

# TEACHING AMERICA

By

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## CHARACTERS

MARY           A late 30's high school history teacher.

MIKE           Mary's husband. A financial analyst and amateur musician. Late 30s.

CARTER        High school English teacher and aspiring novelist. Mid 30s.

JEN            Carter's wife. Recently rejoined the workforce as a real estate agent. Mid 30s.

JEFF           High school senior and record shop employee. 18.

NINA           Jeff's girlfriend. Senior and aspiring writer. 17.

GARY           Mary's friend and colleague. Early 30s.

ELIOT         Gary's partner. 30s.

## SETTING

The fictional Chicago suburb of Shorewood Heights. Spring and Summer of 2009.

\*Note: Scenes should flow into one another as freely as possible to build a continuous effect, rather than a string of blackouts.

## BRIEF SYNOPSIS

The suburb of Shorewood Heights is awakened from its slumber by the actions of the high school history teacher. What unfolds causes the town's inhabitants to question their own assumptions and reevaluate their own lives.

TEACHING AMERICA

"It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband." - 1 Corinthians 7: 1-2

PROLOGUE

(The fictional Chicago suburb of Shorewood Heights. MARY, a 37 year old high school history teacher, BRIAN, a 36 year old Little League coach, and JEN, a 35 year old real estate agent are all in separate areas of the stage. MARY is speaking with her principal, BRIAN is giving a talk to his team, and JEN is showing a home.)

JEN

There are four bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths. Twenty-three hundred square feet. This is a really quiet street. Great schools and parks.

MARY

You wanted to see me?

BRIAN

It's really a pretty simple game guys. Just a little piece of cork. Wrapped in some wool threads and covered with cowhide. That's it.

MARY

Let me see if I'm understanding you correctly. Principal Vettors. You have a problem with me teaching American History?

JEN

Shorewood Heights actually was just listed by Money Magazine as one of the best places to live in the country. Watch out Plymouth, Minnesota we're coming.

BRIAN

Your dad, my dad, our grandfathers and great grandfathers all played this game. It's part of our makeup, part of what makes us who we are. Tradition.

MARY

I'm sorry, but I'm trying to open up these kids' minds. They get force fed the same old stuff and I'm trying to show them that not everything is cut and dry. That it's okay to ask questions. This country is a beautiful combination of paradoxes and hypocrisies. That's what makes us American.

JEN

There are tons of shops and restaurants downtown. There's a little river walk as well. You play golf? We've got three PGA level courses. Arnold Palmer designed one of them. And if you ever want a night in the city Chicago is just a short hop, skip and a jump away.

BRIAN

It's a simple game, but nearly impossible to master. But I'm going to teach you. I'm going to teach you how to hit a ball. How to throw, how to catch. You are going to work with every other man here to create something bigger than yourself. By the end of the season we're not only going to be hoisting the championship trophy, but you are going to be a team. Brothers.

MARY

I don't think teaching these kids about what we did to the Native Americans, or telling them that our country wouldn't be the military and economic superpower it is today without slavery or pointing out that we prop up horrible and murderous regimes all over the world is wrong. I think it's exactly what they need. It's called American history.

JEN

Now this house is going to go fast. Granite countertops, that master bath, finished basement. I don't want to put any pressure on you, but this is a really hot neighborhood. Central High was just named a Blue Ribbon school for the seventh year in a row. Families are moving in by the truckload. But if you want to put an offer in I'd suggest doing it sooner rather than later.

BRIAN

The hardest thing you will ever have to do is hit a pitched baseball. It's coming at you ninety miles-per-hour, dipping

and diving all over the place. You have a split second to react and hit it with a little piece of wood. After that life is easy.

MARY

I'm not trying to "make" something out of this. I'm glad that people are complaining. That means I'm doing my job. I'm trying to get these kids to think. I want them to react. If I cross the line, then at least they know where the line is for them. They know what they think, what they feel, what they believe.

SCENE 1

(A park. There should be sounds of a Little League game in the background. JEN is seated on the bleachers. At the sound of a solid hit, she leaps up.)

JEN

Oh! Nice hit Coop! Good job buddy!

(After a beat MARY enters. She is wearing dark sunglasses and looks a little frazzled.)

MARY

What inning is it?

JEN

Fourth.

MARY

Fourth?

JEN

Jack hasn't played yet.

MARY

Oh. Good. Well not good, but good. Why hasn't he played yet? I-

JEN

Cooper's three-for-three.  
Are you drunk?

MARY

I wish. I think I had some bad fish in the teachers lounge.

JEN

Why would you ever eat fish that was in a teachers lounge?

MARY

It was Harry's retirement party yesterday. He's like some sort of semi-pro fisherman or something and he caught all the food.

JEN

Even the cake?

MARY

I don't even like fish. Peer-pressure. My whole job is to tell kids to resist peer-pressure. I'm so weak.

JEN

I thought you taught history?

MARY

Big picture Jen.

JEN

Can I ask you a question?

MARY

Sure.

JEN

What exactly is the Teapot Dome Scandal? People bring it up all the time, well not all the time, but enough you know? And I always nod, but I don't really know what it is?

MARY

Seriously? This is a problem for you?

JEN

(Referring to the game.)

Run Coop! Slide! Yes! Way to go Cooper!

MARY

Yay Cooper.

JEN

God, we're so close to first I can taste it.

MARY

Are you okay?

JEN

Hm?

MARY

Where's Carter?

JEN

He took Tucker to get some candy from the concession stand. He tried to pretend like Tucker was begging him, but I think he's just too nervous about the game.

MARY

I know.

JEN

Where's Mike?

MARY

Jack banned him from sitting in the stands. He's way out there behind the wall in center-field.

(They both wave. The next batter strikes out and the inning is over.)

JEN

That's okay guys! Keep it up! Whoo! Cooper! Cooper! Be sure to shade that lefty in the hole. He's already gone the other way twice.

MARY

Jack, do you need some sunflower seeds or something honey?  
(To Jen.)  
What the hell are you talking about?

JEN

Hm?

MARY

Shade the hole? I'm afraid to even ask. The boys are only twelve.

JEN

It means to play closer to third base than to second base.

MARY

That's just making it dirtier actually.

JEN

(Playfully.)

Oh God Mary, grow up.

MARY

What's that coach's name again?

JEN

Coach Brian.

MARY

Which one's his kid?

JEN

He doesn't have any kids.

MARY

Divorced?

JEN

I don't think so.

MARY

Gay?

JEN

I hope not.

MARY

Jen.

JEN

What? Have you seen him at practice?

MARY

No.

JEN

Whenever he pitches batting practice Coach B takes off his shirt. He played in the minor leagues. Let's just say that he actually looks like what Carter thinks he looks like.

MARY

Are you having an affair with the coach?

JEN

Have I slept with him? No. Have I flirted with him when Carter's not around and thought about him when I'm alone in the bath?

MARY

You slut.

JEN

We're all entitled to a little fun Ms. "I got sick off of fish at school on a Friday night bull-shit."

MARY

I did.

JEN

It's not like I'm going to do anything about it. It's like a junior high crush.

MARY

Maybe you should.

(There is a sound of a bat hitting the ball.)

JEN

Nice stop Coop!

MARY

Way to be deep in the hole Cooper!

JEN

Mary!  
Did you see that?

MARY

What?

JEN

Coach B just smiled at you.

MARY

So?

JEN

So, smile back.

MARY

He's looking at the field.

JEN

Mary.

MARY

Jen.

JEN

You need to let me have this.

MARY

I thought I was.

You know he's gay though right? No way he isn't gay. He looks too good in that hat.

JEN

What?

MARY

Have you ever seen a middle-aged man look good in a hat that wasn't gay? It's like straight guys heads swell as they age.

JEN

Carter looks good in hats.

MARY

Forget it. Have your little gay fantasy.

JEN

I will.

MARY

Don't you think it's a little weird that he's the coach but doesn't have any kids?

JEN

Maybe Coach B really likes baseball, or kids.

MARY

I'm sure he likes kids.

JEN

You hate kids and you're a teacher.

MARY

Not at the moment.

JEN

What?

MARY

I'm on probation. Well, I'm on strike. They're calling it probation.

JEN

Probation? What happened?

MARY

Carter didn't tell you?

JEN

He might of. I try to tune him out when he gets home from school. There's only so much you can listen to.

MARY

The school board isn't happy with some of my choices. More like a rich parent complained.

JEN

Are you passing out condoms?

MARY

What? No, why would I be passing out condoms?

JEN

I don't know. Safe sex?

MARY

Today we're talking about Federalist Paper Number Ten...have some condoms. I'm just trying to point out that America isn't perfect, and it never has been. What's wrong with that?

(Pause.)

MARY

I'm just saying that it's a little odd that he's the coach of a Little League team that his kid isn't on.

JEN

Maybe Coach Brian is just really good with kids but he hasn't found the right woman yet. I don't think he should

have to apologize for being a really great male role model to our boys. Lord knows that there aren't that many guys for them to look up to. I mean besides their fathers, you know I love Carter, but he works sixty hours a week with school and that stupid book and your husband isn't even allowed on the field. Just because Coach B hasn't settled on just some tramp to start a family with doesn't mean that he should be ostracized from the community and asked to bury his gift.

MARY

Jesus Jen, I think there's a bathtub in one of those port-a-potties if you need it.

(The next inning is over.)

JEN

Oh! Yes! Good job Sox! Whoo! Just one more run guys! You can do it!

MARY

I can't believe Jack hasn't played yet.

JEN

Well...

MARY

Well what?

JEN

The Tigers are in first place and if we win we'll get the tiebreaker for the playoffs.

