

Elysian Fields

A play in three acts

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Act One

Scene one

Scene: A classroom

At rise: **Regina Snow** stands before her class. She is forty years old, and though not unattractive, she has given into middle age before her time and is the kind of woman it is hard to imagine as a child. The only visible student is **John Butcher**, a sixteen year old boy of confidence, and a mature build and presence.

Regina

Reading from the dictionary

“Irony: 1a) The use of words to express something different from and often opposed to their literal meaning. 1b) An expression or utterance marked by irony. 1c) A literary style employing irony for humorous or rhetorical effect. 2a) Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs. 2b) An occurrence, result or circumstance notable for such incongruity. Ironic: Poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended.” For that which we are about to discuss, it is important to be precise with the terms we use.

The setting is important. Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire” is set in the south. It is set in Louisiana. More specifically, New Orleans. Particularly on the street Elysian Fields. This is a real street in New Orleans. It is situated near the railroad tracks, just as he describes. It is in a poor, run-down neighborhood, just as he describes. Literary license was not used here to illustrate a point. He took Elysian Fields for his play, just as it was. But he took it nonetheless. And we must ask, “to what end?” What is the humorous or rhetorical effect? In what way is the name of the street ironic? To understand this, you must understand to what Elysian Fields alludes--which we will discuss in our next class. However, you will already know to what it alludes by then, because you will have looked it up in order to write a two page paper on A: What makes Elysian Fields ironic, and B: Why did Tennessee Williams employ this use of irony.

John

What if it’s not ironic?

Regina

Excuse me?

John

Maybe it isn’t ironic at all.

Regina

Feel free to discuss that angle in your paper as well, but please demonstrate that you understand what irony means in the process. Thank you. That's all for today.

Lights out.

Act One

Scene two

(Scene: The living room of **Regina Snow** and her husband, **Ross McCullers**. It is an eclectic household, but one whose foundation is academia. However well-kept and homey, it is also a strange mishmash of interests and aesthetics. Bookshelves dominate, and there is an attempt at stateliness in the many hardback volumes that is betrayed by stacks of paperbacks on the floor and the occasional random paperback best seller shoved into the bookshelves among the hardbacks. There are two armchairs at the forefront, and a coffee table perpetually covered in newspapers between them. A desk sits in the corner. This is Ross' "work station". It is a tidy mess—stacks of color coded papers organized to suit Ross' needs exactly, but to all others it is chaos. There is a pinboard over the desk, covered in sticky notes, some overlapping, also color coded. A trashcan overflowing with discarded papers sits beside it.)

(At rise: **Ross McCullers** is sitting in his armchair, reading the paper. He is smiling, (which he does easily and often) as he keeps one eye on his paper, one eye on the door. At forty-two, he is in the prime of his life and knows it. **Regina** enters, with a tote full of papers and folders slung over her arm, clearly tired after a long day.)

Ross

Hello, my love.

Regina

Hello. I thought you were going to take out the garbage?

Ross

I took the kitchen garbage out. That's the important one.

Regina

You couldn't just taken out the rest of the garbage at the same time?

Ross

I had a very busy day.

Regina

Well, after dinner, will you take out the rest of the garbage?

Ross
(Smiling, with no sarcasm)

I'd be delighted.

Regina

You're in a good mood.

Ross

Don't you want to know why my day was so busy?

Regina

You've got the Times. I know that's a full days work.

Ross

I've only just begun on the paper. But there's a very interesting item in it.

Regina

Did they find out who killed that poor girl?

Ross

Kidnapped. They haven't found a body yet.

Regina

I don't know how you can be so interested in such morbid things.

Ross

It's my well-spring of inspiration. But that wasn't the item I was referring to.

Regina

What then?

Ross

New York Times Bestseller List.

Regina

I thought that didn't come out until Sunday?

Ross

This is Sunday's paper. Remember when we got ours the book review section was missing? I went to the college library today and stole a copy.

Regina

The public library is closer.

Ross

The college library is better.

Regina

Well? Are you on it?

Ross

Number one: Paperback Mass Market Fiction.

Regina

Number one? Really?

Ross

See, I knew you wouldn't believe me. That's why I wanted you to see it in print.

Regina

Let me see it.

(She takes the paper and looks it over.)

Danielle Steele is number two.

Ross

I know. Do you know what a big deal it is to outsell Danielle Steele?

Regina

Mass Market Fiction. They make you sound so cheap.

Ross

Hey, now. There's a difference between cheap and accessible. I write books people like to read. I see no shame in that. Turns out I write books that everyone likes to read. Number one, baby.

Regina

It's wonderful. It really is. I bet your next book makes you number one in hardback fiction.

Ross

Don't turn up your little nose at mass market paperbacks. Many, many people find my work incredibly important, as I also discovered at the library today. I met a college girl who was working on her thesis. Guess what the subject was.

Regina

Mass market fiction?

Ross

More specifically, my mass market fiction. She was doing her thesis on me.

Regina

Well, there's an ego boost.

Ross

I'll say. She came up to introduce herself, and I swear I've never seen anyone so nervous in my life. You'd think I was Brad Pitt.

Regina

An easy mistake to make.

Ross

You know what I say? Fuck you, Brad Pitt! You don't have a bestselling book.

Regina

Yes, yes. Alright. You don't have to yell.

Ross

It was amazing. She had a whole table to herself, covered with everything I've ever written. All of my books, all of my short stories. She even had my essays from college. I don't even know how she got them.

Regina

I think they're on display at the Smithsonian.

Ross

I tell you, I had no idea I was so prolific.

Regina

Well, what a self-gratifying day you've had.

Ross

Yeah, it was great. And I wrote ten pages today, so I'm back on schedule.

Regina

I'm really proud of you. Really. That's great.

Ross

I told that girl I would meet with her sometime next week to discuss my work. But don't worry. I told her I was married.

Regina

I'm not worried. I trust you.

Ross

You should have seen her face drop when I told her. Your old man's still got it.

Regina

Show her a picture of me. She'll have hope again.

Ross

Oh, she doesn't have a prayer.

(He kisses her. A big wet smack.)

Regina

Could you get me some wine? I've got a bad taste in my mouth.

(Ross exits to get her some wine.)

So my English III kids turned in their first essays today. I started grading them over my free period. It never ceases to amaze me how even with two years of high school, after a summer vacation, everyone has forgotten how to write.

Ross

(Re-entering)

It isn't that. They just know that you'll go easy on them for their first essay back, so they don't try. Streetcar, right? That's what you're reading?

Regina

Yes. That's what they're supposed to be reading. I think most of them just rented the movie, though. In one essay, a student referred to Stanley as "Brando" in two separate sentences. Then he managed to tie in parallels with the Godfather.

Ross

That's an interesting take.

Regina

There was one that was interesting, though. It was very interesting. He writes beautifully. Let me read you some of it. (Shuffling through her papers) Where is it? Oh--listen to this sentence. "Blanche and her husband, a homosexual, cannot survive in the world of Stanley and his kind," and his kind? Can you believe that? Not, "she doesn't like people like Stanley" but "cannot survive in the world of Stanley and his kind." Very eloquent. "Stanley's menace slowly stifles Blanche's light, as weeds asphyxiate a garden." Stanley's menace slowly stifles--isn't that colorful? His sentence structure is like poetry. This is an essay that just begs to be read out loud. You can hear

the menacing tones in the hard ‘-s -t’ sounds. It’s almost metered. It *is* metered. The entire sentence is trochaic. This essay is like a song.

Ross

He’s a flippin’ ballerina.

Regina

You rarely see this quality of work in high school students. It’s very impressive.

Ross

Seems a bit flowery to me. Literally and figuratively. “As weeds asphyxiate a garden?” Come on.

Regina

He’s trying to get the most out of the words. He still has some learning to do, but even so. It’s incredibly refreshing to see anyone--especially a high school boy--this concerned with the language they use. And in an essay, too. It’s actually interesting to read. It’s very interesting. It’s exciting.

Ross

Maybe I’ll read you a little of what I wrote today.

Regina

Oh no! Don’t spoil the surprise. I want to read it all at once. When it’s finished. Oh...here’s a bit I’ll bet you’ll appreciate. Not in the least bit flowery. “Many assert”--not, “many say,” but “many assert”--“Many assert that Blanche is ultimately damned for hypocrisy and lies. However, the varied references to Darwin”--he goes on to quote a few-- ”as well as the repeated comparisons between Stanley and an ape, suggest that Blanche is, in actuality, damned for her progressive, evolutionary ideals. Like Galileo before her, Blanche presents a startling alternate world view, which cannot be abided by the masses, contented in their ignorance. Blanche’s downfall is the result of a clash between the status quo and progressive change.” It doesn’t even matter if I think this is true or not--and by the way, I do--but I’m just so pleased to have a student thinking outside the box and not giving me the same stock answers everyone else gives.

Ross

Yeah, it’s good. I do like that. It sounds familiar to me. That actually sounds like something I might write. If I wrote essays.

Regina

I thought you would like that. He's very good.

Ross

Yeah. He's good. He deserves an A plus.

Regina

I can't wait for his next essay so I can read what he writes. Students like this are what keep people in teaching. Only I don't even want to read the other essays after his. I can't bare to read something trite after reading this.

Ross

You don't know it will be trite.

Regina

Yes I do. It's a rare thing to get an essay like this. It's highly unlikely anyone should be able to live up.

Ross

How's your wine?

Regina

I didn't even realize you'd gotten it for me. I haven't had any yet.

Ross

Seems you got that taste out of your mouth, alright.

Regina

It only feels unfair that he should have to be in the same class with the others. A young man like this deserves more advanced assignments. Some special attention. He shouldn't be held back by his inferiors. He's got to move forward.

Ross

"Inferiors" is pretty harsh.

Regina

Well, it's true. This young man clearly has the capability to rise above the rest. I hate the idea of him being influenced by a bunch of chimpanzees who believe it's "cool" to not try. Who believe it's "cool" to do the bare minimum.

Ross

So put him in a more advanced class.

Regina

It's an honors class. There won't be a more advanced class until next year when he can take college level courses. Maybe I could start an English club, or something. For students who want the extra assignments, who want to hone their skills.

Ross

I thought all of your other students were chimpanzees. Where will you find the interest?

Regina

I'm sure I can find a few students who want another club to put on their college applications.

Ross

I think this is a lot of work for some poor gay kid who's obsessed with gardening.

Regina

He's not gay.

Ross

How do you know?

Regina

I mean, I don't think he is. What makes you think he is?

Ross
(Lisping)

"Thtanley thtifles Blanche'th light."

Regina

Oh, stop it! It's a metaphor. He's saying that like a robust weed, he's strangling her beautiful flowers...okay, I see your point. But even so, what an eloquent way to put it. I don't know why good writing should make this young man gay.

Ross

That sentence isn't good writing. It's just gay

Regina

And what if he is gay? Should I not take an interest in his writing?

Ross

Take an interest in his writing. That stuff about evolution was good. That's how an essay should be written. To the point. I'm just saying, he has potential, but I think you're partly confusing an interest in writing with some kid trying to find a way to come out of the closet.

Regina

You don't know that. I don't think he's gay.

Ross

What does it matter to you if he's gay?

Regina

You're the one making an issue of it! You're the one who's obsessed with sex.

Ross

Well, don't get angry--

Regina

You're threatened by a sixteen year old boy, and it's extremely unattractive.

Ross

Would you calm down? My God, you look at me as though you might kill me if I open my mouth. I make one harmless comment--

Regina

It isn't harmless. It's a hurtful thing to say.

Ross

It's only hurtful if there's something wrong with being gay. Are you a homophobe?

Regina

No. Of course not. It's hurtful if it isn't true. Nobody wants lies told about them.

Ross

It was just a joke. I was only joking. I can't know if the kid is gay. He's got some talent. You're right. I don't know why I said it. It was just something to say.

Regina

Well you should be careful with your words. I'm merely trying to tell you that I had a bright spot in my day today--I found a bright spot in this student's writing--and it made me happy and you have to ruin it and make jokes and not take me or this young man seriously. This is my job!

Ross

Why are you so angry with me?

(Silence)

Why are you so angry with me?

(Lights fade)

Act One
Scene Three

(Scene: The classroom. Class has just ended.)

