Writer's Note

Oh, My Darlin' is probably the easiest of my scripts to explain, because I was living the emotion behind it while I was writing it. I spent eighteen years as a stay-at-home parent and have always been extremely close to all three of my children. When my daughter left for college, she only moved across town, but during her first week in the dorms I kept finding reasons to go see her. She needed something from home. She had forgotten something. I had something I thought she might need. All perfectly reasonable excuses. After about a week, I realized I had managed to see her every single day since she moved out. At some point, I had to admit what I was doing and stop running over there every chance I got.

As a parent, I know that leaving is exactly what is supposed to happen. You spend all those years trying to raise someone who is confident, independent, curious, and capable of building a life without you. If they are ready to leave, you did your job. The difficult part is that doing your job well means they leave.

That feeling is where Henry and Clementine came from. Henry Baker has built most of his adult life around his daughter, particularly after the death of his wife. When Clementine earns a scholarship to Stanford, he is genuinely proud of her. He also discovers that he has absolutely no idea how to stop being the person she needs every day. His increasingly ridiculous attempts to stay close to her are comedic, but the feeling underneath them is one I understood very well.

I wanted to look at coming of age from both directions. Clementine has to discover who she is without her father constantly there to reassure her, defend her, or tell her she belongs. Henry has to figure out what his life looks like when being needed is no longer the same thing as being loved. Neither of them stops loving the other. Their relationship just has to change.

Most stories about leaving home understandably follow the young person stepping into adulthood. I kept thinking about the person standing in the driveway after the car leaves. Parenthood can take up such an enormous part of your identity that there is something unsettling about reaching the point you have spent eighteen years preparing for and realizing that you now have to figure out who you are without the daily job of raising your child.

I also didn't want *Oh, My Darlin'* to treat letting go as a clean, inspirational moment where everyone says exactly the right thing and moves forward. Henry is funny because he handles it badly. He interferes. He makes excuses. He embarrasses himself. Clementine needs him and resents needing him at the same time. That messiness felt much more recognizable to me.

The story is about a father learning to let his daughter build a life that doesn't revolve around him, but it is also about realizing that letting go is not the same thing as disappearing from someone's life. Sometimes a relationship has to change shape in order to survive growing up.