MARY

They're twelve.

JEN

It's important to them.

MARY

To them?

JEN

He did it again. Did you see that? Coach Brian smiled at you again.

MARY

Stop calling him Coach Brian.

JEN

Sorry, it's what Coop calls him. Coach B.

(Through gritted teeth.)

He's looking, smile back. Smile back you bitch!

(MARY smiles.)

JEN

Did you see that? Mmm. That felt good.

MARY

Is everything okay with you and Carter?

JEN

We've been married fourteen years. It's nice to be under the male gaze every once in a while.

MARY

I guess.

JEN

God I hate you. 'I guess.' Do you see how low cut this top is? Nothing. You show up all hung-over and reeking of vomit and it's all smiles.

MARY

I'm sure he can't smell me.

JEN

Would it have killed you to shower?

MARY

I didn't want to miss the whole game.

JEN

I know for a fact he's not gay.

MARY

Who?

JEN

Coach B-. Brian. No Coach. Just Brian. Brian.

MARY

I thought you said you didn't sleep with him?

JEN

I didn't. But Sarah Marcidowski did.

MARY

No? From Peach Street?

JEN

From Peach Street. Kid plays second base - decent bat, weak arm. And according to her he's got an ex-wife and kid out in California or Oklahoma or something. I don't think that's true, but that's what she said. She's a bit of a braggart though, you remember how she said she made those cookies for Coop's birthday? She actually bought them from McDonald's and put them in a tin. Can you believe the audacity? She thought I didn't know, but I know.

MARY

California or Oklahoma?

JEN

Why do you always pick out the details that don't matter?

MARY

Sorry. Wait, those cookies were from McDonald's?

JEN

They have great chocolate chip cookies.  
God, I want him so bad.

MARY

Oh my God.

JEN

What?

MARY

Jack's batting.  
C'mon honey! You can do it!

JEN

Oh my God. It's the last inning. What is Coach B doing?  
First place, first place.

MARY

Thanks for the confidence in my kid.

JEN

I've seen you throw and Mike's an accountant.

MARY

Financial analyst.

JEN

What is that?

MARY

Honestly? I have no idea what Mike does. I'm lucky if get so much as a grunt nowadays.

JEN

Come on blue! That's a terrible call!

MARY

Who's blue?

JEN

The umpire. Just be quiet. He's got two strikes.

MARY

Hit it deep in the hole!

(Strike three. The game is over.)

That's okay Jack. You did your best.

JEN

Fuck. Now we're the two seed. That means we've got the Cards in the semis. Fuck they're tough.

MARY

Sorry.

JEN

I've gotta go console Coop. I'll see you soon.

MARY

I'm thinking of leaving Mike.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 2

(A basement poker table. MIKE, 38, CARTER, 38, ELIOT, 32 and GARY, 35, are playing a weekly poker game. ELIOT is on the verge of being drunk, but isn't sloppy. The others are drinking but not drunk. Tongues are a bit looser than normal.)

CARTER

Oh come on.

GARY

What?

CARTER

This isn't bridge. You guys aren't partners here.

ELIOT

We have a joint checking account.

MIKE

You just suck Carter.

CARTER

You have like three chips.

MIKE

I just started playing. You've been playing your whole life.

CARTER

I'm playing three on one here. How's that fair?

GARY

We can't get married.

MIKE

I'm overweight.

ELIOT

That's not fair.

CARTER

How is being overweight not fair?

MIKE

How is it fair?

GARY

I'd say you were husky Mike, not overweight.

MAKE

Thanks Gary.

ELIOT

Will you just deal?

CARTER

Five card stud.

(CARTER deals.)

MIKE

How's this one go again?

GARY

Show me your cards.

CARTER

No!

ELIOT

He's helping.

(Faux whisper.)

Mike's husky.

CARTER

I quit. I can't play like this.

GARY

Oh come on Carter.

CARTER

No. I'm done.

MIKE

Carter.

CARTER

Do you want me to just put my wallet on the table and you guys can pick through it?

GARY

We play for quarters Carter, quit being so dramatic.

CARTER

You three play.

ELIOT

Come on Mr. Author Sour Puss.

MIKE

What?

CARTER

Nothing. Let's just play.

ELIOT

Carter's famous.

MIKE

Did your book get picked up? Carter? Why didn't you say anything?

CARTER

I was waiting for a big win.

ELIOT

So he could rub it in. I'm James Michener and I just won four dollars and fifteen cents bitches. Texas!

CARTER

What?

ELIOT

Alaska. Poland. Chesapeake.

GARY

Will you stop?

MIKE

That's really great Carter.

ELIOT

This could mean big things for you. You're like Anne Rice.

CARTER  
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

ELIOT  
Interview this vampire.

CARTER  
It's a really small press.

MIKE  
So what?

CARTER  
So it's got a really limited release.

GARY  
Stop being modest.

ELIOT  
It's not your thing.

CARTER  
Thanks.

MIKE  
What's it about?

GARY  
You haven't read it?

MIKE  
Should I have?

ELIOT  
Well played Gary.

MIKE  
They read it?

CARTER  
I didn't think you'd be interested. You're not really a big reader. And you're overweight.

MIKE  
What's that supposed to mean?

CARTER

Sorry. I'll give you a signed copy.

ELIOT

You can sell that on E-bay for like forty seven cents.

GARY

The basic premise is that the American Revolution was orchestrated by the British and wasn't actually a revolution at all. It's brilliant.

ELIOT

Like, so America is like this pawn for the British right? We do all these horrible things, slavery, start international wars, you know all the stuff people hate us for, but the British are pulling the strings. Essentially we keep the empire in tact-

GARY

The Sun Never Sets. That's the title. Brilliant.

ELIOT

But it all benefits the Brits. So they like can take the moral high ground and we do the dirty work. It's probably true if you think about it. It's super S&M. I wish Gary had an accent.

MIKE

So we lost?

CARTER

It's just a book. The main character figures it out and tries to bring down the revolution.

ELIOT

Benedict Arnold.

GARY

Really brilliant.

ELIOT

I still think he should be gay.

GARY

You want everyone to be gay.

ELIOT

Everyone is gay.

GARY

How many cider's have you had?

MIKE

So it's like historical?

CARTER

Mary was really helpful.

MIKE

Has everyone read this book except me?

ELIOT

Only the three people that would have actually paid to read it.

CARTER

I'm sorry Mike.

MIKE

That's okay. I probably won't like it. I like the British.

(Pause.)

ELIOT

You guys have such an unhealthy relationship.

CARTER

I didn't know we had a relationship.

ELIOT

Don't get all frat boy on me. Everything is a relationship, and you two are fucked up.

GARY

Okay Mr. Cider, I think it's time I took you home. Congratulation Carter, that's really great.

ELIOT

I'm not drunk. I was drunk when I first went home with you, but I'm not drunk now. Will you put on the collar, guvnah?

CARTER  
Okay.

ELIOT  
What?

CARTER  
Nothing.

ELIOT  
Do we make you uncomfortable Tri Sig?

CARTER  
At this particular moment yes.

GARY  
Eliot, let it go.

(ELIOT kisses GARY. He tries to make it really steamy and sexy, but it's just mildly sloppy.)

ELIOT  
I just blew your mind.

CARTER  
Who are you talking to?

ELIOT  
Everyone.

MIKE  
We've seen you guys kiss before.

ELIOT  
Not like that Husky.

GARY  
Thanks for having us Mike.

ELIOT  
R.E.M. was on the oldies station today. When did we get old?

(Singing. The scene goes on while he sings.)

What's the frequency, Kenneth? is hmm-uh-hmm-uh-hmm, uh-huh

You said that irony was the shackles of youth, uh-huh  
I couldn't understand  
You wore a shirt of violent green, uh-huh  
I couldn't understand

GARY

Okay Eliot, we get it. It's time to go. Eliot. We have to  
be at the doctor at eight tomorrow.

ELIOT

My sister is having Gary's baby.

GARY

Okay.

ELIOT

I never understood, don't fuck with me, uh-huh.

CARTER

What?

GARY

Another time.

ELIOT

That makes me the woman. I'm the bitch. I'm so fat give me  
some Doritos. Let's go to Curves together Mike.

(GARY and ELIOT exit.)

ELIOT

(Singing, as they are leaving.)

Hey Andy, did you hear about this one? Tell me, are you  
locked in the punch?  
Hey Andy, are you goofing on Elvis? Hey baby, are we losing  
touch?  
If you believed they put a man on the moon, man on the  
moon.  
If you believe there's nothing up my sleeve, then nothing  
is cool.

MIKE

What exactly just happened?

CARTER

I'm not sure but I think they're trying to have a baby.

MIKE

The beginning of the end.

CARTER

At least Eliot's body won't go to shit.

MIKE

Jen still looks good.

CARTER

I'm glad we are done with that. Nobody tells you what a pile of shit you're getting into. Those first five years are hell. Double hell the second time around because you know what's coming but you can't stop it. It's like getting stung by a bee or something.

MIKE

What?

CARTER

I don't know, that didn't make sense. But you know what I mean. And don't you ever tell Jen or Mary because if this gets out I'll know it was you and I'll hunt you down, but it's worse for the guy. Because even if you're like super-dad you don't get any credit. You know? It's like Jen stayed home, but I still got up with them, I still was always there, feeding them, getting crap all over me and every article of clothing I ever owned, but I'm still the bad guy because she gave up her life. She wanted to stay home mind you, but she resents you because you look normal and you get to keep working and keep some semblance of a life, even though that's so not true.

MIKE

Yeah.