(At Rise: Regina stands at the podium as John gathers his books to leave.)

Regina

John, would you stay for just a moment? I'd like to speak with you.

John

Yeah, sure. I've got track practice in fifteen minutes, though.

Regina

This won't take long.

John

Sure. What's up?

Regina

It's about your essay.

John

Is something wrong with it?

Regina

No. In fact, I enjoyed reading it very much.

John

Oh. You did?

Regina

Yes. Very much. I was very impressed.

John

Well, thank you. Thanks.

Regina

It's one of the best essays I've read in a long time.

John

God...well, thanks. That's great.

Regina

I particularly liked the idea of Blanche as an evolutionary scientist.

John

Yeah. You know, a lot of people think of Stanley as the, uh, you know, the bearer of truth in the play. But it's been my experience--well, not personally--but it seems to me that usually the people speaking the truth are the ones who are condemned. And I think that's shown in the play.

Regina

I absolutely agree.

John

Yeah. That's why all of my favorite TV shows are cancelled. They're too progressive. You know?

Regina

I don't own a TV, but I know what you mean. "Like Galileo before her..."

John

Right. Exactly.

Regina

Do you have any aspirations to write? Professionally?

John

I don't really know what I want to do. I like to write, but I haven't really pegged down a career yet. I should get on that, I guess.

Regina

It's something to think about. You have an exceptional talent.

John

Okay, yeah, I'll think about it.

Regina

I don't pull every student aside to say this. I really mean it. I believe you could go very far with your writing.

John

Really? I mean, don't jump the gun on that. You've only read one essay of mine.

Regina

You made your talent very clear in that one essay.

John

Okay. Well, thanks. I'll keep at it.

(John starts to leave.)

Regina

There's one more thing.

John

Yeah?

Regina

I'm trying to get an after school English club started. A place where students who are really interested in honing their craft can meet and discuss literature, and do writing exercises, those sort of things. Do you think you would be interested?

John

Yeah, I don't know. It sounds good, and everything, but I'm pretty booked up this year. I do track and debate team and choir.

Regina

I haven't drawn up a schedule for it just yet, so I'm sure I could work it around your other activities. Perhaps I could even give out extra credit for people interested in joining.

John

I just wish I'd known about it last week when everyone was doing their club sign-ups. I just really don't know if I have the time, you know?

Regina

Then drop one of your other clubs.

John

I can't just--

Regina

John, I know I seem insistent. But do you have plans to be a professional runner or politician or singer?

John

I don't have plans to be a professional anything. Like I said, I don't know what I want to do. I probably don't want to be a professional singer, though. I don't like to sing by myself.

Regina

Then drop choir.

John

You don't sing by yourself in choir. You sing with a choir.

Regina

Be serious, now.

John

I am being serious. I'm not sure what I want to do.

Regina

If you're not sure, then you owe it to yourself to take part in this. If I'm right about you--and I'm fairly certain I am--writing could be your calling. We'll do some creative writing in the club, maybe work on some short stories. We can work on them together, and if they show some promise, maybe I could put you in touch with my husband's publisher.

John

Your husband's a writer?

Regina

Yes, he is. And it's possible I could put you in touch with his publisher. I couldn't promise you anything, but either way it would be a good contact to have.

John

Would I know anything he's written?

Regina

Probably. He has a book out now that's doing pretty well. "The Fog Beyond the Bridge."

John

Ross McCullers is your husband? Really?

Regina

Yes.

John

But your last name is Snow.

Regina

I kept my maiden name. But he knows a lot of people who could mentor you.

John

You're kidding me, right? He's not really your husband.

Regina

No, he is. I don't like to talk about it too much. At the school where I taught in Charleston, everyone knew he was my husband and he was asked to speak all of the time, and he doesn't like it and it puts me in an awkward position--it's not a secret, I just don't like to make a point of making it known. You understand.

John

Yeah. Did he see my essay?

Regina

Well, actually I did read him a little bit of it. I hope you don't mind. But like I said, he knows a lot of people, and I'm very excited about your writing.

John

How much of it did he see?

Regina

I read him a paragraph, or so. I hope you don't mind.

John

What did he say about it?

Regina

He said you deserve an A plus.

John

Did he say anything else?

Regina

Nothing of note.

John

My sister has that book. I haven't read it, yet.

Regina

John, I hope you'll consider joining my club. Truth be told, I have to keep my class on a fair track--not everyone in the class is at the same level and I don't want to leave anyone behind. But by the same token, I don't want to see your writing suffer because you aren't being challenged. You really have something. I think it would be a mistake to pass this up.

John

Who else did you ask?

Regina

You're the first, but I'll put out a sign-up sheet tomorrow. I just wanted to extend the invitation to you personally.

John

I'll think about it.

Regina

Please do.

John

I've got to get to track. Thanks Ms. Snow.

Regina

No. Thank you.

(Lights fade.)

Act One Scene Four

(Scene: The living room)

(At Rise: Regina is grading papers. Ross is reading the paper.)

Regina

I'm going to have to teach these kids how to write an essay. I was hoping their first essay assignment was a fluke but here we are, essay number two, and no improvement. Time to get out the MLA handbook.

Ross

Well, that is your job.

Regina

No. They've had two years of high school, already. This is an honors class. They should know how to write an essay by now. But there's nothing I can do. If they met the grade requirement last year I can't keep them out. My job is to teach them literature. And also to help them write better essays. But by now they should at least know that literary essays aren't written in the first person. This girl wrote, "I really liked the part when..." Can you believe it? "I really liked the part when,"?

Ross

Which part did she like?

Regina

She really liked the part when they have the poker game and Stanley, quote, "goes nuts."

Ross

That is a good part. Oh, hey, they found the guy who kidnapped that girl.

Regina

Who was it?

Ross

The uncle. She's dead.

Regina

That's typical. I want to just tell them all to start over. But we couldn't move forward that way.

Ross

City Council is raising the fine for littering.

Regina

Hmmm...

Ross

Oh, they wrote an article about you. "Teacher Seduces Student, 13. Parents Outraged"

Regina

What? Where was this?

Ross

Kansas. That's disgusting.

Regina

Let me see it.

Ross

Hah! The two apparently plan to get married once she's out of house arrest and he turns eighteen.

Regina

That's a long time to wait.

Ross

It's not gonna happen.

Regina

You never know.

Ross

Yeah, right.

Regina

I wonder what drew them together. Let me see it.

Ross

It says that she was raped as a teenager. Boo-hoo.

Regina

Can I see it?

Ross

I'm still reading it...Jesus, what an idiot. She's pretty, though. My teachers never looked like that. What would a woman that looked like that need with a thirteen year old kid?

Regina

I guess she loved him.

Ross

I'm sure he told the most romantic fart jokes she'd ever heard.

Regina

Please...

Ross

This is ridiculous. What did she think was going to happen? How hard up do you have to be?

Regina

I don't know...Perhaps there's something admirable about disregarding the law for love.

Ross

For love? You think this was love? He's thirteen years old.

Regina

I'm sure he didn't mind. She's very attractive.

Ross

When you're thirteen, it's not up to you to mind or not mind. Listen to this, "I don't know what happened. I simply forgot about the age difference when we were together. I didn't feel like his teacher, I felt like his comrade." I wonder if she could feel that his testicles haven't even descended yet. You'd think that would be a tip off that there's an age difference.

Regina

Perhaps he's mature for his age. Age difference when it comes to sex is a fairly modern conception. Teacher's having sex with their students goes back to the Greeks. People are only upset because she's a woman.

Ross

Yes. I'm sure everyone would feel much more at ease if it were a thirty-two year old man having sex with a thirteen year old boy. Everyone loves a gay pedophile.

Regina

Oh, you know what I mean.

Ross

Yes. You only want the same rights that every ancient Greek man had.

Regina

I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about that woman. It's such a bizarre situation. I'm sure she had her reasons.

Ross

Everyone has their reasons for everything.

Regina

I'm not saying it's right, necessarily, I'm just saying that something about the whole thing seems a little romantic.

Ross

Romantic?

Regina

They long to be together but the law keeps them apart--yes, a little romantic. And I suppose in some ways it makes sense--men hit their sexual peak in their teens, women reach theirs in their thirties and into their forties. Perhaps we shouldn't make laws to dictate biological desires.

Ross

Are you actually defending this woman? She's taken advantage of a thirteen year old boy.

Regina

No...I mean, thirteen is young, of course. I don't admire her. No.

Ross

She's despicable.

Regina

Maybe she's just...

Ross

Deranged?

Regina

Maybe she was just taken with him. Maybe he was an impressive student.

Ross

Maybe sex with your teacher is a good incentive to study.

Regina

You think so?

Ross

You're having problems with your kids at school, take a page out of this woman's book.

Regina

Of course not. *I* couldn't.

Ross

Sure you could. Give them some after school tutoring.

Regina

I don't think I would be very good incentive.

Ross

I don't know. Thirteen year old boys pretty much view sex with anyone as incentive for anything.

(Ross laughs.)

Regina

What?

Ross

I was just thinking about you giving your boys "after school tutoring."

Regina

Is it so funny?

Ross

Of course it's funny. It's a goddamned joke.

Regina

Yes. It's preposterous.

Ross

Did you think I was serious?

Regina

No. I knew you were joking.

Ross

Has one of your students got your fancy?

Regina

No! No. No one's got my fancy. "Got my fancy"...what a silly expression, anyway.

Ross

Are you keen on one of the boys?

Regina

Would you please?

Ross

You want to tickle his pickle? Kanoodle with his noodle?

Regina

You're disgusting.

Ross

You want to take the boy to school?

Regina

I want to teach.

Ross

Who is it? Huh? Which one of your little ruffians caught your eye?

Regina

Little ruffians...

Ross

How about the one with the essay?

Regina

The one with the essay?

Ross

“His words are like dancing” or something. You know. You’re eyes were twinkling when you talked about him the other day.

Regina

They were not.

Ross

Yes they were. You got all flushed. I thought you were gonna have the vapors.

Regina

I was not! I was not all flushed!

Ross

You were salivating.

Regina

No I wasn’t! I was impressed with his writing. He has a real talent.

Ross

You’re turning red just talking about him.

Regina

He’s a sensitive young boy who knows what to do with words. You wouldn’t know about that, would you? Little ruffians and the vapors and got your fancy...if you ever finish your book I can use it as a reference on which clichés to avoid in my class.

(Silence.)

Ross

I was only teasing you. I'm sorry.

Regina

It's okay.

Ross

I was only teasing. You know I don't write like that. I was joking.

Regina

I know you don't write like that. I'm sorry. That was really mean. (Pause) I'm sorry--it's that woman! It's that horrible woman. She makes me nervous. Women like her make it so you can't take a liking to a student without people wondering if you're not some sort of pervert.

Ross

No one believes that of you.

Regina

I'll bet no one believed it of her.

Ross

Everyone believed it of her. She looks like she teaches English at a whorehouse in Nevada.

Regina

And what do I look like?

Ross

You couldn't harm a fly. Let alone have sex with one.

Regina

My students aren't flies. And what makes you so sure?

Ross

You catch more flies with honey--to use another outworn cliché'.

Regina

“Outworn cliché'.” That's redundant.

Ross

We can't all turn a phrase like Joey Van Pimpleface.

Regina

Well, for the record, I have no interest in Joey Van Pimpleface.

Ross

I know.

Regina

And you're a very good writer.

Ross

I know.

Regina

And I know that even if I were a predator, my students wouldn't go for me, so you've got nothing to worry about.

Ross

I go for you. And that's all you need to worry about.

Regina

It keeps me up nights worrying about it.

Ross

Well, don't let it keep you up too late. I'm going to bed.

Regina

I'll be there in a minute.

(He kisses her on the forehead and exits into the bedroom. Lights fade on Regina as she re-reads the article.)

Act One
Scene Five

(Scene: The classroom.)

(At Rise: Regina is at the podium, and John is at his desk. They are silent, waiting.)

Regina
(Finally)

We'll give it a couple of more minutes.

John

Okay.

Regina

I had several students sign up. I'm sure they'll trickle in.

John

Okay.

(Silence.)

John

Did you have a good weekend?

Regina

Yes, it was fine. Nothing too exciting. I graded the quizzes you got back today. That was about all. (Pause) How about you? Did you have a good weekend?

