Hmm. I can see why you needed that history book. (Looks at laptop, types.) Let me look something up. (to herself.) 1881.

CHLOE

(types)

Back. How is Winifred? (to MONTANA) His little sister. She's got the dropsy.

MONTANA

Is that bad?

CHLOE

I think so.

WOODROW

(types)

Better. She played at skittles all this forenoon. C-M.

CHLOE

(types)

C-M? question mark.

WOODROW

(types)

Chortle mightily.

CHLOE

(types)

Keep working on those, sweetie.

MONTANA

(looking at laptop)

I got it! He can stop the assassination of President Garfield.

CHLOE

(snorts)

There was not a President *Garfield*.

MONTANA

(shows her laptop.)

There. Look. Tell him this.

CHLOE

(types)

Prez Garfield will be shot by Charles Guiteau June 6 9:30 AM Baltimore and Potomac railway station. Alert secret service. (to MONTANA) Did they have a secret service then?

MONTANA

(shrugs)

Don't know. Apparently they had magic wi-fi, so why not.

WOODROW

(types)

How do you know this?

CHLOE

(types)

Well, I'm in 2023.

WOODROW

(pauses, then types)

You neglected to mention this.

MONTANA

You didn't tell him?!

CHLOE

(winces)

There was never really a good time. (types) Sorry about that. Didn't want to alarm you.

WOODROW

(types)

Are there flying machines? And automatons?

CHLOE

S-S-D-M. Same shit different millennium. Send the message, K?

WOODROW

Garrett!

(GARRETT enters.)

WOODROW(cont.)

Can you please dash this off to Washington? It's a message from the future.

(He hands the message to GARRETT, who reads it.)

GARRETT

The future?

WOODROW

2023. So I've been told.

GARRETT

How intriguing.

WOODROW

I am curious but somewhat skeptical.

GARRETT

But mightn't forwarding this change the future?

WOODROW

I gather that's the notion. Send it, let's see what happens.

(GARRETT exits.)

WOODROW

(typing)

Sending. K-F-C.

CHLOE

(types)

Question mark.

WOODROW

(types)

Keeping fingers crossed.

CHLOE

(types)

Keep working on those. So, when can we meet F-2-F?

MONTANA

Uh, Chloe, how are you supposed to meet face to face?

CHLOE

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. LCA!

WOODROW

(types)

How?

CHLOE

(types)

You're smart, you can figure -

(CHLOE AND MONTANA's half of the stage goes dark. GARRETT re-enters WOODROW's side.)

GARRETT

I sent it off. Did anything happen in the future?

WOODROW

(types)

Chloe? (pause) Hello? (pause) R-U-O-K? (to GARRETT)
Nothing.

GARRETT

Hmmm.

WOODROW

Perhaps she's off to the lavatory.

GARRETT

Or perhaps we've just radically changed the future and she's winked out of existence.

WOODROW

I wouldn't expect President Garfield's legacy to be quite that far-ranging.

GARRETT

(shrugs)

Who's to say.

WOODROW

O-M-G, Garrett, what do I do?

GARRETT

Allow me. (Sits at telegraph, types.) Washington -
belay previous message stop. Sent by neer-do-wells
stop. All fine. (to WOODROW) Doesn't matter to me, I
voted for the other fellow.

(GARRETT stands up, WOODROW sits
back at telegraph. Lights back up
on CHLOE and MONTANA.)

CHLOE

(types)

-you can figure it out.

WOODROW

(to GARRETT)

She's back.

GARRETT

Spiffy. Ask her if they have flying machines.

WOODROW

(gestures GARRETT away)

Of course they do, it's the future. (types) You're there? G-S-O-R. Great sigh of relief.

CHLOE

(types)

K - question mark.

WOODROW

(types)

Very K. (Sadly.) But listen. We cannot meet.

CHLOE

(types)

Sad face.

WOODROW

(types)

And we cannot converse anymore. It's too dangerous.

CHLOE

(types)

OK I'm really not 18 but I'm mature for my age.

MONTANA

(snorts)

That's debatable.

CHLOE

S-T-F-U.

WOODROW

(types)

Dangerous for history. I fear we could break the universe.

CHLOE

(types)

LCA! I'll wait for you.

WOODROW

(types)

For 142 years?

CHLOE
(types)
I'll definitely be 18 by then.

WOODROW
(types)
LOL. Sorry. I like you very much. But we must stop.

CHLOE
(types)
Can we at least be B-F-F?

MONTANA
Hey! I thought I was your B-F-F!

CHLOE
You're my 2023 B-F-F. He's my 1881 B-F-F.

WOODROW
(types)
You mean best friends forever?

CHLOE
(types)
Now you're getting the hang of it!

WOODROW
(types)
I'll never forget you. W-Y-W-H.

(WOODROW stands and looks across
to stage right, sadly.)

CHLOE
(types)
Wish you were here too.

(CHLOE stands and looks right at
WOODROW. Lights down on his half
of the stage.)

MONTANA
Well that was sad. Whatever the hell it was.

CHLOE
Still don't believe me, do you?

MONTANA

Not really.

CHLOE

Google him. Woodrow Sherman, Baltimore.

MONTANA

Why would he be on Google?

CHLOE

(shrugs)

Stranger things have happened. Like, just now.

(MONTANA types.)

MONTANA

OMG. First page, no less. Something about a cryptic gravestone. Oh. Wow.

CHLOE

What?!

MONTANA

There's a photo.

(She hands the laptop to CHLOE.)

CHLOE

(looking at photo)

Woodrow Sherman, 1859-1937. Beloved husband, father - wait, he was married?!

MONTANA

That was probably later, McFly.

CHLOE

Oh, right. Beloved husband, father and (smiles) B-F-F.

MONTANA

Aw. I guess he really was getting the hang of it.

(Blackout. End of play.)