CARTER

I'm just glad she's back to work now. What is it, twelve years later and things are finally starting to get back to normal. I thought post-partum was only supposed to last for six months.

MIKE

Mary was like that too after Jack. For awhile. Like six months.

CARTER

Hey man, I'm sorry about Mary. It's total bullshit. If it matters everyone is totally behind her.

MIKE

Yeah, well I guess our high school teachers are becoming rather famous.

CARTER

Hey, listen, I'm sorry about the book. I didn't want to try and rub it in your face or force you to read it or anything.

MIKE

It's fine.

(Pause.)

CARTER

Okay.  
I better get home. Jen's got the kids.

MIKE

Yeah.

CARTER

You okay?

MIKE

Yeah. Just a long day at work.

CARTER

I hear you. I had a kid ask me if Mark Twain was a singer.

(Pause.)

MIKE

Can I ask you something?

CARTER

Yes, Eliot and Gary are gay.

MIKE

Seriously.

CARTER

I have four minutes.

MIKE

Do you ever, I don't know, feel stuck? Like you're not doing what you should be doing?

CARTER

Every weekday of my life.

MIKE

This is coming out wrong. It's not like I don't love my life. I love my life. I really do, I'm not showboating here. I mean, Mary's great.

CARTER

She looks better now than when you got married.

MIKE

Right. And Jack, we'll you know.

CARTER

Yeah.

MIKE

But it's so...hard. But easy too. Do you know what I mean? Like it's so easy to just keep going. But I get to work and I want to die. I sit on the train on the way home and I don't want to get off.

CARTER

But you do.

MIKE

I do. Because it's easy to get off.

(CARTER laughs.)

CARTER

I'm sorry. I'm twelve. You're soulless, you were saying...

MIKE

I think I have a crush on the song lady at the library. Jack meets his math tutor there. And when I pick him up she's there.

CARTER

So you like sit there and listen? You're a creeper.

MIKE

I just pretend I'm one of the parents.

CARTER

You are one of the parents.

MIKE

Exactly. Her voice is so alive.

CARTER

So she's singing about the alphabet and what? you like get off on that?

MIKE

It's not like that. It's nothing. It's not a big deal. She just makes me feel good. I'm not like going to do anything. I just feel bad about it.

CARTER

It's normal to find other people attractive. You aren't going to hell. Jen's in love with that Little League coach.

MIKE

Coach B? He doesn't know what he's doing.

CARTER

It's not a big deal. It actually kind of gets me hot. Look man, I gotta go. I'm going to have to take the kids for like nine days straight if I'm late.

MIKE

I'll see you at the game this weekend?

CARTER

Hell yeah, it's the playoffs.

MIKE

You wanna watch from the outfield with me?

CARTER

We'll see.

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 3

(Local Arby's. NINA, 17 African-American, and JEFF 18, high school seniors that are dating, are out late at night.)

NINA

He's actually really insightful. Maybe you're just jealous?

JEFF

Of Mr. Matthews?

NINA

Carter.

JEFF

You think I'm jealous of our English teacher? Are you serious? Did somebody just inject me with heroin and I didn't notice? Did you slip some acid in my coke? Mr. Matthews? Oh, I'm sorry, Carter. The guy's-

NINA

You don't get it.

JEFF

No, I don't get it. Please enlighten me Nina.

NINA

Look at your life. You are totally this product and you don't even realize it.

JEFF

Oh my God. You cut me to the core. I'm like this saltshaker. Wasting night after night in Arby's when I could be in a five star restaurant.

NINA

They don't have salt shakers in five star restaurants Mr. Zagat.

JEFF

Pepper? Ketchup? Mustard?

NINA

Shut up Jeff.

JEFF

Or do rich people not like such base things?

NINA

You're a spoiled rich kid. Stop pretending you're not.

JEFF

And you're not? And what five star restaurants have you been to? Does Carter take you out on his teacher's salary?

NINA

It's not the same and you know it. That's the point.

JEFF

What's the point? You're seventeen, you're supposed to be having sex after school, doing drugs, getting drunk and tuning out your teachers not falling in love with them.

NINA

I'm not in love with Mr. Matthews.

JEFF

Now it's Mr. Matthews.

NINA

You're so immature.

JEFF

No I'm not.

These curly fries suck.

(To the staff off-stage.)

These curly fries suck. I'm gonna report you! Your days at Arby's are numbered friend!

(Pause.)

NINA

I'm moving to New York in June.

JEFF

Come again? I said "These curly fries suck." And I think you replied with I'm moving to New York?

NINA

I'm going to Columbia.

JEFF

Columbia? Since when? You never told me you applied to Columbia.

NINA

Well I did.

JEFF

This was his idea wasn't it?

NINA

He pushed me, but it was my idea. He thinks I have talent. You know my story got published last week and you didn't even say anything.

JEFF

In the school magazine. And yes I did say something.

NINA

Bullshit. What story was it?

JEFF

The one about the saltshaker.

NINA

Jeff...

JEFF

Fine. Go to Columbia. Write books and have babies with Mr. Matthews.

NINA

Don't be an ass Jeff.

JEFF

What happened to our plan?

NINA

That was never serious.

JEFF

Oh, okay, so if it's my plan it's a joke, but Carter-

NINA

You don't get it Jeff. It's not about Carter or you. It's about me. I don't want to spend my life wondering what I could have done. I don't want to spend my life in the Shorewood Heights Arby's. And we both know you aren't going to start a band. And even if you do, so fucking what? How is that a future?

JEFF

I didn't realize that being in high school meant that you'd always be in high school.

NINA

That's just it Jeff, I don't know that you won't be.

JEFF

So what, you're just going to up and move to New York? Do you even know anyone out there?

NINA

I don't need to.

JEFF

You don't need to? Earth to Nina, you can't just fucking move to New York. And last I checked, and geography isn't my best subject so you might need to check on this, but we live like twenty miles outside of Chicago.

NINA

Geography isn't a subject.

JEFF

Yes it is.

NINA

Its part of social studies.

JEFF

And I'm the one that's closed off? Geography is so a subject.

NINA

I don't care. I don't want to move to Chicago. Everyone moves to Chicago.

JEFF

Everyone eats too Nina. Are you going to stop eating?

NINA

Don't mock me. This is important.

JEFF

Do you hear yourself?

NINA

Finally I do.

JEFF

Oh my God. When did you get so pretentious? Just because Mr. Matthews wants to fuck you doesn't mean you have talent.

NINA

Fuck you Jeff.

JEFF

You're just some exotic prize to him.

(Pause.)

JEFF

He teaches high school English for fuck's sake.

NINA

He also just published a novel.

JEFF

So?

NINA

So this isn't about Carter. It's about me.

JEFF

You're right. Go. I'd hate to deprive the world of your unique point of view.

NINA

At least I have a point of view.

JEFF

No you don't. 'Oh my spoiled suburban life is so hard' is not a point of view.

NINA

You're right Jeff. Let's just sit here and talk about music and school and waste our lives.

JEFF

Why is that wasting our life?

NINA

I want mine to be about something. I want to talk about things that matter. Like racism and sexism and classism and-

JEFF

Pretentious-ism. I'm more black than you are.

(Pause.)

You want to talk about racism how's about your dad.

NINA

Don't bring my parents into this.

JEFF

He calls me Master Morris.

NINA

He does not.

JEFF

Fuck me he does. That's not fucking racist? He hates that I'm dating you. He's trying to get Mrs. Sweet fired.

NINA

Maybe she should be fired.

JEFF

You're kidding right? We've had one teacher in twelve years of public education not lie to us and you think she should be fired?

NINA

She makes assumptions that she shouldn't make.

JEFF

Because she's white.

NINA

That's not what I said. I just think that she needs to be careful dealing with subjects that she doesn't have personal experience with. That school has two minority teachers and they both teach Spanish, that isn't wrong?

JEFF

Oh hello Mr. Moore, I thought I was out with your daughter for a minute there.

NINA

Don't bring my father into this.

JEFF

He brought himself into it.

NINA

You don't know what it's like. And neither does she.

JEFF

Did you-

NINA

Drop it.

JEFF

You guys moved across town when those two gay guys moved in next door. That seems kind of hypocritical. Why don't you write a story about that instead of one about me?

NINA

That story is not about you.

JEFF

Go to New York.

NINA

It's not.

JEFF

Oh really? You're story about a dead end teenager named Jeremy isn't at all based on me?

NINA

Forget it Jeff.

(Pause.)

You're right. These fries suck. Pass the salt.

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 4

(After baseball practice. BRIAN, early 30's is picking up equipment. He's shirtless. MARY enters.)

MARY

Jack, go wait in the car honey. I need to talk to your coach for a minute.  
Hi.

BRIAN

Hi. Mrs. Sweet, right? Jack's really a great kid.

MARY

Mary. Thanks.

BRIAN

Coach B.

MARY

Coach B.

BRIAN

Brian. Rodriguez. Sorry, the kids started it. We all have nicknames. Jack's 'The Beanstalk.'  
It doesn't sound so dumb when you're surrounded by twelve year olds.  
Can I help you with something?

MARY

I just wanted—Could you put your shirt on?

BRIAN

Oh gosh, I didn't realize. I'm sorry.  
(He puts on his shirt.)  
Is that what you wanted to talk about?

MARY

No.

(Pause.)

BRIAN

Jack's really making some great strides.

MARY

Yeah. The team looks really good this year.

BRIAN

They're a really great group of kids.

MARY

I'm sorry, I don't have the best memory, which boy is your son?

BRIAN

He's not on the team.

MARY

Oh?