John

Yeah, it was pretty good. Got to sleep in. There was a cool show on PBS about a guy who makes his own money. Did you see it?

Regina

I don't own a TV.

John

Oh, right. You said that. Well this guy--he's not a counterfitter or anything--but what he does is he makes little pieces of artwork and uses them as currency. I mean, it's obviously not real money, and he doesn't say that it's real money or anything, but his theory is that money is just little mass produced pieces of art on paper, so his little mass produced pieces of art should be worth the same. And it was so weird, in almost every case where he explained this to people, they were like, "Yeah, you're right." And they'd give him what he wanted.

Regina

Really?

John

Yeah. It makes you think about all the stuff in the world that's completely arbitrary. You might as well just fake it. What's the difference, you know?

Regina

Well, I suppose the difference is in the pride you feel when you attain something legitimately. When you earn the money and you buy a meal, that meal means more to you.

John

Yeah. But there's also a certain amount of pride in knowing that everyone else thinks you have to do things a certain way and play by the rules and you've outsmarted the system. Besides, what's legitimate, anyway?

Regina

Compliant with the law. Being in accordance with established or accepted patterns or standards. Based on logical reasoning; reasonable. Authentic; genuine--

John

I know what legitimate means.

Regina

Of course you do. My apologies.

John

Do you have the whole dictionary memorized?

Regina

No, but I use it a lot. I like to be correct.

(Silence.)

John

So, he's not in accordance with accepted standards. Nobody who's done anything great ever was.

Regina

You certainly have a point there.

(Regina laughs.)

John

What is it?

Regina

I don't know. For some reason the conversation is just striking me--I don't know.
(Pause) I'm afraid no one else will show up.

John

What do you want to do?

Regina

Well, it seems pointless to have a club with no members. What do you want to do?

John

I don't know.

Regina

I suppose you can go home.

John

I can stay if you want.

Regina

No, I won't make you stay.

John

We're here to talk literature, let's talk literature. Read any good books lately?

Regina

Strange as it seems, I don't get much time to read books until summer vacation. I mostly just read student essays, brush up on the books we're reading in class.

John

Is your husband working on anything new?

Regina

Yes he is. It's a crime novel. I don't know if I mentioned it the other day, but he just found out he's number one on the New York Times Bestseller List for his last novel.

John

Jesus! Number one? Really?

Regina

Don't get too excited. It's just paperback mass market fiction.

John

That's still a big deal.

Regina

Yes. It is.

John

Well, great for him. That's awesome.

(Pause.)

Regina

Have you read anything good lately?

John

Why were you laughing earlier?

Regina

Nothing. I was just enjoying your youthful exuberance, I suppose. You actually remind me a bit of my husband when I first met him.

John

I think I'll take that as a compliment.

Regina

You should. He was an excellent writer.

John

Well, he's number one. New York Times doesn't fool around.

Regina

No, they don't.

John

So why the past tense?

Regina

He's an excellent writer now, and he was an excellent writer then. That's all.

John

Sorry. I just know how you like to be precise.

Regina

The past tense is that you write like he did then. Illegitimately, so to speak. Without

(Regina continued)

respect to what your peers are writing. Without respect to the expected norm. And there is a great deal to be said for this kind of writing. One can accomplish great things by tampering a bit with the rules. But now he's a legitimate writer. Adhering to the currently accepted patterns. And he does it better than anyone else. He is genuine, and authentic, as any legitimate writer should be--completely frank about sex and violence, as is the current trend to forgo subtlety, viewing such subtlety as false. He is self referential, also a current trend, also adhering to the requirement of authenticity in that it makes it plain that what you are reading is a work of fiction, not allowing the reader to be caught up in a fictitious world. And he's a bestseller, which is an extraordinary accomplishment. Which proves that people who do things legitimately can do great things, and perhaps it is more likely because they satisfy the masses. So there's your lesson for the day.

John

The lesson for the day is that I'm wrong.

Regina

The lesson for the day is don't be a snob.

John

Hey, I think it's great your husband is on the list. My sister really likes the book--

Regina

This is really pretty pointless, keeping you here. I'll talk to your choir director and get him to let you rejoin.

John

Are you sure? You seemed really excited about this club.

Regina

Yes, but there doesn't appear to be a club.

John

Did I say something wrong? I didn't mean to come across--

Regina

No, no. You haven't done anything wrong... Only, be careful with generalizations. A

(Regina continued)

person may not be revolutionary, or timeless, but there is something to be said about being a part of one's own time--contributing to one's own culture, for embracing the status quo. There is some merit to it.

John

You think I should write more that way? The way everyone else does?

Regina

No. That isn't at all what I'm saying. You're a beautiful writer. You should write just the way that you write--

John

I mean, we're talking about apples and oranges here. You're husband writes novels and I wrote an essay.

Regina

I'm talking about a standard for writing in general.

John

I've got to be honest, I don't really know what you're getting at. You're saying that I write in a...fundamentally different way than your husband. I should write just the way I write, but he's a great writer and accomplishes great things?

Regina

I'm saying that we live in a democracy. The masses make the ultimate decision about what is good, but someone has to give them new ideas about what is good.

John

And I should be giving them new ideas?

Regina

Precisely.

John

And you're husband should give them what they think is good?

Regina

My husband should do what he likes. I just want to be clear that presenting new ideas doesn't necessarily mean putting down people like my husband, even if you do think he's pandering to the vulgar masses.

John

I really didn't say that.

Regina

He doesn't. (Pause) We should probably call it a day. .

John

Can we still meet up and talk about writing from time to time?

Regina

Of course. I'm always available for that. I look forward to it.

John

I really didn't mean to come across like I hate anything mainstream. I'm not one of those people.

Regina

No, of course not. Just...something to be wary of. Do come and see me about your writing. It--well, it's really a joy to read. I'd like to mentor you any way I can.

John

I will. I want your opinion.

Regina

That's good to hear. I'll see you in class tomorrow.

(Lights fade)

Act One
Scene Six

(Scene: The living room.)

(At rise: Ross is going through stacks of papers, filing them. Regina enters.)

Ross

Welcome home.

Regina

What's all this?

Ross

This is everything I've ever written. I got that girl to make me copies of the college pieces she found.

Regina

What are you doing with those?

Ross

I was thinking maybe I could compile a complete works.

Regina

Do you really think people would be interested in reading your essays from college?

Ross

Well, she was. And if one person is, then probably other people would be. Besides, they're already written. It doesn't take too much work to compile them. I might as well.

Regina

Well, would you do me a favor and get them out of the living room before bed time? I don't want to spend the next week navigating through stacks of paper just to get out of the front door.

Ross

I will. This is really wild.

Regina

Hmmm?

Ross

It's just a very strange thing to look back at what you wrote twenty years ago. I have to say, I find me fascinating.

Regina

So that makes two people who are interested in reading your college essays.

Ross

Don't be such a nay-sayer.

Regina

I'm not nay-saying.

Ross

You don't even want to read what I'm writing now. Why would I expect you to be interested in my college essays?

Regina

What are you talking about? I'm interested in your writing. I always read your books.

Ross

Fine.

Regina

What are you angry about?

Ross

Don't worry about it.

Regina

I am interested in reading your essays. I just don't want them cluttering up the living room.

Ross

Okay. That's fine.

Regina

Are you sure? You seem angry with me.

Ross

I'm not. I'll get these out of your way.

Regina

I didn't mean right now. I just meant before bed.

Ross

I really don't want to look at them anymore.

Regina

Really? Because I said I don't want them in the living room?

Ross

No, because I've been looking at them all day, trying to get them sorted out, and I'm sick of looking at them.

Regina

Are you sure?

Ross

Yes. It's nothing. I'm just done for the day.

(Ross shoves the rest of the papers into a folder and puts them on the desk.)

Regina

Did you find anything interesting in there?

Ross

I'm done talking about it.

(Silence)

Regina

Alright.

(Regina puts down her bags and goes to get herself some coffee. They do not speak as she does this.)

Ross

How was your club?

Regina

It wasn't. Only John showed up, so I called it off.

Ross

Well, maybe next semester.

Regina

Oh, it doesn't matter. I only wanted to do it so I could give John some extra encouragement anyway. It doesn't really matter to me that no one else showed up. Maybe it's for the best. This way I don't have to deal with students who are only interested in getting extra credit.

Ross

You really hate your students, don't you?

Regina

I do not! Of course I don't hate my students...quite the opposite, actually. They seem to hate me. Quite a bit. I couldn't even lure them in with the promise of snacks.

Ross

Why would they hate you?

Regina

Because I ask them to read books. That's why.

Ross

I doubt they hate you.

Regina

It really doesn't matter to me. I don't want to be the fun teacher. I want to be the teacher that--well, that teaches. I want to be the teacher that challenges these students and makes them learn something. I couldn't care less about being popular. It's just disappointing that none of them take advantage of the education offered to them.

Ross

One kid showed up. That's something.

Regina

They're only concerned with lip gloss and looking cute and football games and experimenting with sex. Honestly, you should hear some of the conversations I overhear in the hallways. These kids aren't interested in anything except degrading themselves and doing things they'll regret later.

Ross

Weren't you interested in those things in high school?

Regina

I didn't have time to be interested in those things. I was interested in learning.

Ross

Well, what do you want me to say? You were a nerd.

Regina

Wanting to learn makes me a nerd?

Ross

Wanting to learn at the expense of degrading yourself and doing things you'll regret later? Yeah. That pretty much defines nerd.

Regina

John isn't a nerd. John seems to be very popular. All the kids like him. And he's interested in learning.

Ross

Well, he showed up to your club, so you're the cool teacher by proxy. I wouldn't worry about it.

Regina

I'm really not worried about it. I have no aspirations to be the "cool teacher."

Ross

Yes, you have. Everyone wants to be the cool teacher.

Regina

I don't. It would be utterly absurd for someone like me to aspire to that, anyway. You said yourself, I'm a nerd.

Ross

When I said nerd, I meant sexy librarian type.

Regina

Right.

Ross

I mean it.

Regina

I wish you wouldn't make fun of me.

Ross

You're just as depraved and stupid as your students, I'll bet. When you're supposed to be grading papers, I know you're really reading Cosmo and giggling at the dirty stories.

Regina

Don't even say Cosmo to me. I hate that magazine.

Ross

I bet your class just consists of watching MTV. I bet you study Jewel's book of poetry.

Regina

Dear god...

Ross

I bet you study 2Pac's poetry.

Regina

I don't even know who that is.

Ross

I bet you wanted to start a club just to sit around and make fun of the other lame teachers.

Regina

Why do you always tease me like this?

Ross

I like to see you get all flustered.

Regina

Why can't you just...

Ross

What?

Regina

Just, say something to me.

Ross

Say what to you?

Regina

Just say something nice to me.

Ross

“Sexy librarian” is the highest compliment a man can give.

Regina

But you know that’s not true.

Ross

What do you want me to say?

Regina

Oh, never mind.

Ross

What?

Regina

It doesn’t matter.

Ross

I think you’re very cool.

Regina

That’s not what I’m--Oh, never mind.

Ross

What do you want me to say?

Regina

Just...tell me something nice.

Ross

Something nice about you?

Regina

Oh, just forget it.

Ross

I just want to make sure I get it right. Let's see...something nice about you...

Regina

Really, just forget it. Anything you said now would be cheap.

Ross

Just give me a second.

Regina

Please don't. Don't say anything.

Ross

I love you. Does that work?

Regina

Yes, that's fine. Thank you. I love you, too.

Ross

Do you want me to say something else?

Regina

I don't want you to do anything.

Ross

I'm just trying to figure out what you want--

Regina

Nothing. I don't want anything. It's not your problem. What I want is for my students to take an interest in what I have to offer. That's all. It's got nothing to do with you. You don't have to do anything.

Ross

Well, I'd like to do something.

Regina

I just want to feel like I'm good at my job. I know I'm not the cool teacher, I don't need you to tell me I'm a nerd to know that I am one, and I don't even care about all of that, but if I can't even--oh, never mind. It's stupid. It's shallow. And I don't care. I'm over it now. I realize that it's not your problem, and I shouldn't need cheap compliments to make me feel good about myself. I feel fine. I'm over it. I was just feeling sorry for myself, but I'm over it now. Let's talk about something else.