BRIAN

He lives with his mother in Virginia.

MARY

Virginia?

BRIAN

I only get to see him a couple times a year.

MARY

That must be hard.

BRIAN

He's like a different person every time I see him.

MARY

They grow up fast.

BRIAN

It's tough not really having a say in how your child grows up, or being an influence in any way.

MARY

I can imagine. It could be worse, your son could banish you to the outfield.

BRIAN

That's why Mike is out there? I couldn't figure it out. I thought it was to get a better angle.

MARY

What?

BRIAN

Your husband is apparently quite the baseball mind. He's chalk full of coaching advice.

MARY

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

It's okay. I've set my email to filter him to junk mail.

MARY

Too bad we can't do that in real life.  
What happened?

BRIAN

What?

MARY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry-

BRIAN

Oh. No, that's fine. I thought you were talking about the game for a minute.  
Well, um...

MARY

Forget it. I overstepped-

BRIAN

I was playing in the minors when she got pregnant. So I quit, you know, so I could get a real job to support my family. Turns out I didn't really have any skills applicable to the real world. She was actually in this band at the time. They were pretty good too. Cut a couple of records that got some pretty good local play. Anyway, long story short we both resented the other one for making us quit our dreams.

MARY

Wow.

BRIAN

It's hard to imagine that I saw him as a burden, but I think we both did and then it was too late. I was stupid. I thought I'd been robbed of this Hall of Fame career, but I was already twenty-eight, you know, it just wasn't gonna happen. And it's not like I had to quit, I just used him as an excuse. I couldn't accept reality so I guess I blamed him for all of it. I felt like I had to give up my identity. And now I see him every other holiday and for a week in the summer. So I guess I coach these kids to sort of make amends.

MARY

We all give up our identity.

BRIAN

You weren't always a history teacher?

MARY

No, I was, I don't know if I still am. I don't know what that makes me. We'll have to wait and see what the school board says. But I know what you mean.

BRIAN

Right. I just said it out loud. To my wife. Ex-wife.

MARY

I said it out loud to teenagers. Ex-teenagers.

(Pause.)

MARY

Well you're really great with the kids. Jack talks about you all the time.

BRIAN

You guys did a good job with that one.

MARY

Mike's actually in a band.

BRIAN

Really? He doesn't seem like the type.

MARY

It's a cover band. Guns 'n Roses. Autumn Rain or something.

BRIAN  
November Rain?

MARY  
That's it.

BRIAN  
Those guys are actually pretty good.

MARY  
You've seen them?

BRIAN  
They played my buddy's wedding last year. Your husband is quite the whistler.

(Pause.)

BRIAN  
I'm sorry, I'm just going on and on, woe is me right? What did you want to talk about?

MARY  
Nothing. I just, um, wanted to say thanks. Jack - The Beanstalk's had a lot of fun this season.

BRIAN  
It's not over yet. We've still got the playoffs.

MARY  
Right. I'll be there.

BRIAN  
I hope so.

(The scene shifts to a classroom.  
CARTER is grading papers behind his desk. After a moment NINA enters.)

NINA  
Mr. Matthews?

CARTER  
Nina. Geez, you startled me.

NINA

Sorry.

CARTER

Is there something I can help you with?

NINA

I was wondering if you had a chance to look at my last story?

CARTER

As a matter of fact I'm reading it right now.

NINA

Oh. I'm sorry.

CARTER

If you want to be a writer you better get used to people reading your stuff.

NINA

Like right in front of you though?

CARTER

Sometimes. I once had a guy at a conference rip one of my stories to shreds.

NINA

So you just sat there while the guy ripped out your heart?

CARTER

I even picked up the tab.

NINA

How could you do that?

CARTER

It's a business. Don't burn bridges. It's a small world.

(Pause.)

NINA

So what do you think?

CARTER

I'm not finished.

NINA

So far?

CARTER

Well that doesn't really matter.

NINA

Sure it does.

CARTER

If I love it now but the ending sucks then I'm going to think it sucks, even though I love it right now. And if I hate it now but the ending blows my mind then I'm going to love it.

NINA

Okay.

(Pause.)

CARTER

It's promising.

NINA

Really?

CARTER

It's a little heavy handed at times, but it's definitely got potential. You're a very talented writer Nina.

NINA

Thanks.

CARTER

Can I ask you a question? You don't have to answer, but I'm curious.

NINA

Okay.

CARTER

Why are you writing this?

NINA

What?

CARTER

What's the driving force that made you put pen to paper?

NINA

I wrote it on my laptop.

CARTER

Nina.

NINA

I don't know. I guess I want to point out how fake everything is. Like how we all sit at home and watch TV and TV tells us what to like and what to do and what we should buy, then we all go out and like do it.

CARTER

So what's your theme?

NINA

TV?

CARTER

Loss of identity?

NINA

Maybe? I don't know. Like, how she's trying to be different things to different people.

CARTER

Think about it. Once you know for sure wait seven days then re-read this and give me a revision.

NINA

Okay.  
Are you doing a reading tonight?

CARTER

It's tomorrow.

NINA

Is it cool if I like came to that? Even though you're totally doing it at like a big box instead of a local shop.

CARTER

I'd be honored if you came. And there aren't any local bookstores in Shorewood Heights anymore.

(MIKE is in a record store. He is checking out. JEFF is the clerk.)

JEFF

Did you find everything okay?

MIKE

Yeah. Just this one.

JEFF

Roman Candle? Nice. Little Elliot Smith for my middle-aged friend.

MIKE

I had it when I was in college.

JEFF

Cool. Me too.

MIKE

I bet.

JEFF

Well, if I go to college I'll have had the album whilst in college. So...

MIKE

I can't believe you guys had it. Nobody has this.

JEFF

Totally. You'd think Billy Joel was the only person to release an album in the past twenty years.

MIKE

Right, although I must admit that I do own a copy of River of Dreams. God, it feels so good to finally say that to somebody.

JEFF

It's cool. I've got Kelly Clarkson on my I-pod.

MIKE

How is this place still open? I thought people didn't buy CD's anymore?

JEFF

My step-dad is loaded. He owns like six McDonald's and has more money than he knows what to do with. He also used to be in this band when he was in high school, so he keeps the store to remind him of his youth even though it like loses something like two thousand dollars a month.

MIKE

You should ask him for a raise.

JEFF

It beats working at one of his Mickey-D's.

MIKE

I guess. So what else are you into?

JEFF

All sorts of stuff.

MIKE

Kelly Clarkson, Shakira, come on man.

JEFF

Are you holding me up? Is this like a music hold up?

(They both assume traditional "hold-up" roles.)

MIKE

Yeah. Tell me a cool band you like or I'll blow your head off.

JEFF

Oh man, oh man, just, oh come on man, I've got six kids—

MIKE

I have a kid and haven't been to a show in twelve years. Now!

JEFF

Neko Case.

MIKE

How old are you? I thought you were hip.

JEFF

You put me on the spot.  
The Baby Argyles?

MIKE

Are you making fun of my kid?

JEFF

Yes! Jason Doherty? The Stalkers? None of this is sinking in?

MIKE

I'm still buying CD's.

(Pause.)

JEFF

Did we just have a moment?

MIKE

I think we did.

JEFF

Do you want a cig?

MIKE

Don't ever say cig again.

JEFF

Fuck you.

MIKE

It makes you seem immature.

JEFF

You're immature.

MIKE

I had to quit. Babies and cigarettes don't mix.

JEFF

Babies and cigarettes. That's an awesome name for a band.

MIKE

Fuck I miss it.

JEFF

You were in a band?

MIKE

Cigarettes.

JEFF

What did you play?

MIKE

Cigarettes.

JEFF

A play a little. Lead vocals too.

MIKE

Cigarettes. I'm talking about actual cigarettes.

JEFF

Right.

MIKE

What they don't get is that cigarettes are awesome.

JEFF

I know.

MIKE

I don't smoke to be cool. Okay, I started smoking to be cool. But I smoke—smoked because smoking is fucking awesome. That's what they don't get. They go on and on about cancer and all that, like I don't know that inhaling smoke and tar is bad for me. But they don't get that it's awesome. It tastes so good; it feels so good. Like there isn't anything I can't accomplish with a cigarette hanging from my lips. God I miss it so bad. Now I just look like some high strung asshole all the time. I don't have anything to do when I'm just hanging out, waiting for the train—

JEFF

The Metra? You totally take Metra.

(Singing.)

The way to really fly!

MIKE

What train do you take to get downtown asshole? Believe me, once you actually ride the El, you'll like Metra.

JEFF

Couldn't you like smoke outside or something?

MIKE

She wouldn't let me. She was like an SS guard about it. I get it, it's not like I want my kid breathing that stuff in. But it's like I didn't have a choice. I could give up the band, we all knew we sucked. I could even move to the suburbs. That was my choice. But I couldn't be a smoker and a father.

JEFF

Dude, that sucks. I don't know what I'd do without smoking.

MIKE

Pick me out an album.

JEFF

Hmm?

MIKE

C'mon. Pick something for me.

JEFF

What do you want?

MIKE

Anything. Something a white suburban 39 year old ex-smoker in a cover band with a wife and kid wouldn't know about.

JEFF

Okay. Let's start with The Baby Argyles. I Thought You Said Patience was a Virtue. It's a good transition from The Stalkers. Give that a listen and come back next week. I'll pick some shit out for you.

MIKE

You'd do that?

JEFF

Settle down man, I'm not going down on you.

MIKE

Oh but you are.

JEFF

That's not cool man. I'm not like that.

MIKE

Cherish every one man. They don't last.

JEFF

Are we talking about bj's or cigs?

MIKE

Yeah.

JEFF

I think I can do that.

MIKE

Thanks...I didn't catch your name?

JEFF

Jeff.

MIKE

Jeff. Thanks man.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 5

(MARY and GARY in Mary's garden.  
She is planting.)

MARY

Petunia?

GARY

That's what I said. But Eliot's in love with it.

MARY

Are you guys having an eighty three year old British woman?

GARY

Sometimes I wish we were.

MARY

I'm sure she'd make excellent tea.

GARY

I could use some. I'm exhausted. I was on couch duty last night.

MARY

Trouble in Oz?

GARY

Eliot wants me to propose.

MARY

So? You guys have been together for ten years.

GARY

But we can't get married.

MARY

Why not?

GARY

Because we can't get married.

MARY

Not legally, but you can still get married.

GARY

How can we still get married if we legally can't get married?

MARY

It's all just symbolism.

GARY

Not for me.

MARY

So?

GARY

Could you at least pretend to be on my side for five minutes?

MARY

Sorry.

GARY

He doesn't want to have a baby out of wedlock.

MARY

He's got no problem with you having a baby with another woman?

GARY

Exactly. I mean it's his sister.

MARY

You bastard. If Mike got my sister pregnant I'd kill him.

GARY

You have a sister?

MARY

We're talking theoretical here. Assume that if he got any woman pregnant I'd kill him.

GARY

Right.

I get it, it's as close as we can come to having a baby. But what's the hang up?

MARY

So why won't you do it?

GARY

It's silly. It'd be like giving him a promise ring. We're too old for that kind of stuff.

MARY

So move to Iowa.

GARY

I'm not moving to Iowa.

MARY

Why not?

GARY

Because I shouldn't have to. Plus it's Iowa.

MARY

Just do it.

GARY

He acts like I'm going to run off with someone when he's nine months pregnant.  
He's not even pregnant.

MARY

You're missing out on pregnancy sex. Very hot. Nothing like getting kicked in the stomach in the middle of an orgasm.

GARY

God I miss you. The lounge is so dead without you.

MARY

Thanks.

GARY

I feel like such an outcast. Like I've got the plague or something. Nobody will talk to me. I guess by my being your friend they're in danger of making eye contact with me. It's like they think I'll give them AIDS and get them fired-probation-strike. You know, sometimes I think we all became teachers because we didn't know how to grow up.

MARY

I'm starting to think you might be right.

(Referring to the flowers.)

What do you think? Needs some more color and vertical interest.

GARY

I don't know.

MARY

What do you suggest?

GARY

More flowers? I don't know.

MARY

What? I thought you were—

GARY

Honey, these hands don't get dirty.

MARY

I'm sorry. I just assumed.

GARY

I'll be there for the board meeting.

MARY

Me too.

GARY

If it doesn't go well you can always just totally flip out. You've got nothing else to lose. It would be your one moment of freedom, what are they going to do? Fire you twice? It's really a once in a lifetime opportunity to do something with no restraint. I mean if you don't care about getting your job back, not that you couldn't totally get a job in another district with your credentials—

MARY

Is it really worth it?

GARY

What?

MARY

Just do it.

GARY

You're harder to sidetrack than Eliot. Even if I wanted to I can't do it now. It's all he talks about. Now it'd just seem like I was doing it because he wanted me to do it. You need to go home and make a cake or something for Mike.

MARY

I'm not like that.

GARY

Yes you are.

MARY

I'm not making Mike a cake.

GARY

Why not?

MARY

We don't have the time.

GARY

Scandalous. You can't drop that on me and then walk away.

MARY

I'm not getting into it Gary. We've been married a long time. There are bumps in the road.

GARY

There are bumps in the road and then there's staying with your mother.

MARY

I'm not staying with my mother. We're just in a rut.

GARY

Take a trip.

MARY

I don't think so.

GARY

Eliot and I always go away whenever we get stuck. Look,

you've had a rough couple of weeks with the school board and everything. It would do you some good. It's great.

MARY

Yeah?

GARY

Oh yeah.

MARY

So why don't you propose to him?

GARY

Have you not been listening?

MARY

Not really.

GARY

And you don't exactly inspire confidence in the institution at this exact moment.

MARY

How can you tell if someone is gay? I thought gardening would be a tip off.

GARY

I'll pretend to not be insulted if you prefer.

MARY

I think my son's baseball coach might be gay.

GARY

Oh. Do we have a real scandal brewing? Are you in love with him? Are you leaving Mike for your Little League coach?

MARY

No. Don't be ridiculous. I'm just curious.

GARY

Ask him about Gwen Verdon.

MARY

Can you or Eliot come to Jack's game this weekend?

GARY

I'm busy. I'll see if Eliot can come. He loves picking out straight gay guys.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 6

(CARTER and JEN's bedroom. He is getting ready for his reading. She is already dressed.)

JEN

It's nearly six-thirty Carter. I thought you told her six o'clock?

CARTER

What do you want me to say?

JEN

Did you call her?

CARTER

I've called ten times.

JEN

I can't believe this.

CARTER

She's fifteen.

JEN

And she's supposed to be here. I guess you're on your own.

CARTER

You're not coming?

JEN

Are you just now entering this conversation? How can I come if the babysitter isn't here?

CARTER

Can't you call Mary or something?

JEN

And tell her to be here five minutes ago?

CARTER

I don't want to go by myself.

JEN

It's your reading. You have to go.

CARTER

I want you to be there.

JEN

Me too.

CARTER

You look really hot in that dress.

JEN

You're late.

CARTER

They won't start without me.

JEN

C'mon Carter. The kids are down the hall and you're late.

(Pause.)

CARTER

Are you sure this tie goes?

JEN

Yes. Quit dawdling.

CARTER

And you think the part where Arnold has his epiphany is a good selection?

JEN

Yes.

CARTER

Why?

JEN

Because it is.

CARTER

Are you going to change?

JEN

(Slight pause.)

I don't want to be in this all night with the kids.

CARTER  
Please?

JEN  
C'mon Carter. I'm tired.

(Pause.)

JEN  
Don't.

CARTER  
What?

JEN  
Don't make me feel guilty.

CARTER  
I didn't say anything.

JEN  
You don't have to.  
Fine, I'll wear the dress.

CARTER  
Forget it.

JEN  
Carter—

CARTER  
Sorry for finding you sexually attractive.

(Pause. CARTER puts his book and  
another sheaf of papers in his  
briefcase.)

JEN  
You're going to be great.

CARTER  
Thanks.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 7

(MIKE and MARY's bedroom. They are getting ready for bed.)

MARY  
The meatloaf was good tonight.

MIKE  
Not too much ketchup?  
(He pronounces ketchup "catch-up".)

MARY  
No, just the right amount of catch-up.  
What were you listening to earlier?

MIKE  
I got a new album.

MARY  
When?

MIKE  
A few days ago.

MARY  
Why didn't you tell me?

MIKE  
I didn't think it was noteworthy.

MARY  
It kind of sucks.

MIKE  
I like it.

MARY  
But it sucks.

MIKE  
But I like it. It's different.

(Pause.)

MIKE

Did you let out Fritz?

MARY

Yeah. Still won't go.

MIKE

What is with that dog?

MARY

I'll call the vet in the morning.

MIKE

Just put some laxatives in his bowl.

MARY

Mike, I'm not giving the dog laxatives.

MIKE

Give him a prune.

(Pause.)

MARY

How did your meeting with Mr. Foster go?

MIKE

Oh. Fine. Just wanted me to do something that's not actually possible.

MARY

What exactly do you do?

MIKE

What?

MARY

I don't know what you do?

MIKE

I'm a financial analyst.

MARY

Yeah, but what does that mean?

MIKE  
It's complicated.

MARY  
So tell me about it.

MIKE  
I'm tired Mary.

(Pause.)

MIKE  
I make sure our company makes sound investments.

MARY  
Okay.

MIKE  
It's complicated. It's not like teaching.

MARY  
Which one of us is part of a community scandal?

MIKE  
I didn't mean that. It's just that everyone knows what a teacher does.

MARY  
Except me apparently.

MIKE  
You're a great teacher. I wish I cared about my job as much as you do.

MARY  
So tell me what you do.

MIKE  
If you don't do it it's hard to explain. I play around on E-Bay a lot.

MARY  
You've just been quiet lately.

MIKE  
I'm always quiet.

MARY

Okay. Forget it.

(Pause.)

MIKE

I have a show this weekend.

MARY

I know. My mother's watching Jack.

MIKE

Are you coming?

MARY

I'm going out with Jen. Her and Carter are having some problems.

MIKE

Jen and Carter?

MARY

Apparently he doesn't communicate all that well.

MIKE

Very funny.

MARY

I guess they're going to counseling.

MIKE

Is that what this is about? I'm not going to counseling.

MARY

I don't want to. Why are you so defensive?

MIKE

Because I feel like I'm being interviewed here.

MARY

Maybe if you spoke to me I wouldn't have to pry everything out of you.

MIKE

I bought two albums.

MARY

What?

MIKE

I got an old one - Elliot Smith. And a new one - The Baby Argyles.

MARY

Baby-what?

MIKE

It's a band.

MARY

Okay.

MIKE

So you know. I got two new albums.

MARY

Okay.

MIKE

Carter thinks Jen's sleeping with Coach Brian.

MARY

Did he say that?

MIKE

In his own way.

MARY

She's not.

MIKE

How do you know?

MARY

Because I asked her.

MIKE

I knew there was something wrong with that guy.

MARY

There's nothing wrong with him.