Ross

I think you've got plenty to offer. I was only teasing you when I said you were a nerd. I think you're great--

Regina

Please! Please, don't. It will only make me feel worse. Please, stop. Thank you, but stop.

Ross

So now I'm not allowed to make you feel better?

Regina

I feel fine. I feel better. I don't want you to lie to me.

Ross

I'm not lying--

Regina

It doesn't matter if you are or not. Just don't say anything. It will make me feel self-conscious and even worse than I do. I'm fine. I'm just an idiot, that's all. I'm fine.

Ross

Are you sure?

Regina

I'm sure.

Ross

You're not an idiot.

Regina

Okay. Fine.

(Silence.)

Anything good in today's paper?

(Lights fade.)

Act One Scene Seven

(Scene: The Classroom)

(At rise: Regina is clearing out her desk for the day--grabbing papers to grade and whatnot. She starts to move away from her desk when she spots a note. She picks it up. Reads it and rereads it.)

Regina

"I know someone who likes you." I know someone who likes you...I know someone who likes you...

(She sits, still reading the note. John enters the classroom and she stands abruptly.)

John

It's just me. I didn't mean to scare you.

Regina

You didn't. I was just...lost in thought. Yes. You startled me a little.

John

You haven't seen an umbrella in here, have you? I thought I might have left it in here.

Regina

I haven't seen it, but feel free to have a look around.

John

I carried it around all day because they said it was gonna rain and it didn't. Now I've left it some place and it's pouring.

Regina

That's always the way, isn't it?

John

(As he searches the room)

Every time. Every time it rains I have to buy a new umbrella. I leave them everywhere.

(John continued)

I think umbrellas should be communal--leave bins of umbrellas out on the street or in stores. It starts to rain, you take one. When it stops you leave it in a nearby bin. I don't think it's here.

Regina

What isn't?

John

My umbrella.

Regina

It will turn up.

John

Probably not. I'm just gonna have to get soaked. I've gotta get home. I can't spend all afternoon looking around for the thing.

Regina

If you want to wait here until the rain lightens up, you're welcome.

John

Don't you have to go?

Regina

I was going to grade some papers before I left.

John

(Going over to her podium)

All of your things are packed up.

Regina

You're right. I was going to leave, but I--I meant that I can stick around and grade some papers if you'd like to stay and wait out the rain.

John

I don't think it's gonna let up.

Regina

Yes.. It's coming down pretty hard.

John

I know someone who likes you.

Regina

You do?

John

It's the note on your desk.

Regina

Oh--yes. Yes, someone left this on my desk. Do you--Would you know who might have left this?

John

Someone who knows someone who likes you. (John laughs.) Someone's got a crush on you.

Regina

Yes, well. Occupational hazard.

John

Yeah, teachers probably get that all of the time.

Regina

Well, not all of the time. Actually, this is the first time. For me. I know other teachers who get it a lot, though.

John

You wouldn't necessarily know if you get it all of the time, though. Would you?

Regina

I guess not. But I doubt it all the same.

John

I'll bet you get it more than you think.

Regina

You don't have to stroke my ego. I certainly find the note flattering, but it isn't my aim to--My aim is to arouse interest in literature, not--

John

I know.

Regina

And if I can do that, then my job is done. It's certainly flattering to get a note like this, but young boys have enough distractions. I'm glad not to get in my own way.

John

You know, it's possible this kid has a crush on you *because* you aroused his interest in literature.

Regina

Well, it certainly wouldn't be because of my looks and charm.

John

You're fishing.

Regina

I am not! I don't need to fish for compliments from sixteen year old boys. I don't mean to be rude, but truly, there are more important things on my mind than making young boys fawn on me.

John

I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to say that. I thought it was cute, that's all.

Regina

Cute?

John

Endearing. That's a better word. You don't ever get to see your teachers as human. It's nice to see that you care what people think of you. It's reassuring, I guess.

Regina

Do you have a problem getting the other kids to like you?

John

No.

Regina

No. I suppose you wouldn't. Well, I'll just say that it may seem very important right now to be popular, but as you get older you start to see how little it really matters. There are more important concerns.

John

But you want it nonetheless, right?

Regina

Yes. I want it nonetheless. But as I said, there are more important concerns. We don't need to wallow in our basest of wants.

John

That's Blanche's downfall.

Regina

I don't believe she is a woman who wallows in her baser wants. She has in the past--yes. She's had many lovers. She's incredibly vain, yes. But she does her best to rise above it once she arrives at Elysian Fields. She does her best to not be so base, to put her sexual needs--her base desires--aside. She behaves with Mitch as though she were a virgin--which he knows not to be true even before Stanley reveals her secret, because she was married. We see her flirting with a young man collecting for The Evening Star in Scene Five--we see her almost give in to temptation. And she kisses him. Once. But then she says "I've got to be good." And sends him away. She is a

(Regina continued)
woman rising above her animalistic needs.

John

I mean that she cares what people think of her. That's her downfall. She stops being promiscuous because it's more important that people think well of her. That's her downfall.

Regina

She trades one base need for another.

John

Exactly.

Regina

That's interesting.

John

It's in my essay.

Regina

I haven't graded them yet.

John

Well, I'd like to talk to you about it once you have.

Regina

Most students dread talking to their teachers about their work.

John

You arouse my interest in literature.

Regina

You're teasing me.

John

And you're pretty when you blush.

Regina

John--did you write this note?

John

No. But I thought I'd do you a favor and give you the compliment you were fishing for earlier.

Regina

The only favor you need to do me is pay attention in class and do the reading assignments. I don't need you to flatter me.

John

I wasn't flattering you. It's true. And it's nice to hear. And there's no shame in wanting to hear it.

Regina

It might be a good idea to keep the subjects of our conversation in the realm of literature.

John

I'm not trying to flirt with you.

Regina

I think you're making fun of me.

John

I'm not. I'm just...I don't know. I just thought you'd like to hear it.

Regina

I...yes. It's nice to hear. Thank you. But from now on, I'll thank you not to indulge me in my desire to be liked by everybody. Blanche's downfall, remember?

John

I'm not indulging anything. I was just stating the facts.

Regina

All right. Thank you. We'll leave it at that.

John

It's not raining so hard now.

Regina

Yes. I'm sure you need to get home.

John

I still want to talk to you about my essay once you've read it.

Regina

Of course.

John

I'll see you tomorrow.

Regina

So-- you don't know who wrote the note?

John

I'll let you know if I hear anything.

Regina

Thank you. I just--I want to set the young man straight, is all. So I'd like to know who it is.

John

I know. I'll see you tomorrow.

(John exits, passing Ross on his way in with flowers, who is unseen by Regina. He comes up behind her and whispers in her ear.)

Ross

I know someone who likes you...

(She jumps and turns to see him.)

Regina

Oh! It was you.

Ross

Happy Anniversary.

Regina

Yes...Happy Anniversary.

Ross

All day you wondering, which one could it be? Which of these little ruffians is scribbling my name on their notebooks?

Regina

Imagine my disappointment to find out that it's only you. Besides, I only just found the note.

Ross

There's probably some young kid in your class who has wet dreams about you--

Regina

Keep your voice down...

Ross

--I was just giving him a voice, whomever he may be. But, since he has to spend the evening popping pimples, and since he has a nine o' clock curfew to begin with, and since it's our anniversary anyway, I thought I might take you out myself. Am I a

(Ross continued)
suitable substitute?

Regina

My students are writing in depth essays on the work of Tennessee Williams. What do you have to say for yourself?

Ross

This morning I finished what will be the next Pulitzer Prize winning book.

Regina

I suppose that will do. Wait a minute--you finished it?

Ross

I finished it. And it's dedicated to you.

Regina

I'll start reading it tonight.

Ross

Hey--I love you.

Regina

I love you, too.

Ross

That's good. Let's get some chow.

Regina

Sounds good. I'm famished.

Ross
(Heading out the door)

The engine's running! Time's a-wasting! Get your things quick or I'll leave without you.!

Regina

I have to grab my papers!

Ross
(Off)

I'll be in the car!

(Regina picks up her purse and bag of papers, throws the note in the trash and exits.)

(Blackout.)

Act Two Scene One

(Scene: The classroom.)

(At Rise: Regina is lecturing from the podium. John is seated at his desk, in shadow, as before.)

Regina

Belle Reeve. Does anyone know what the name of Blanche's childhood home means? It means "a beautiful dream." What does this signify? She was raised in a beautiful dream. She was the only one left to fight for the beautiful dream. She is terrified of being left with the blame when the beautiful dream is lost. In reality, the only other person concerned with the loss of Belle Reeve is Stanley, who wants his share of the money it was worth. He is concerned with hard dollars and cents. He is concerned with hard reality. Already he's at odds with Blanche, who simply wants "magic." Is she a fool for holding onto the fantasy? For hoping there is more to life than hard reality and dollars and cents--for hoping that intellect and gentleness and beauty and love can enter into it?

She nearly found it in her first husband--intellect, gentleness, beauty--but no love. He was unable to love her truly. And that was his real crime--not that he was a homosexual, but that being a homosexual prevented him from truly devoting himself to her. Stella, on the other hand, has found true, passionate love--with none of the intellect, none of the gentleness, and certainly none of the beauty. Perhaps this is what Williams was trying to say: that it is a beautiful, and yet foolish--even mad--dream to expect out of life those things which are promised as a child--that those things that we hope and strive for can never really happen the way we dream them--that life, in reality, is a drab, unimpressive, disappointing thing. Is it any wonder she should cling to the fantasy? (The bell rings). Remember the reading assignments for next time. That's all. (John starts to leave.) John, will you stay after for a bit.

(Lights come to full. John sits back down.)

John

What's up?

Regina

I've graded your essay.

John

Oh yeah?

Regina

I don't know what to say, John. I really don't.

John

Okay...I don't know what that means.

Regina

I hope you don't think for a moment that because I enjoyed your last essay that anything you hand in will be considered gold.

John

I don't think that.

Regina

It was...disappointing. It was very disappointing.

John

Why was it disappointing? What was wrong with it?

Regina

Nothing was *wrong* with it.

John

Okay...

Regina

John, you can't--you can't give me dull, unimpressive essays. Not when I know you're better than that.

John

I was just trying to follow the format--

Regina

That's all you did. All you did was follow the format.

John

What else should I have done?

Regina

You should have tried.

John

I did try. I worked hard on that essay--

Regina

Don't lie to me. You didn't work hard at all.

John

I...I'll do better next time.

Regina

No. You're going to redo the assignment.

John

Seriously? You think it was that bad?

Regina

It was standard, John. It was typical.

John

Fine. When do you want it?

Regina

Don't be angry with me. I only want to see you reach your full potential.

John

Are you making anyone else redo it?

Regina

I think you know better than to compare yourself with the other students.

John

Was it worse than the other essays?

Regina

No. It was on par.

John

But you're only making me redo it?

Regina

Yes.

John

That's completely unfair.

Regina

No--what's unfair is that some of the other students really tried--really and truly tried--and couldn't manage to write an essay better than your most careless work. It's unfair that some people--people like yourself--should be truly gifted but don't care and fritter away their talent while others, no matter how hard they try, will never produce anything of any worth.

John

Maybe I'm just not as good as you thought. Have you thought about that?

Regina

Don't be this easy on yourself.

John

I just don't see why I should have to redo it. If I don't produce Shakespeare every time then I have to be punished? Give me a bad grade if you have to, but don't make me do twice the work of everyone else.

Regina

This isn't a punishment.

John

Then what is it?

Regina

If you don't give a damn, John, fine. You don't have to redo the assignment. It's my fault. I thought you were interested in honing your skills. Perhaps I was just hoping you would be.

John

I am interested.

Regina

You're interested in coasting through this class. You wrote one decent essay in the hopes that I wouldn't notice your mediocre work in the future. If you want to produce mediocre work, that's your prerogative, but do not insult my intelligence. Don't pretend that you value my opinion and tell me you wish to discuss writing and flatter me in the hopes that I'll give you an easy A and write you glowing college recommendations. As though it isn't bad enough that I should encounter open disdain and mockery from my other students, but you dress your disinterest in smiles and compliments and insincere enthusiasm. Please, do not insult my intelligence.