MIKE

Oh come on. His kid's not even on the team. And he's apparently unfamiliar with doing a double switch.

MARY

His kid lives in Virginia. He's divorced.

MIKE

Why do you know that?

MARY

People tell me things.

MIKE

Except me apparently.  
I just don't like the guy.

MARY

I think we should get away.

MIKE

What?

MARY

I think we could use a weekend getaway.

MIKE

Now's a bad time.

MARY

There's never a good time.

MIKE

Money's tight.  
I've got a few big projects that I've got to get done.  
You've got...you're stuff. Now's a bad time.

MARY

I need something Mike.

(Pause.)

MIKE

Can we talk about this in the morning?

MARY

Fine.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 8

(GARY and ELIOT'S home. They are putting together the nursery.)

ELIOT

Can I go on the record as saying that I love chocolate brown?

GARY

Sure.

ELIOT

No, I mean like officially. Can we go to the courthouse or something?

GARY

I'll call our lawyer and see. Emily is starting to get big.

ELIOT

She's a cow.

GARY

Eliot. She's your sister.

ELIOT

What? You didn't know her in high school. She weighed maybe forty-seven pounds. No joke. I've never seen her finish a sandwich before. I'm surprised the pregnancy took.

GARY

Well...

ELIOT

Oh please. What thanks to your super-sperm?

GARY

I haven't been clinically tested...

ELIOT

I can't believe in a few days, any day now, there will be a baby in here.

GARY

Our baby.

ELIOT  
You know the sex.

GARY  
What?

ELIOT  
She told you the sex of baby Petunia/Liam?

GARY  
No.

ELIOT  
You're such a bad liar. It's adorable how bad you are.

GARY  
It was killing her. She had to tell somebody.

ELIOT  
How long have you known?

GARY  
A couple days.

ELIOT  
Gary.

GARY  
Two months.

ELIOT  
Oh my God, and you didn't tell me?

GARY  
You didn't want to know.

ELIOT  
I know. No, I'm not mad. I can't believe you didn't tell me. Two months?

GARY  
I haven't eaten in three days.

ELIOT  
Gary.

GARY

I didn't want to ruin it for you.

ELIOT

I think this is my favorite room in the house.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 9

(MARY is meeting with the school board. CARTER is giving his reading.)

MARY

Thank you for having me here tonight.

CARTER

It's truly a pleasure to be here. Thank you so much for coming out. It's nice to see some familiar faces.

MARY

As I'm sure you are aware I am here to defend my curriculum choices and classroom freedom.

CARTER

Let's say we get started. I'll take any questions you might have after the reading.

MARY

As a teacher of history, I'm struck by several similar circumstances throughout time.

CARTER

Sorry, I'm a little nervous. This is my first reading. Hm. I always tell my students not to pre-apologize for their work. So, thanks again for coming.

MARY

I've been with this district for fourteen years.

(Responding to a question.)

I don't expect that to, what was the word you used? Compensate? For my, "indiscretions?" I'm simply stating that I've come to learn a lot about myself over that time.

CARTER

(After his reading. Taking questions.)

Come again? Sorry, I don't hear as well as I used to. No, your English is fine. Right. Well I don't think the book is anti-American. If anything it exonerates America. But that's not really the point.

MARY

I've made thousands of mistakes while at Shorewood Central. I've answered questions incorrectly, unfairly graded students that I didn't like, phoned in lectures and generally been a pretty awful teacher some days.

CARTER

No, Arnold is not gay.  
Yes, I'm sure.

MARY

But most days there isn't any place in the world I'd rather be. When I was in graduate school I thought I was better than high school. I thought all I'd be doing was teaching apathetic kids about people and events that they didn't care about. A glorified babysitter.

CARTER

Well thank you. I did see the review in The Tribune today. It was very kind. I can only hope others say the same. If there are any others. But I don't really do it for the reviews. I never thought it'd even get published, so just seeing it on the shelf is still quite a shock. I thought I'd spend twenty years on it and then it'd sit in my drawer until somebody found it cleaning out the house after I die.

MARY

I want to let these kids know that they have a choice. That not everything has to be the way it is. That education is a two way street. What a terrible fate to simply go along day after day just accepting what's given to you.

CARTER

I think at its core the story is about self realization. Knowing yourself is so difficult. It's terribly tricky to see yourself for what you really are, who you really are; it might be the hardest thing anyone can do.

MARY

I'm not going to get on a soapbox, and I'm not going to defend myself. I taught the material how I felt it should be taught. I did what I thought was most beneficial to the students of Shorewood Heights. If you disagree, so be it. I'll abide by whatever decision you come to. Thank you.

CARTER

Well I think I've gone on long enough. Thank you again for coming out and supporting the book.

MARY

Yes, I do use the "N" word as you call it in class. No, I don't feel that it's inappropriate. These kids need to know the power of language. It's one of maybe five words that are essential to our history. By omitting it I'd be leaving out part of our identity. You wouldn't suggest I'd not talk about democracy or freedom? We can't hide from who we are.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 10

(The local Arby's. CARTER and NINA are there after the reading.)

NINA

Oh my God, you are like a rock star.

CARTER

No—

NINA

You are. Everyone there wanted a piece of you. You should start wearing leather pants.

CARTER

I don't think that's a good idea.

NINA

You can metaphorically wear them at least.

CARTER

It was just a few people. Don't blow it out of proportion.

NINA

Don't sell yourself short. You're always telling us how hard it is to make it.

CARTER

I'm in an Arby's.

NINA

You're on your way to making it. I'm telling you. This book is going to take off. You saw The Trib. They hate everything, like they hate...everything. They would hate like whatever The Citizen Kane of books is, and they like loved your book. Loved it.

CARTER

It's just one review. And it said some pretty bad stuff.

NINA

Like Carter Lane's debut novel is quite possibly the best debut by an American author in half a century? Is that the bad stuff?

CARTER

It also said I was too wordy.

NINA

Oh my God, can you find the good in anything?

CARTER

Says the black clad teenager.

NINA

Whatever.

(CARTER pulls out her story from his  
briefcase.)

NINA

What is that?

CARTER

(Reading.)

There isn't a point where you make a firm decision about your future. It just happens to you. You're twenty and you have this life planned out but it doesn't happen. There isn't a moment when you decide to be x or y, to do this or that. You simply fall away from history and live snugly in the present.

NINA

That's out of context.

CARTER

It's really great. Terribly fucking depressing. You should really check yourself in some place. But brilliant. Better than anything I ever wrote when I was your age.

(NINA lunges across the table and  
kisses CARTER. He resists at first,  
then kisses back before abruptly  
putting a stop to it.)

CARTER

I'm—  
I should go.

NINA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that.

CARTER

No. I...it's-

NINA

I thought you. I'm sorry. Mr. Matthews. I just thought that I felt something that now I can so clearly see wasn't there, and I'm sorry and you totally don't have to like talk to me or look at me ever again and I won't say anything to anybody about this or anything-

(He kisses her.)

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 11

(The park same as Scene 1. It's the Little League playoffs. MARY and ELIOT are in the stands.)

ELIOT

God, this is so boring. These kids suck at baseball. Do they know that?

MARY

Okay Mr. Hall of Fame.

ELIOT

I was all-state my senior year.

MARY

You played baseball?

ELIOT

No. I played football.

MARY

Me too.

ELIOT

I did. Starting free safety for three years.

MARY

That means nothing to me.

ELIOT

It means that not everything is cut and dry Hester Prynne. Isn't that your whole thing?

MARY

I don't think that's the best use of the scarlet letter.

ELIOT

I am here to tell you if the guy you're lusting after is gay.

MARY

I'm not...lusting...after anybody.

ELIOT

Mmhmm.

MARY

So, what's the verdict?

ELIOT

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but that man loves him some vagina. Put a big ole V on his chest.

MARY

No?

ELIOT

Yup. Coach B hearts P-U-S-

MARY

I get it.  
We are in public you know.

ELIOT

These people could use a little jolt. Or is that exclusively your domain?

MARY

God, where is Jen? It's the last inning.

ELIOT

I wouldn't watch this either if I didn't have to.

MARY

No, Jen lives for this. It's the playoffs. It's all she talks about.

ELIOT

That's the most depressing thing I've ever heard.

MARY

She's just taking an interest in her son's life.

ELIOT

I am so not going to be that parent.

MARY

Please. You're going to be like Mike, banished to the outfield.

(They wave.)

ELIOT

That's why he's out there?

MARY

I swore I wouldn't do this, but once you're a parent you'll understand.

ELIOT

Oh, et tu, Brute?

MARY

You're going to sit through more concerts, recitals, plays, games than you can possibly imagine. And they are going to be painful, but you're going to love every minute.

ELIOT

So long as Petunia/Liam loves everything I do we won't have a problem.

(JEN enters.)

JEN

Sorry I'm late.

MARY

We're up by one.

ELIOT

Cooper has been deep in the hole all game.

JEN

What?

ELIOT

Mary told me to say that.

MARY

Are you okay?

JEN

Yeah. I just had some bad fish in the teachers lounge.

ELIOT

Why would you ever eat fish that was in a teachers lounge?  
I make Gary bring his lunch.

JEN

They've got the bases loaded.

ELIOT

But Coach B is on your team.

JEN

What?

MARY

Nothing.

ELIOT

Carter was great last night.

JEN

So I hear.

ELIOT

Seriously. I've always thought he was kind of an ass, in a good way, but an ass. This was like the perfect forum for it, because he can be all like asshole and "I'm the author and you're the peasants."

JEN

Is that a compliment? I'm not sure what you're saying.

ELIOT

Carter be good night last making words out loud.