John

Is that what you think I was doing?

Regina

That's all, John. I won't keep you here. I'm sure you've got one of many extracurricular activities to attend to.

(John starts to leave, but stops at the door.)

John

You know what? You'd have to be an idiot to think that I would go to all of that trouble just for a grade. Because if you want to know the truth, yours is the class I look forward to the most. I do value your opinion. I value every word that you say. I don't hang around after school and make myself late for track and bend your ear about writing

(John continued)

because I'm some sinister villain--I do it because I want to be around you! I do it because I'm happy when I'm in your company because I feel like I'm learning something. If you want to know the actual, sincere truth of it. I'm sorry if you didn't like my essay. And maybe it wasn't my best work. Maybe I did do it in a rush. Maybe I didn't put the effort into it I should have--but it isn't because I don't give a damn. You know what I was doing all week when I was supposed to be working on that essay? I was writing a short story. Maybe I wasn't writing the essay you asked for, but I was writing--because you told me I should write. Because you told me that I had talent. Because I wanted to hone my skills, and I'm sorry, but it didn't include writing another essay, in MLA format, about a play we've been working on for weeks, when I've been writing essays in that same format according to the same criteria for all of high school.

Regina

Are you telling me the truth?

John

I'm telling you the truth.

(John pulls some stapled papers, blue in color, out of his backpack.)

Here. It still needs another draft, I know, but I wanted you to read it.

(He hands the blue paper to Regina.)

Regina

I will.

John

I'm sorry. I just--you can't think I don't care.

Regina

No--it was an unfair assumption. I shouldn't have thought that of you. I'm sorry--but John, you have to put the effort into your classwork as well.

John

I know. I will.

Regina

Try to do better next time.

John

I will.

(Lights fade.)

Act Two

Scene Two

(Scene: Regina and Ross' bedroom. It is dark, largely dominated by a bed placed center, and lit by the streetlights that come in through a window.)

(At Rise: Regina and Ross are lying in bed. We see movement on her side. Sighs and heavy breathing. It grows more intense. A moan escapes and she covers her mouth with one hand to stifle it. A convulsion and she's finished. They lie silent for a moment.)

Ross

What were you doing?

Regina

What?

Ross

You were masturbating.

Regina

I was not. Go back to sleep.

Ross

Did you want to have sex?

Regina

I wasn't doing anything. You were dreaming.

Ross

I wasn't asleep. I was watching you.

Regina

You were watching me?

Ross

Yes. I was. You were masturbating.

Regina

I was rubbing my thigh. There was a cramp.

Ross

You were moaning.

Regina

My thigh hurts. I wasn't doing anything.

Ross
(Laughing)

Oh my god...

Regina

What?

Ross

I can't believe I caught you masturbating.

Regina

You're imagining things. Go to sleep.

Ross

We can have sex, if you want to.

Regina

No, that's alright.

Ross

Well, I'd like to.

Regina

I'm tired.

Ross

You mean you're finished.

Regina

Please stop.

Ross

Why didn't you wake me up?

Regina

You just said you were already awake.

Ross

Yeah, but you didn't know that. When you were masturbating.

Regina

It didn't seem necessary to wake you up for a leg cramp. Now, please.

Ross

What were you thinking about?

Regina

My leg.

Ross

Who were you masturbating to?

Regina

Nobody.

Ross

Shakespeare? Faulkner?

Regina

I wasn't.

Ross

Don't deny it. I think it's sexy.

Regina

You're depraved. I was rubbing a leg cramp.

Ross

Well, why don't you let me rub your leg cramp for a while?

(He puts his hands on her, she removes them quickly.)

Regina

Please. I'm not in the mood.

Ross

Yes you are. Why don't you let me touch you?

Regina

I wasn't doing anything! Why don't you let me sleep?

Ross

Because we haven't had sex in six months, and you're secretly masturbating at night.

Regina

You know I don't do that.

Ross

Apparently you do. Listen, I'm glad.

Regina

You're humiliating me.

Ross

I didn't know you had it in you.

Regina

I don't.

Ross

You're all buttoned up on the outside, but you're a sexual beast on the inside. I love it.

Regina

Please, don't.

Ross

No, it's great. But you can let me in on it, you know. You don't have to be embarrassed.

Regina

I'm telling you, you were dreaming.

Ross

It was Shakespeare, wasn't it? You were diddling to old Bill.

Regina

No. And please don't say "diddle".

Ross

Dostoyevsky? Salmon Rushdie?

Regina

It was Robert Frost. He gets me so hot I just want to rip my clothes off in the New England snow and have intercourse under the birches.

Ross

That's the sexiest thing you've ever said. Take off your flannel jammies.

Regina

I was joking because you're being ridiculous.

Ross

Did you come?

Regina

Oh my goodness. Don't say that word to me, please.

Ross

Jizz? Spooge?

Regina

Disgusting...

Ross

I know! You were masturbating to that kid's essay!

Regina

Stop it! He's a student, and I--I wasn't doing anything! Please--

Ross

Fine. We'll drop it.

Regina

Thank you.

(Silence)

Ross

Why won't you let me touch you?

(Silence)

I know you want to be touched.

(Silence)

But not by me, right? Is that it?

Regina

I'm just not very sexual.

Ross

Yes, you are! Let's cut the shit!

Regina

You're yelling at me.

Ross

Do you love me?

Regina

You're my husband. Of course, I love you.

Ross

But you don't trust me?

Regina

No, it's not that--

Ross

Then what? What is it?

Regina

It's nothing.

Ross

No it's not.

Regina

Yes it is. You're making a big deal out of nothing and I have to be up at five thirty and I need to sleep. Can we please just go to bed?

Ross

No. We can't. We need to talk about this.

Regina

Oh goodness...

Ross

Why don't you want me to touch you?

Regina

Because...because you're right. I was...masturbating. I thought you were asleep, so I didn't wake you, and I have to get up early, and so I didn't want to bother with the whole ordeal, so I just did it myself, and now I'm done--I'm finished, and I want to go to sleep. And that's all. Are you satisfied?

Ross

Do you do this often?

Regina

Do what?

Ross

How often do you...not want to bother with the whole ordeal? How often do you diddle yourself when I'm asleep?

Regina

God, that's a childish word..

Ross

"Diddle" is childish. "Masturbate" is clinical. What do you want? "Play with yourself?" "Push your love button?" Let's not get bogged down in words, here. Let's just talk.

Regina

Well, I have a hard time talking in this disgusting language.

Ross

And why is that?

Regina

Because it's embarrassing! I don't like to say those words.

Ross

They're just words. And you have no problem with the actions.

Regina

Yes, I do. I don't do it often, to answer you're question. But I am a human being, and as much as it embarrasses me, I have to...take care of things from time to time. But I don't think I should have to talk about it. You don't need to know about those things.

Ross

You know something?

Regina

No. I don't know anything.

Ross

I don't think you've ever taken a shit while I'm at home.

Regina

We're resorting to foul language, now?

Ross

Goddamnit, yes! We're resorting to foul language, now. I don't give a flying fuck about the words. I'm trying to talk to you. You understand the things that I'm saying? Right? It doesn't sound like jibberish to you, does it?

Regina

I understand what you're saying, yes.

Ross

I'm saying--and I believe I'm being precise with my terms here--that when we were first married, you and I used to fuck.

Regina

We had sex, yes.

Ross

And we don't fuck anymore.

Regina

It's been a while, you're right.

Ross

It's been six months. And we haven't fucked on a regular basis in years.

Regina

Any married couple can say the same thing. As you get older your sex drive dwindles.

Ross

You're in your early forties. You're at your peak--you said so yourself the other day. And to prove it you're diddling, you're masturbating, you're rubbing one out, you're wanking, you're wonking, you're pleasuring yourself--pick a term you feel comfortable with--in secret. While you think I'm asleep. Because you don't want to "bother with the whole ordeal." Bullshit.

Regina

Is this supposed to be a come on?

Ross

This is supposed to be you telling me what has changed. You've always been...straight laced. But you used to be human. You used to let me touch you. What has changed? What's different about me now that you act like you're repulsed when I touch you?

Regina

It isn't you. I'm sorry. I was tired. I just--I didn't want to deal with it! I don't know how else to put it.

Ross

Bullshit.

Regina

Would you stop saying that, please.

Ross

No. I will not stop saying it, because that's exactly what it is. It is a big pile of bullshit. If a bull walked into our bedroom, dropped his drawers, and squeezed out a huge fat turd on my pillow, it would be the equivalent of what you're telling me. The most efficient way to say that is "bullshit." As Polonius says, in Act two, Scene two of Hamlet, "since brevity is the soul of wit, and tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes, I will be brief, and say 'bullshit!'" You aren't the only one who knows how to read.

Regina

He also spends the entirety of the play speaking far more than necessary, which is exactly what you're doing right now. The line is ironic.

Ross

I know what ironic is. "Poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended." Irony is when you haven't had sex with your wife for six months because she's always tired or not in the mood, but really she's spending the night jacking off while she thinks you're asleep.

Regina

That isn't irony...it's typical. It's disgustingly typical.

Ross

Who cares? You know what I'm getting at.

Regina

I--can we please talk about this in the morning?

Ross

No. I...Listen. I'm not trying to make you feel bad. I'm not trying to make you uncomfortable. I'm just trying to fix this. I want you to feel comfortable being sexual. I want to know what I can do to make you...want to bother with the whole ordeal of sex. I know I'm capable. I used to be capable of it.

Regina

I was different then.

Ross

How?

Regina

Because I was impressed with you then! Because I was young and impressionable and I thought you were a good writer.

Ross

And now?

Silence.

And now?

Regina

Nothing.

Ross

No. Say it. You used to be impressed with me, and now?

Regina

And now I'm old and tired and I want to get some sleep.

Ross

Stop being false for one fucking second!

Regina

I hated your book! Okay? I hated it! It was trite and childish and the plot was predictable and the sex scenes were obvious and without cunning and gratuitous and made me nauseous and were devoid of beauty, and sex with you is obvious and without cunning and gratuitous and makes me nauseous and you speak in cliché's and redundancies and I feel like an animal, I feel like a disgusting hog when we have sex and it's unrefined and you make stupid noises and faces, and when I was young I didn't know any better and I read romance novels, and any sex at all felt romantic and all of your writing is like that and you won't get any better and I'm not pretty and I feel less pretty when we have intercourse because I'm just a hole--I'm just a lumpy hole for you to "fuck", to use your word, because I feel like you're writing the scene, I feel like you're writing who I am and I don't like your writing! I can't stand your writing.

(Silence)

Ross

Wow...

Regina

I didn't mean it. I'm sorry.

Ross

No. Don't. Don't talk anymore. I've got it.

Regina

I'm sorry, I was just angry. Please don't believe anything I've said.

Ross

(Getting out of bed)

Be quiet.

(He starts to get dressed and gather a few things during the following.)

Regina

Where are you going?

Ross

I don't know.

Regina

Come back to bed.

Ross

If you think I could ever get into another bed that you're in, you're insane.

Regina

I--

Ross

Do. Not. Speak. You're done speaking.

(Silence)

Regina

I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me. Please--

Ross

Please, what? What could I possibly offer the virgin queen?

Regina

Please don't leave.

Ross

I don't think there's any reason to stay. You've made it clear that I make you miserable.

Regina

You don't--

Ross

You've had your say! I swear to God, not another word until I've left the house. Jesus Christ...you're nothing but a frumpy, repressed, mean, old school-marm. Who the fuck

(Ross continued)

are you? What do you know about writing? What do you know about sex? I've been on the best seller list twice. I write what's real. I fuck like a real person. I don't know what expectations you have in your head, but whatever they are, you don't deserve them. Even if they were attainable, they won't be to you. Because you're cold. And selfish. And pretentious. And you've gotten fat. Go fuck yourself.

(He grabs the rest of his things and exits.)

(Lights fade.)

Act Two
Scene Three

(Scene: The living room.)

(At rise: Regina is standing over the table drinking coffee and reading John's short story. Husband enters. They look at each other briefly, awkwardly. He looks away and goes under into the kitchen.)

Regina
(As Ross goes exits into the kitchen)

You came back.

Ross
(Off)

No. I didn't.

(He enters, carrying a trash bag)

I just wanted to get some of my stuff. I thought you'd be on your way to school by now.

Regina

Oh.

(Silence as he gathers his things.)

Regina

Where are you staying?

Ross

A friend's.

Regina

How long are you going to be gone?

Ross

Indefinitely.

Regina

This is silly.

(Silence.)

Regina

You're acting like a child.

(Silence. He picks up the stack of papers he had been sorting through the day before and angrily puts them in the bag. He sees the short story on the table and goes to grab it.)

Regina

Don't take that!

Ross

Well, I don't want it cluttering up the living room, do I? Whatever will you do if it's sitting right out in the living room.

Regina

I'm reading it.

Ross

I'm taking it.

Regina

That doesn't belong to you.

Ross

Who does it belong to?

Regina

It was given to me.

Ross

You don't want it.

Regina

Yes. I do. Leave it here.

Ross

It's drivel.

Regina

It's brilliant. And it's mine.

Ross

Just because you like something doesn't make it yours. It's mine, and I'm taking it.

Regina

You're going to take something that doesn't belong to you simply out of spite?

Ross

You don't own my writing.

Regina

It's not your writing.

Ross

Well it's in my bag of shit, so it must be mine.

Regina

How can you be this threatened? Of a sixteen year old boy...

Ross

I'm not leaving because of some gay kids essay.

Regina

Would you please stop calling him that.

Ross

What is your obsession with this kid? What the fuck does he have to do with anything anyway?

Regina

You're the one who brought him up!

Ross

You're the one who brought him up.

Regina

You took that short story.

Ross

It's my short story. I don't know what you were doing with it anyway.

Regina

Well I wasn't masturbating to it, if that's what you think!

Ross

I don't think you do anything that humans do.

Regina

You're the one behaving like an animal--

(Ross beats his chest and lets out an animalistic roar. He hops around the apartment like an ape, turning over furniture as he does so. He stops and stands up straight.)

Ross

I'll get the rest of my things later. I have to go meet with my editor, make some changes to my book, you know--actually do the things that you teach about. I would clean this mess up, but I don't have opposable thumbs.

Regina

Ross--

(He exits, slamming the door.)

(Lights fade.)

Act Two

Scene Three

(Scene: The classroom.)

(At rise: Regina stands at the podium. John, at his desk, is in shadow.)

Regina

I think we were talking about the conflict between Stanley and Blanche. Why they couldn't tolerate each other. Why can't the two co-exist? I...they're different in nature. I don't know...they...Stanley sees through Blanche. He can't stand to...he sees the bestial side of people, and is intolerant of their loftier aspirations. To be more than animals. To be human beings. Blanche is, of course...she has a past. She's made mistakes. She's succumb to her baser instincts in the past. She's been vulnerable in the past, but she's trying to...she's trying to be better than what she is. She's trying to make a fresh start, and that's really all you can expect from a person, but Stanley is intolerant of this. He's threatened. He's threatened because someone has challenged him and he's in a world where--Stella says of him that he's "the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere." And Blanche sees through this because he's base and rough and common, with no aspirations to loftier ideals. In fact, Stanley says of Stella that...I can't remember the exact wording...that when he met her she was like Blanche, but he pulled her down--he pulled her down and weren't they happy when that happened? Stanley pulls people down, Blanche tries to raise them up, but if you have a rope wrapped around a piano, isn't it easier to pull it down from a ledge up high than it would be to pull it up from somewhere down below? Does that make sense? The point...what am I saying? The point is that Blanche is inevitably pulled down by Stanley, because you can't make people better than they are, but even when she goes to the mental institution, she still retains her loftier ideas, even if they're considered crazy, and I think that's important and often a point overlooked...I think I'm getting off track here...To be frank--well, let me start again--to be frank, they cannot get along because of sex. And truth. Stanley is by no means sexually moral--he beats his wife and then makes love to her, in the end he rapes Blanche, but that is--wait, we'll come back to that. But the point is that however awful, he doesn't pretend to be anything else. He doesn't regard himself as immoral, but he also does not deny his actions. Blanche is judgmental of his actions, but denies her own immorality in regards to sex. But she is trying. She's trying to be better than herself and that's important...but perhaps besides the point I'm trying to make...well actually...it ties in nicely because in fact Blanche's downfall, brought on by Stanley, is similar to the downfall of her late husband, which she is the catalyst for--it's all retribution. Her husband was a homosexual--he couldn't help it. That's simply how he was. But this was unacceptable, and thought to be immoral, so he tried not to be. He got married. He didn't talk about it. He tried to be better--and I'm not saying it's bad

(Regina continued)

to be a homosexual, I'm speaking from his point of view now--in his mind, and in the mind of society he was trying to be better than what he was. But Blanche couldn't leave well enough alone because she knew the truth, and couldn't ignore it. And she taunted him. She teased him. She judged him. She called him out on it. And he killed himself. And she deeply regrets this. Stanley does the same to Blanche--it's retribution for her past actions. I believe that Williams was trying to make a statement of...he was...the point is that you can't escape your past, you can't escape who you are. People won't leave well enough alone. People won't let you forget--and we all have urges, but Blanche just wants things to be beautiful! She just wants something better for herself! She doesn't just want to be a blob of hormones and instincts and a plaything for sweaty, common men. So what if she's not a virgin? So what if she's had some messiness in the past! Is it any business of the men in this play? Is she any less sincere with Mitch? She says she has old fashioned ideals--and indeed she has. One isn't born with these things, however, we are born filthy, animal creatures, but she's adopted these ideals as her own and her past doesn't make them any less legitimate. She feels them in her heart, and she doesn't want to be degraded ever again, but she wants a man--a man who is "superior to the others," as she describes Mitch, to love her, and make sex beautiful and not degrading, but these men won't let her escape it and it's unfair! They couldn't leave well enough alone, they couldn't just play along, even if they knew it to be false—

(The bell rings. The lights come to full.)

Oh, and, uh, for homework, I'd like you to take three pages to, uh, tie this into irony. Relate the class discussion to irony for homework. In three pages. That's all.

(John stays behind)

John

Is everything all right?

Regina

What do you mean? Yes. Everything's fine.

John

I don't want this to come off the wrong way--I'm just concerned--but that wasn't the most coherent lecture you've ever given. Or the most specific homework assignment.

Regina

Well, to be honest it doesn't really matter what you write about as long as you demonstrate that you were paying attention in class and you understand irony.

John

Were you paying attention in class?

Regina

Of course. What does that mean?

John

Were you listening to yourself?

Regina

Yes, I was--what are you--

John

You sound like you're having some sort of breakdown. I know it's none of my business, but you can talk to me if you want.

Regina

I'm sure you don't want to hear me talk about my problems. You've probably got friends waiting for you outside or track practice or something.

John

No. I'm free. What's wrong?

Regina

I can't talk to you about this--you're a student.

John

I'm the only one here. Who's gonna know?

Regina

I...well, fine...my--well, my husband started moving out this morning. We had a fight last night and he left and he came back this morning to get his things when I was on my way out, and I think we're getting divorced and we've been married for twenty-one years and so...well, yes. I'm having a break down of sorts. Yes.

John

Wow.. I'm sorry. Really. That's awful.

Regina

Yes. Maybe. I don't know. Maybe it's for the best. I don't know. I just--I'm very confused, and hurt, and I feel guilty because I hurt him, but--I don't know what to say. I'm at a loss for words--so I suppose that means I'm very upset because that is usually not the case.

John

Can I ask what happened?

Regina

I...well, it's complicated. I...didn't like his book. And I told him so. And I said very mean things about his writing and he said I didn't deserve the things that I want because I'm cold and pretentious. And fat. He also called me fat. And he left. And that's it. That's all. But really, you don't need to worry yourself with this. I appreciate your kindness, but I'm fine and you should run along.

John

I don't have to.

Regina

No. I think you should. I shouldn't be talking to you about this.

John

Why not?

Regina

Because...I shouldn't. Because you're my student.

John

Is there any reason I can't be your friend, too?

Regina

Why would you want to be friends with someone like me?

John

Someone like you?

Regina

Someone like me. A frumpy, old school marm.

John

Because you're...because I want to. That's why. (Pause.) I wouldn't take his insults too seriously. I'm sure he was just upset. I'm sure he holds your opinion of writing in high regard.

Regina

I doubt it.

John

I hold your opinion in high regard. I wouldn't call you fat or anything--I wouldn't lie to hurt your feelings--but I'd be pretty upset if you didn't like my writing.

Regina

There's nothing not to like about your writing.

John

I'm not--I'm not trying to make it about me and my writing. I mean, thanks, but what I mean is maybe you can talk to him. Tell him you didn't mean it, and he can tell you he didn't mean it, because I'm sure he didn't. You've been married a long time. You don't have to get a divorce over one fight.

Regina

But I did mean it. And I'm pretty sure he meant it. It's a strange thing to tell the truth. Once you say what you mean--well, no one forgets it. You can't go back. That's pretty much it.

John

Married that long though--surely you have a lot of good things to say about one another--that are true.

Regina

I do appreciate your concern. But really, I'm fine. And I need to get going.

John

Are you sure?

Regina

Yes. Run along.

John

Okay. I hope I didn't make you more upset.

Regina

You didn't.

John

Okay. Have a good weekend.

Regina

You, too.

(He starts to leave, but she stops him.)

Regina

John--

John

Yeah?

Regina

I'm--it's ridiculous to ask you this, but--well, I see something in you--I think you know more than your age would imply, so I do value your opinion...

John

What is it?

Regina

I'm supposed to apologize, aren't I? I'm supposed to keep this thing together. That's what you said, right? We've been married for twenty-one years, and I'm supposed to fix this, and not let it fall apart, right? I mean, he's a well respected writer, and it looks strange...I don't know how to do this, because my husband and I don't fight. I think it really is our first real fight--I mean, over something that mattered, where we tried to hurt each other--and that's the way marriage is, isn't it? People fight, you try to get over it, you stay together. I know it doesn't work that way these days so much--or in my day, for that matter--but we're not talking about two people who rushed into marriage and after a year decided that it wasn't working. We're talking about twenty-one years of marriage--you don't throw that away, do you? I can't believe I'm even asking you this.

John

Why not?

Regina

I don't mean it as an insult. I can't believe I'm asking anyone this. As I said, I don't question your intelligence. You're incredibly bright. It's...well--oh, it doesn't matter. I've asked your opinion on the situation, and I would like to hear it. If you have one.

John

I don't know. Maybe it seems simplistic, but I think the only rule is to do what makes you happy.

Regina

That doesn't seem simplistic at all. It seems incredibly complicated.

John

No. It isn't. It is simplistic.

Regina

Maybe. Okay...now I'm embarrassed. Or something. And my sentence structure is falling apart, so I'll let you go. Thank you, John. I'll see you on Monday.

John

Okay...I...

Regina

Yes?

John

I don't want to leave you like this.

Regina

I'm fine. I promise. I'm fine.

John

Are you sure?

Regina

Yes. Go.

(He looks at her.)

Regina

Please. I'm fine.

(John exits.)

(Lights fade to blackout.)

Act Three

Scene 1

(Scene: The library. A table is covered with Ross' books and papers, as well as a girls backpack.)

(At rise: John enters and looks around furtively, before he begins looking through the papers. Ross comes up behind him.)

Ross

What are you doing?

John

Nothing—I. I was just looking for something.

Ross

I've got those in a certain order. I know it doesn't look like it.

John

This is my sister's bag. I thought this was her stuff.

Ross

Is Sandra your sister?

John

Yeah.

Ross

She went to get coffee for us. She's doing her thesis on me, I'm trying to help her out.

John

You're Ross McCullers?

Ross

Yes, I am.

John

Oh. I'm a big fan.

Ross

Well, thank you! Your whole family's got good taste, it seems. What was your name?

John

John.

Ross

Well, John, if you wait a minute I'm sure your sister will be right back.

John

No, that's okay, I've got to go anyway.

Ross

Hey, I know you, I think.

John

No, I don't think you do.

Ross

Yeah, I think I saw you the other day at my wife's school. Do you go to Central?

John

Yeah, I don't think I'm in her class, though.

Ross

I haven't even said who she is yet.

John

Oh, that's right. I think I'm just a little nervous meeting you.

Ross

Regina Snow?