JEN

Well I'm glad it went well. I just wish I could have been there.

MARY

You should have called me.

JEN

You were probably already there.

MARY

You could have just dropped Cooper off. Mike and Jack were home.

JEN

I didn't want to impose.

MARY

Your husband was giving his first reading from his book. It wouldn't have been imposing. How many times does that happen?

JEN

Mary.

MARY

What?

ELIOT

Ixnay on the reading-ay.

(There is a base hit and the game is now tied.)

MARY

Fuck.

JEN

This is bad. It's only the second round. We can't lose to the Marlins. They only won three games all year. It's not fair. It's not fair. We've worked too hard.

ELIOT

Are you okay honey?

JEN

How's your sister?

ELIOT

Fat. Miserable. I think I just signed over my half of the inheritance.

MARY

What is she? Eight months?

ELIOT

She's thirty-nine weeks. My big fat single pregnant sister carrying her gay brother's lover's child. Talk about Hester Prynne. You should see the looks we get when the three of us are walking down the street.

JEN

How's Gary?

ELIOT

Sickeningly adorable. He brings home a new onesie like everyday. Did I mention that he knows the sex? It's killing me.

JEN

I don't think I'd want to be surprised again. It's so hard to get ready when you don't know.

MARY

I'm pregnant.

(There is another hit. The Marlins score the winning run and there are end game celebrations.)

ELIOT

I'm sorry. It sounded like you just said you were pregnant?

JEN

Mary.

MARY

I'm ten weeks.

(Pause. MARY is obviously upset.)

ELIOT

Are baseball games always this exciting?

JEN

Are you okay?

MARY

I'm sorry.

JEN  
What's Mike think?

MARY  
I haven't told him.

JEN  
Is it his?

MARY  
(Slight hesitation.)  
Why would you even ask?

ELIOT  
It's gonna be fine. We can have play dates.

MARY  
No. I know. I'm just a little shocked.

JEN  
I'm sorry Mary. I didn't mean anything. I've gotta get  
Coop. I'll call you.

MARY  
Okay.

(JEN exits.)

MARY  
Fuck.

ELIOT  
Is it his?

MARY  
What's the difference? You're having a baby that's not  
yours.  
Sorry.  
Yes.

ELIOT  
If it makes you feel better Carter is cheating on Jen.

MARY  
Why would that make me feel better?

ELIOT

Gossip usually makes pregnant women feel better?

MARY

Where did you hear that?

ELIOT

I don't know. Redbook? Gossip makes me feel better.

MARY

How do you know?

ELIOT

I've spent my whole life trying to interpret peoples' every move. So now I'm like the best people reader on the planet. It's like the only benefit to a closeted childhood. I should totally have a talk show. It's obvious. Did you see her wrist?

MARY

No.

ELIOT

She had a tennis bracelet.

MARY

So? Jen's got a crush on Coach B.

ELIOT

It's gold. Which means that Carter got it because Jen likes silver. I'm like only a friend of a friend of a friend and I know that, how he doesn't...

MARY

So, he got her some jewelry. It's been known to happen.

ELIOT

Tennis bracelet is code for affair. Don't ask, it just is. She didn't go to the reading, she's late to the game. Not to mention when was the last time he got her something for no good reason. Plus he's all mister big-shot now, feeling good about himself, looking good and boom, things happen. Don't worry. She knows, so you won't like have to break it to her.

MARY

Oh God. I can't believe this. I'm thirty-seven years old. I can't do this. I can't start over.

ELIOT

Thirty-seven is the new sixteen. You're like Juno.

MARY

How did this happen? We've had sex like once in the last eight years.

ELIOT

You should really use protection. Aren't you like passing out condoms in your classes?

MARY

No.

ELIOT

I thought that's what you were in trouble for.

MARY

I said the "n" word in class among other things like trying to get my students to think for themselves.

ELIOT

Oh.

(Tentatively.)

Ni...g...?

MARY

Yes.

ELIOT

Oh.

MARY

What?

ELIOT

Nothing. It's...no, nothing.

MARY

You too?

ELIOT

I just don't know that it's the best idea for you, to be saying that.

MARY

I'm not racist.

ELIOT

I didn't say you were.

MARY

What are you saying?

ELIOT

I'm saying that you're a middle-aged privileged white woman. That's a really loaded word for a lot of people. I don't want to get into it.

MARY

That's the whole point. Why are we so afraid of it?

(Very slight pause.)

I'm not middle aged.

ELIOT

Look, I love you. I support you. It just makes me uncomfortable. It's not my place.

MARY

You sound just like Vettters.

ELIOT

Just to warn you I might get hit by lightning.

(Pause.)

MARY

That was the night. When Vettters fired me.

ELIOT

Confrontation makes me hot too. I'm a little flushed now actually.

MARY

You wanna have some pregnant sex?

ELIOT

I'd love to.

MARY

Here comes Mike and Jack. I've gotta go. Thanks for coming.

ELIOT

Are you kidding me? This is the most excitement I've had in weeks.

MARY

You need to get out more.

ELIOT

Call me if you need anything.

MARY

I will.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 12

(Record store. JEFF is behind the counter with a cigarette. MIKE enters and JEFF lights up.)

JEFF

(Pretending like he was caught smoking.)

Oh my God. What are you doing here?

MIKE

You can be a real dick, you know that? I tell you something personal and you mock me.

JEFF

Um, I'm a guy.

MIKE

You're a little boy. With a little dick.

JEFF

Nice.

MIKE

Whaddya got for me?

JEFF

Nothin'. It's been a busy week. We can look for some shit if you want.

MIKE

That's cool. I brought some stuff for you.

JEFF

It's our one month anniversary. I can't believe you remembered.

MIKE

(He pulls out a tape.)

JEFF

Are you serious? Is that like your demo tape?

MIKE

This is history.

JEFF

I don't think I've got anything to play a tape on. You still got your old boom-box?

MIKE

Bootleg. Nirvana. 1987. Nussbaum Road.

JEFF

Okay.

MIKE

Dude. This is their first live show. Do you know what this is?

JEFF

A crappy bootleg copy of a band before they were any good?

MIKE

For a musical snob you don't know shit. And some of the stuff you gave me sucks.

JEFF

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I was talking to a fat old fuck in a Guns 'N Roses cover band. I didn't realize you were Kurt Cobain.

MIKE

I'm husky.

JEFF

Dude, you're fat.

MIKE

(Pointing to his stomach/love handles.)

This is not fat.

JEFF

There's a Curves down the street. Women's Workout world down on Central-

MIKE

Dude, do you realize what this recording represents? Do you know what was on the radio in 1987? All of the shitty bands that you like now-

JEFF

You're the one jerking off to Peter Gabriel.  
(Pantomimes masturbating.)  
'I want to be, your Sledgehammer!'

MIKE

It all started at this house-party in 1987 in Raymond, Washington. Do you not get that? Do you not understand what this tape means? Or did you think that the world didn't start until you opened your eyes?

JEFF

Okay man. Keep your dick in your pants. I'll listen to it.

(Pause.)

MIKE

If you love it enough you'll do anything to keep doing it.

JEFF

What?

MIKE

November Rain.

JEFF

That's a really lame name. Like if I tried to come up with a more lame name for a GNR cover band I don't think I could come up with anything dumber. Maybe Mr. Brownstone. Or like Appetite for Rockstruction.

MIKE

Of course it's a stupid name. It has to be for us to get any gigs. But it keeps us playing. Dude, you can think what you want, but I could be playing in this band or I could be sitting on my ass. Sometimes you've got to come to terms with your situation and make the best of it.

JEFF

You mean settle.

MIKE

No, I mean realize that you aren't this special talent that the world needs to hear. I'm great on guitar, but so are twenty thousand other guys. Realize that when you get down to it at its most base level music is music.

JEFF

Dude. That's like exactly what I told my girlfriend.

MIKE

What?

JEFF

You aren't special, blah blah blah.

MIKE

Are you retarded?

JEFF

What?

MIKE

You can't tell a seventeen year old girl something like that. What's the matter with you?

JEFF

Well we kinda broke up. So I guess I shoulda run it by you first.

MIKE

Look, I'm a fuck up. My marriage is falling apart. I hate my job, my kid doesn't talk to me. This is the highlight of my week. But even I'm not as dumb as you.

JEFF

Thanks for the sympathy.  
And you're fat. Ten year old boys are husky.  
She's going to Columbia anyway, so it doesn't really matter. We woulda broke up in a few weeks.

MIKE

Columbia is downtown. Just a Metra trip away.

JEFF

Columbia, like New York Columbia.

MIKE

Oh. So move to New York.

JEFF

Why?

MIKE

Why not? You want to end up like me?

JEFF

Yes. I want to be the overweight bass player in Paradise City.

MIKE

Then go to college. I don't know. Do something.

JEFF

College is a rip off. My brother's got \$100k in debt and he works in a call center. It's a lie. I already live at home, at least now I don't owe anybody anything.

MIKE

Then work at this store. I don't care. Just don't let it define you.

JEFF

You're really making me uncomfortable with your like advice.

MIKE

Seeing the woman you love everyday isn't such a bad life.

JEFF

Dude, you do jack off to Sledgehammer. I was just making a joke earlier. Have you been shoving Nickelback albums up your ass when I'm not looking?

MIKE

Listen to the tape.

JEFF

Okay Slash.

MIKE

Thirty-nine is not middle aged.

JEFF

I don't care.

MIKE

I'm glad I stopped in.

JEFF

Could you stop making this awkward?