John

No. I mean—yeah, I'm in her *English* class.

Ross

Were you in class today?

John

Uh-huh.

Ross

How was she?

John

What do you mean?

Ross

She was just...a little under the weather this morning. I wanted to see if she was alright in class.

John

Yeah, she was fine.

Ross

Okay. Good. That's good.

John

I'll just get that thing from my sister later. I should get going.

Ross

Wait, you're John? The one with the essay?

John

There are a lot of Johns.

Ross

Did you write an essay about Stanley being a weed in a garden?

John

I...look, I'm sorry—

Ross

There was some good stuff in there. I mean, you should work on your metaphors. But still, I think you've got some talent. Keep at it.

John

Thanks. I will.

Ross

Why were you sorry?

John

Huh?

Ross

You just said you were sorry.

John

Oh, because I have to go. I was just stopping in to say hi to my sister. But, she's taking her time with that coffee.

Ross

Don't tell her I said this, but I think she's playing hard to get with me.

John

She's nuts about your writing. You could probably have her if you wanted.

Ross

I'm a married man. But thanks for the vote of confidence.

John

I've got to go. (Pause) Hey, I don't know why I said that. I don't usually talk like that.

Ross

It's okay. They're just words.

(John exits. Lights fade.)

Act Three

Scene Two

(Scene: Regina's living room. Many items associated with Husband are missing.)

(At rise: Regina sits on the couch, reading Ross' book. It's raining out. A knock at the door. Regina walks to the door, calling as she goes.)

Regina

Who is it?

John
(Off)

It's me. John.

(She stops.)

John
(Off)

It's raining. Can I come in?

(She unlocks the door and lets him in.)

Regina

What on earth are you doing here? How do you even know where I live?

John

It's listed.

(They look at each other, awkwardly.
Silence.)

Regina

Let me take your coat, it's soaked through.

John

Thanks. Do you mind if I take my shoes off? I'm sorry--is this weird? It's just, I'm kind of sloshing around in them. They're full of water.

Regina

Yes, go right ahead. Make yourself comfortable.

(She puts his coat in a closet while he takes off his shoes. He sits down. She remains standing.)

John

How are you?

Regina

I'm alright. What brought you all the way over here in the rain?

John

It turns out you don't live very far from me at all.

Regina

It's pouring out there. Are you alright?

John

Yeah. It's just water.

Regina

Don't play dumb. It's unconvincing. I'm asking what brings you to my house.

John

I was worried about you.

Regina

I'm fine. I'm a grown woman. I can handle it. Thank you for stopping by, I appreciate it, but this is totally inappropriate.

John

Listen--fine. You say you're fine, I believe you. I know you can handle it. I know you don't need me to come in and save you. But I'm soaking wet, and it's the weekend,

(John continued)

so I know you don't have to grade papers right this second, and I hate to bring it up, but you're husband is gone, so I know I'm not disturbing dinner or anything, so why don't you let me stay here and dry off, and we'll just keep each other company for a while. We don't have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about. I'm just here for a visit.

(She doesn't respond.)

This isn't inappropriate! I promise. This is two friends having a visit. What's wrong with that? And if there is something wrong with that, well, we're the only ones who know about it, aren't we?

Regina

I'm sure there are more fun things you could be doing on a Friday night. Where are your friends?

John

Probably driving around in circles trying to think of something fun to do. That's what they always end up doing on a Friday night. They're complaining that they can't get into any bars. Then they'll end up hanging out in the Wal-Mart parking lot. I swear. It's what ultimately happens every Friday night. I would just as soon be here. Sooner.

Regina

Are you hungry?

John

Have you eaten?

Regina

No.

John

Are you going to?

Regina

Would you like something to eat?

John

Were you already planning to eat something?

Regina

I hadn't thought about it.

John

Are you hungry?

Regina

Are *you* hungry?

John

I'm not so hungry that I need you to feed me.

Regina

If I fed you, would you eat?

John

Would you eat?

Regina

Would you like some fruit while we discuss it?

John

"Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?"

Regina

I have some apples. We'll have some apples while we decide.

John

That's T.S. Eliot.

Regina

Yes. I know.

John

I hadn't read it before. I read it for the first time the other day.

Regina

What did you think?

John

I--I don't know. It was great--but I'm not sure if I understand it all. The rhythm is so fast, it just falls all over itself--in a good way. It's so urgent. To be honest, though, it made me feel a little stupid.

Regina

Because you didn't understand it?

John

Yeah. I know that it's a little egotistical to expect that I can read anything, and it's not that there are words I don't understand--I understand the sentences, it's just the point of it that I'm having trouble with. I just need to read it again.

Regina

I don't know whether it will encourage you or discourage you to know that every time I read that poem, I pull something different from it.

John

No. That's encouraging. It's partly why I liked it, I suppose. Because it made me feel stupid. Because I didn't get it right away.

Regina

That way of thinking is partly what makes you so far from stupid.

John

I don't think I'm as smart as you think I am.

Regina

I don't believe any of my other students are lacking intelligence either. But it's wonderful to see a young man actually use his intelligence--to not try to downplay it. To not dumb himself down for the sake of looking cool to his friends. Most of my students are either trying to impress their friends or they are trying to impress me. I don't believe you're trying to impress anybody. I believe you love words. I believe you actually want to learn more about them. About the people who know what to do with them. It's refreshing to see a student so interested in the material. Am I right in presuming that's your position?

John

You're right. Yes. But I would be lying if I said I didn't want to impress you, as well. My friends, too.

Regina

Why do you want to impress me?

John

Because you know what you're talking about. Because I trust your judgment. Because you know what I want to know about writing. Because your lectures are...you're a person that--were I to impress you--it would mean something about my writing.

Regina

That's far different than wanting to impress me for a grade, or so you can feel like you're the smartest kid in the class, or to prove that you're smarter than me. Although, I have encountered students that were smarter than me, and I would certainly count you among them. To be honest, it makes me a little bit nervous that you hold me in such high regard. Sometimes I don't think I really know anything that I think I know.

John

You probably know more.

Regina

No. I don't. "I should have been a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floors of silent seas."

John

You're feeling sorry for yourself.

Regina

See? You do understand the poem. No, though. I'm not feeling sorry for myself. I'm coming to terms with myself.

John

Is that his book?

Regina

My husband's?

John

Yeah.

Regina

Yes. It is. I'm rereading it.

John

You don't like it?

Regina

You know, I very much liked your short story. I never got to tell you. My husband picked it up with his things, though. I hope you have another copy somewhere. I'd like to edit it for you--

John

But you don't like your husband's book?

Regina

I...I don't know. It has some merit.

John

No. It's trash.

Regina

You haven't read it.

John

You told me today you didn't like it.

Regina

Well, I'm only one person.

John

You're the only person. Good riddance to him.

Regina

I actually think I was a bit harsh on him.

John

Has he heard you speak? Has he heard your lectures?

Regina

I often talk to him about what I'll discuss in class the next day.

John

He can hear you speak on the subject of literature, and he still produces trash? Good riddance to him.

Regina

He's been on the bestseller list twice. With this, he'll probably be on there again. I teach a high school English class. My opinion of literature is irrelevant.

John

Irrelevant? You really think that?

Regina

No...not irrelevant. To my husband it's irrelevant. That's what I mean.

John

Nothing you say is irrelevant. If anything, you manage to give meaning to otherwise

(John continued)
irrelevant books.

Regina

I try not to teach irrelevant books.

John

It's no wonder you've never taught any of your husband's books.

Regina

I don't teach my husband's books because I don't want the students to feel awkward talking about them.

John

You don't teach your husband's books because they aren't any good.

Regina

They simply aren't my cup of tea. That doesn't mean that they aren't any good.

John

Why did you marry him in the first place?

Regina

I don't really want to talk about this.

John

You look so sad. Your eyes are always so sad. It's easy to see that he didn't love you enough.

Regina

I don't even know what that means.

John

It's clear he didn't even listen to you when you spoke! He shouldn't be producing trash! When I hear you speak, I want to just--tear the flesh from my body and dig. I just want to lay on the floor, I want to dig and I want to rip out something worthy of Dickens or

(John continued)

Shakespeare or T.S. Eliot or Robert Lowell--something that's worthy of you--because to hear you speak about it--when you speak about literature, you're fourteen years old and you're in love--you're in love with these words and your lips get red and your eyes widen and you're illuminated and you're beautiful--To hear you speak about it--there's nothing left to want but that effect. So what if every person in America bought your husband's book? That effect is everything. He took an opportunity to make you soft and pretty and girlish and glittering and he wrote a bestseller instead. He's unworthy, his book is trash, and good riddance.

(Silence.)

Regina

I don't know if I can have you here now.

John

Don't make me go.

Regina

This is complicated.

John

It doesn't have to be.

Regina

But it is.

John

What's complicated about wanting to make you happy?

Regina

What you want isn't complicated. It's what I want that's complicated.

John

What do you want?

Regina

I can't discuss what I want with you.

John

Why not?

Regina

Please...

John

Can I tell you what I want? I'd like to tell you what I want. Come here to me.

(She walks to him. Very close. He touches her face, kisses her lightly on the forehead.)

Was that what you wanted?

Regina

You can't do that. You should go.

John

You don't want me to go.

Regina

It isn't about what I want.

John

You should have everything you want.

Regina

Please...

(He kisses her lightly on the mouth.)

John--

John

It's only you and me. It's alright.

(He kisses her again--longer this time. She pulls away.)

Regina

I--this is wrong.

John

Nothing else exists right now. Let go. You're worried about the outside world, what they would say. That's Blanche's downfall.

Regina

It isn't that simple.

John

There's nothing beyond this room. There's nothing beyond your eyes.

(He kisses her on the eyelid.)

Or your nose.

(He kisses her on the tip of her nose.)

Or your lips.

(He kisses her on the mouth, long and deep).

You're beautiful. You're so beautiful.

Regina

No, I'm not.

(He kisses her again, putting his hands on her. He continues through the following.)

John

I want you. I want to raise you up...I want you open...I want every part of you beautiful

(John continued)
and vibrating...I want to love you...I love you.

(She has fallen into it. She is clutching
him.)

Regina

I want you--I want you to fuck me.

(Lights fade.)

Act Three

Scene Three

(Scene: The classroom.)

(At rise: Regina is lecturing at the podium, John is at the desk.)

Regina

Someone brought up the subject of Blanche's guilt. That's an interesting subject. Does Blanche feel guilt? It isn't really addressed. She was run out of town when she...when she had an affair with a student. But it says nothing of her conscience. Her conscience didn't compel her to leave. Or, at least, there's nothing to imply that this was the case. So what does this say about morality? Blanche speaks of kindness, she speaks of love, she speaks of gentleness--all of this implies that she is at her core a decent human being. So why is the play devoid of repentance? Perhaps because there is nothing to repent. What, really has she done wrong? Did the young man she had an affair with have a nervous breakdown, or kill himself, or kill someone else as a result of what she did? Perhaps the play is a social statement about the dangers of moral judgment in regards to sex. Let's take a look at Blanche and her dead husband. Both are by all accounts sensitive, gentle people--their only defects are looking for love where society says they shouldn't. But what of Stanley and the act of rape he commits? Where does that fit in? He, too, is unrepentant. Does this mean he is morally just? Well, there are some differences here. We see the harm that Stanley causes--and that's because rape is not an act of love--it is an act of hate. It is an act of punishment. It is an act of judgment. Williams clearly makes the distinction between what Stanley does to Blanche and what Blanche is doing to her student. Stella says she couldn't bare to continue living with Stanley if Blanche's story were true--he should be punished but he isn't. We can see here a metaphor for societal sexual hypocrisy--Blanche is punished for an act of love, while Stanley is vindicated for an act of hate. I hope this gives you something to think about while you're studying for your exam. That's all. Happy studying.

(John gets up to leave.)

Regina

John, would you stay a moment?

(They wait a moment for the others to leave.
When they have, she places her hand on
his.)

Regina

I was hoping I could see you tonight.

John

Tonight?

Regina

You could come by my house. We could work on your story.

John

Yeah, I was going to go to the bonfire...

Regina

Oh, that is tonight isn't it?

John

You know what? If I'm late to track practice again the coach is gonna kill me. I'll call you, though. Alright?