MIKE

I'll see you next week. If you aren't in New York.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 13

(BRIAN is standing outside of Mary and Mike's door. It is late at night. He's holding a baseball glove. He rings the bell several times. He starts to leave when MARY opens the door.)

MARY

Coach B?

BRIAN

Sorry. I know it's late.

MARY

Not like I have to go to work in the morning.

BRIAN

Did you get fired?

MARY

What do you think?

BRIAN

Sorry.

MARY

Are you Mexican?

BRIAN

Excuse me?

MARY

Sorry, I've been sipping on some wine. I just can't tell what you are.

BRIAN

I'm from Cedar Rapids. My family is Dominican.

MARY

Oh. Okay. Sorry to be so blunt about it. I'm Irish and Polish. They said that the minority community was unhappy with me. How do you like that? The first time this town pays any attention to minorities is when I try to include them in our country's history.

BRIAN  
I...The Beanstalk left his glove at the field.

MARY  
Okay.

BRIAN  
So I brought it by.

MARY  
At 11:30?

BRIAN  
I didn't realize it was so late.

MARY  
What are you doing here?

BRIAN  
Sorry?

MARY  
It's late.

BRIAN  
I just wanted to give Jack his glove back. Didn't want him to get too down on himself because of the game today. Tough way to end the year.

MARY  
We can't win 'em all.

BRIAN  
I guess not.

MARY  
I haven't been sipping wine.

BRIAN  
Okay.

MARY  
I'm preg-

(He kisses her. It is not long lived,  
but rather intense. After the kiss  
there is a pause.)

MARY

Thanks. Thanks for that.

BRIAN

I'm sorry. Here's the mitt.

MARY

I'm...I'm gonna go back inside now.

BRIAN

Right.

MARY

Thanks for the glove Coach B.

BRIAN

You're welcome.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 14

(The same night. JEN and CARTER's house. He is seated and she is pacing the room. She begins picking up and cleaning, rotating between very slowly and finely moving things to very rapid movements. This goes on for quite some time as the silence looms.)

CARTER

I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

JEN

I don't even know what to say to you right now.  
I mean what the fuck were you thinking? What's the matter with you?  
Fuck. Carter, fuck.

CARTER

Why did you say yes?

JEN

What?

CARTER

When I asked you to marry me. Why did you say yes?

JEN

Carter—

CARTER

Why?

(Pause.)

I deserve to know.

JEN

You deserve to know? You deserve to know? You don't deserve shit. You just tried to fuck a little girl at a fucking Arby's.

CARTER

It's not like that.

JEN

Oh really, what's it like Carter? You just wanted to talk and you wanted some roast beef? The only person you could unload your feelings on was a thirteen year old black girl? At Arby's?

CARTER

Jen-

JEN

Don't. You don't deserve anything. You deserve to have your dick chopped off. Fuck you Carter.

CARTER

That's very mature Jen.

JEN

I thought you liked immature girls.

CARTER

Forget it.

JEN

No please masta, tell me what a bad little girl I've been.

CARTER

She's seventeen and she kissed me.

JEN

I wonder why she kissed you Carter. Girls don't just make out with their teachers. I can't even look at you.

CARTER

Jen-

JEN

Get out.

CARTER

You're being unreas-

JEN

Get out of my house.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 15

(MIKE and MARY's house. Later that night. MIKE enters carrying a guitar case. MARY is seated on the couch watching old movies.)

MIKE

(Startled.)

Whoa. You nearly gave me a heart attack. What are you still doing up?

MARY

Can't sleep. How was the show?

MIKE

Not bad. I think only three or four people made fun of us.

MARY

A new record?

MIKE

Could be.  
I got you something.

MARY

What?

MIKE

I was going to wait until tomorrow.

MARY

Why did you get me something?

MIKE

I can't just get you something?

MARY

No.

(He hands her a box.)

MIKE

Open it.

MARY

This isn't a tennis bracelet is it?

MIKE

What?

MARY

I have something I need to tell you.

MIKE

I know.

MARY

Well, two things, but one is a lot more important.

MIKE

Will you just open it.

MARY

Coach B kissed me.

MIKE

What?

MARY

He came here to give me Jack's glove and then he kissed me.

MIKE

Fucking Dominicans.

MARY

I threw him out. I didn't mean anything.

MIKE

Oh, hey, I just made out with some girl but no biggie.

MARY

Mike.

MIKE

No it's cool. I'm glad that you were making out with other guys.

MARY

Mike, listen to me. Nothing happened. It didn't mean anything. He caught me by surprise.

MIKE

I bet. I've seen the way you and Jen look at him.

MARY

Mike, he's our son's little league coach.

MIKE

A pretty crappy one at that.

MARY

Okay? That's it. I'm sorry.

MIKE

Do I get to make out with someone now?

MARY

No. Why? Is the song lady at the library free?

MIKE

I don't need her. I could have my pick of burned out fifty year old groupies.

MARY

I know.

MIKE

Open it. Before you make out with somebody else.

MARY

You're taking this really well.

MIKE

Will you open it?

MARY

Fine.

(She does.)

Mike.

MIKE

I know.

MARY

There's something else I need to tell you.

MIKE  
Mary, my God, I KNOW.

MARY  
You know?

MIKE  
Yes.

MARY  
How do you know?

MIKE  
You're my wife.

MARY  
And that's what the necklace is for?

MIKE  
Well I originally got it to make up for making out with  
Jack's little league coach.

MARY  
Very funny.

MIKE  
I love you.

MARY  
You're taking this really well. Are you high?

MIKE  
No. A little buzzed, but no.

MARY  
But we're old.

MIKE  
We're not that old.

MARY  
I don't have a job.

MIKE  
You were in grad school when Jack was born and I worked at

the movie theater. It'll be like an extended maternity leave.

MARY

Can we do that?

MIKE

Don't worry about that right now.

MARY

Are you really okay with this?

MIKE

I've had a few weeks to figure some stuff out.

MARY

Because you've been kind of a jerk lately.

MIKE

I know.

MARY

Good.

MIKE

Everything is going to be fine. And when you're ready any school in the country would be lucky to have you.

MARY

Thanks Mike.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 16

(Several months later. The record store. JEFF is behind the counter with his back to the door as MARY, with a double stroller, walks in.)

JEFF

(Thinks he's talking to Mike.)

Dude, where the hell have you been. It's been like three weeks. I got a pile of shit for you. And you were right, that tape was pretty fucking awesome. And guess what else I've got.

(Sees MARY.)

Oh, fuck, Mrs. Sweet.

MARY

Hi Jeffery.

JEFF

Just so you know I am in no way qualified to handle a baby.

MARY

I'll take that as your way of saying congratulations.

JEFF

Totally. Was the extra one like your severance package?

MARY

Good to see that you're still an asshole Jeff. In a good way. It's my friends Eliot and George's baby - Petunia.

JEFF

Like two dudes had a baby? They are a Steve Guttenberg away from a hit movie. I'm free most nights if they need a fill in. For the movie, not to baby-sit.

MARY

We trade Mondays so that we can get some sleep.

JEFF

Not that it matters, but I think that's total bs what they did to you.

MARY

It's fine.

JEFF

Not like trading Mondays or whatever. Like the school board and this town. Whatever, like half this neighborhood didn't try and sell their houses when Nina's family moved in. I thought you were cool. You know, for a teacher and shit. Cool probably isn't the right word, you know, for a high school teacher with two kids, but it was cool that you treated us like adults.

MARY

Thanks. I can see it's taken you a long way.

JEFF

Oh totally, I totally sell to black people now whereas before I kicked them out of the store. So, um, can I help you with something?

MARY

(She produces a CD.)

What's this?

JEFF

In my professional opinion I'd say that it is a compact disc.

MARY

Why does my husband have it?

JEFF

Um, probably because he likes music.

MARY

Why is your voice on it?

JEFF

What?

MARY

Your voice.

(She hands it to him.)

JEFF

No way. That's our demo. Are you like a record producer now?

MARY

No.

JEFF

Because that would be really convenient for me.

MARY

I found it in my husband's underwear drawer.

JEFF

Not to pry Mrs. Sweet, but why were you going through his things?

MARY

I was putting away his laundry asshole.

JEFF

You know, it's that kind of language that got you into this predicament in the first place.

MARY

Cut the crap Jeff. Did you make a demo tape with my husband?

JEFF

Why are you so angry? Shit, we didn't sleep together.

MARY

Because I think you saved my marriage.

JEFF

That second track is pretty transcendental.

MARY

It's actually not bad.

JEFF

Wait. You're married to Husky?

MARY

You're just now putting that together?

JEFF

We mostly talked about music. And made fun of each other.

MARY

How long has he been coming here?

JEFF

I don't know. Since you had a job and looked normal. He brought in his guitar one day and we just started fucking—um, messing around and we put some shit down a couple weeks back.

MARY

Even though your girlfriend got me fired and ruined my best friend's life, thank you.

JEFF

Oh, we totally broke up. She's going to New York. Her story about you and Carter is actually being published in The New Yorker. It's actually really good. Don't worry, you totally can't tell it's you. But you come off really racist, like George Wallace racist. Your name might as well be Jane Crow.

MARY

Well I'm glad something sunk in.

JEFF

You like that? I've been looking to make a Jane Crow joke this whole time.

MARY

It's not that funny.

JEFF

I know.

MARY

Well, at the risk of you subconsciously influencing these kids I'd better be going.

JEFF

It was good to see you Mrs. Sweet. Tell Women's Workout World to stop by today. I've got some stuff for him to listen to so he doesn't sound so old on our next album.

MARY

I will. Thank you Jeffery.

(Blackout.)

THE END