Regina

You're fine, right? You haven't gotten scared now?

John

I'm not scared.

Regina

Good. Neither am I.

John

I'll call you.

Regina

Please do. I look forward to it.

John

Okay. Catch you later.

(John bolts out the door.)

(Lights fade.)

Act Three
Scene Four

(Scene: Regina's living room.)

(At rise: The doorbell rings. Regina answers it and we find John's father, Mr. Butcher.)

Regina

Right on time.

Mr. Butcher

Let's talk.

(Regina sits, across from Mr. Butcher.)

Regina

Thank you for stopping by, Mr. Butcher

(Silence.)

You didn't mention what exactly it was that you wanted to speak to me about.

(Silence.)

What brings you by, Mr. Butcher?

(He is silent.)

John is doing excellently in my class. In all of his classes from what I understand. I hope he told you that he won the academic excellence award for English.

Mr. Butcher

He told me.

Regina

Yes. He's a very good student. (Pause.) Was there something specific you'd like to discuss?

Mr. Butcher

You like my son?

Regina

He's an excellent student. He's a very bright young man.

Mr. Butcher

Yeah. He's a bright young man. Do you like young men?

Regina

Well, I spend an awful lot of time with young people. I'd have to like them to do what I do, wouldn't I?

Mr. Butcher

Let me put it another way: Did you fuck my son?

Regina

I...what?

Mr. Butcher

I'm just trying to get to the bottom of whether or not you fucked my sixteen year old son.

Regina

Would you please watch your language.

Mr. Butcher

Pardon me? Watch my language?

Regina

Where did you hear that?

Mr. Butcher

I want to know if it's true.

Regina

Did he tell you that?

Mr. Butcher

Why aren't you answering my question?

Regina

I--I want to know why you're asking me this.

Mr. Butcher

Because I know that you did. I know that you did.

(Silence.)

Regina

I'm not in the habit of engaging in sexual intercourse with my students.

Mr. Butcher

You look like you aren't in the habit of engaging in sexual intercourse with anyone. But I know that you took advantage of my son.

Regina

I didn't take advantage--

Mr. Butcher

(Pulling a folded piece of paper from his pocket and reading)

"I honestly didn't think she'd actually let me do it, but I managed to fuck Ms. Snow last night. The whole thing was insanely easy. All the woman really wanted was someone to say something nice to her for a change, and throw in some poetry while they were at it--and BOOM: "Fuck 'n Suck High School IV". She's such a hard ass, I thought it would be fun to flirt with her, but somehow the thing went farther than I originally intended really quickly. Lying next to her in her husband's bed, I had a moment of pity for her. She held one hand on her stomach--I think she was trying to hide her fat rolls. I could see how important it was to her that I find her attractive, that I not think of her as "a frumpy old school-marm"-- it was a little sad. But honestly, whatever. She obviously needed a good fucking, and now I know one way to shut her up when she's boring us all to death in class--just stick my cock in her mouth."

Regina

What...

Mr. Butcher

I want to know what the fuck happened.

Regina

He wrote that?

Mr. Butcher

He wrote that.

Regina

Where did you get that?

Mr. Butcher

He posted it on the internet.

Regina

On the internet?

Mr. Butcher

I found it. I asked him if it was true. He said it was.

Regina

It's on the internet?

Mr. Butcher

I had him erase it.

Regina

People have seen it?

Mr. Butcher

You tell me, right now, what the fuck you were doing?

Regina

I don't know.

Mr. Butcher

He's sixteen years old. You're supposed to be his teacher. You're supposed to keep him away from this sort of stuff.

Regina

It wasn't like that.

Mr. Butcher

It wasn't like that?! You're disgusting. You're a whore. So, what? You can't get anyone your own age to fuck you, so you prey on your students? You take advantage of a child? You feel good about yourself? Do you feel desirable, Ms. Snow?

Regina

It wasn't like that.

Mr. Butcher

How did you pressure him into it?

Regina

I didn't--I don't know! My husband had just left, and he's--I thought he was different...I liked his writing--I can't believe he wrote that about me. How could he--He was so sweet...

Mr. Butcher

Damn right he was sweet! He's a little boy!

Regina

He couldn't really think that...

Mr. Butcher

What do you have to say for yourself?

Regina

He lied to me...

Mr. Butcher

Don't tell me you didn't know how old he was--

Regina

He was just taking advantage...

Mr. Butcher

You tell me how a fucking sixteen year old kid takes advantage of forty-something woman? Are you a mental retard or something? Is that it?

Regina

No, he--my husband had left, and he was comforting me, and I don't know what happened! It happened so fast--and I told him he should leave, but he told me I was illuminated--

Mr. Butcher

"Illuminated"?

Regina

And he kissed me, and I said he shouldn't, but he said it would be alright, and I was in a vulnerable position, and he was being so nice to me, and it shouldn't have happened! It shouldn't have happened! If I had known he would say that--"the only way to make her shut up..." He wrote that? He wrote that? I...He was so sweet, and he seemed--it didn't seem...I don't know. My husband had said I was repressed and frumpy and fat and he--he told me that I was pretty and girlish and he loved me and I believed him, but he was just taking advantage of me! I'm so...he was just taking advantage of me.

Mr. Butcher

He was taking advantage of you?

Regina

Yes.

Mr. Butcher

He was taking advantage of you?

Regina

Yes!

Mr. Butcher

Why would my son take advantage of you?

Regina

I don't know.

Mr. Butcher

Because you're such a fucking prize?

Regina

Please...

Mr. Butcher

Are you gonna mention my language again?

Regina

No.

Mr. Butcher

That was a sad story about how your husband left you and you were so vulnerable and all that. Did you tell my son that? Did you hope to prey on a nice kid's sympathy?

Regina

I--it wasn't like that.

Mr. Butcher

You had sex with my son in your house. That's what it was like.

Regina

No--

Mr. Butcher

That's what it was like. You had sex with my son in your house. Correct? Correct?

Regina

We talked about poetry...

Mr. Butcher

And then you had sex.

Regina

Yes...yes. I'm sorry.

Mr. Butcher

It's against the law. Maybe you don't give a shit about the morality of what you did, but in case you didn't know it, it is very much so against the law.

Regina

Yes.

Mr. Butcher

The thing is, I'm not going to press charges, because quite frankly, I don't want to turn on my TV and see a picture of my son next to a picture of you. It's humiliating. It's humiliating enough to have your son involved in a teacher sex scandal, but Jesus...

Regina

All right.

Mr. Butcher

Tomorrow's Friday. Next week is the start of fall break. So you're gonna teach classes

(Mr. Butcher continued)

like normal tomorrow. At the end of the day, you're gonna hand in your resignation. You won't return when classes start again. You got me?

Regina

Yes.

Mr. Butcher

I don't want the kids to know what happened. If any of them saw it on the internet, John's gonna tell them he was goofing on them.

Regina

Thank you.

Mr. Butcher

This is for John's benefit, not yours. He's not gonna be the kid that fucked the fat teacher, you know what I mean?

Regina

Yes. I know what you mean.

Mr. Butcher

And you're getting the fuck out of town. As quickly as possible. I want to see you in a moving truck by Monday.

Regina

You want me to move?

Mr. Butcher

I don't want you within a stones throw of my son. And I don't suppose you've got any reason to stay, do you?

Regina

No. I don't.

Mr. Butcher

Tomorrow is Friday. It's your last day.

(Lights Fade.)

Act Three

Scene Five

(Scene: The library. The same table where Ross and John met.)

(At rise: Ross and Mr. Butcher are meeting. Ross is reading John's blog.)

Ross

Holy moley...

Mr. Butcher

I hope you won't mention this to anyone, but I thought you should know.

Ross

I don't know if I want to know this.

Mr. Butcher

I understand you two just split up, and just in case you had some hopes to reconcile, I thought you might want all of the facts.

Ross

Yeah, yeah I got you. Fuckin'...Jesus Christ...

Mr. Butcher

You know, we're all big fans of yours over at our house. I think my daughter's actually working on a school project on you. She goes to the college.

Ross

Her thesis?

Mr. Butcher

Yeah, I guess it would be. She's been working on it a really long time.

Ross

Yeah. I've been helping her with it...Oh my God, this is....small world, huh? Jesus...

Mr. Butcher

I would really appreciate it if you didn't mention this to anyone. I want to save my son the embarrassment.

(Ross laughs, abruptly.)

What is it?

Ross

I don't know. This is...I spent twenty-one years trying to get her to..."All the woman wanted was for someone to say something nice to her for a change and throw in some poetry while they were at it." I'm a writer for Pete's sake. You've got a very smart son.

Mr. Butcher

My son isn't the cause of this.

Ross

For as long as I can remember, my wife's never been the cause of anything.

Mr. Butcher

Don't take this the wrong way--I know this is a shock. It was a shock for me, too--but I would venture to say you don't know your wife as well as you think you do.

Ross

That's for damn sure. (Laughs.) Good for her.

Mr. Butcher

Excuse me?

Ross

I can't believe that kid got her to let loose. Or that she thinks he's a better writer than I am...

Mr. Butcher

John didn't "get her" to do anything. He's a kid.

Ross

Hey--you didn't show this to her, did you? It would break her heart if she read this.

Mr. Butcher

Of course I showed it to her. I don't give a damn about her broken heart. I don't want her near my son.

Ross

I just wish you'd broken it to her more gently.

Mr. Butcher

Are you fuckin' serious? You know my kid is sixteen, right?

Ross

Doesn't sound like it was his first time. I was having sex at sixteen.

Mr. Butcher

You weren't having sex with your teachers at sixteen.

Ross

I never thought to try.

Mr. Butcher

That's because teachers aren't supposed to be on the menu. You worry all of the time what you're kids are up to--who's teaching them bad stuff, who's putting ideas in their heads. You don't want the teachers--

Ross

Where did you find this?

Mr. Butcher

It was on the internet.

Ross

You found this on the internet?

Mr. Butcher

Yeah.

Ross

How did you find it?

Mr. Butcher

It was on the internet.

Ross

Yeah, I know. What was the website?

Mr. Butcher

It was some journal site. You know. A lot of kids are on those.

Ross

But you don't know which one?

Mr. Butcher

I don't remember.

Ross

You don't check it regularly, or anything?

Mr. Butcher

Well, I might now. I wanted to give my son some privacy, but now that I've found this--

Ross

But how did you find it?

Mr. Butcher

You know. I was just screwin' around on the computer and I found it.

Ross

Man...

Mr. Butcher

What?

Ross

There's just so many sites out there. I don't even know how many. You're lucky you found this. It's really a coincidence.

Mr. Butcher

Yeah, it really is. I'm just thankful I can put a stop to it.

Ross

I would think you'd have to be searching for something that's in the text...

Mr. Butcher

I was just floatin' around to different sites. You know.

Ross

...Something like, "Good fucking" or "Cock in her mouth."

Mr. Butcher

I wasn't, but it's really none of your business what I was looking at.

Ross

No. You're right. Besides, you know how many porn sites are out there? The odds of you finding this just from typing in "Cock in her mouth" or something are astronomical.

Mr. Butcher

I think the important thing is that I found it.

Ross

It would have to be more specific than that, wouldn't it? Maybe something like, "school marm comma hard ass" or "fuck n' suck high school" is probably a good one to search by. Or "High school comma cock in her mouth."

Mr. Butcher

Watch it, man.

Ross

Sorry. Sorry. It's just a weird coincidence.

Mr. Butcher

His name. I searched for his name. You ever do that? Search for your name, or people you know and see what's on the internet about them?

Ross

Yeah. Yeah, sure. We all do that.

Mr. Butcher

I'm not the pervert here.

Ross

You know what, though? His user name up here in the corner is just "John." Man, how many thing's about "John" did you have to read before you found something about your son? I mean, it's a pretty common name.

Mr. Butcher

The important thing is that I found it.

Ross

Yeah. Thanks for bringing this to my attention. I'm really sorry about the embarrassment my wife has caused you.

Mr. Butcher

You're welcome. You won't mention this to anyone?

Ross

Not a soul.

Mr. Butcher

Thanks. I just don't want the embarrassment brought on my family. You know.

Ross

Sure, sure. Oh, and maybe you could warn your son that it isn't wise to plagiarize the work of your teacher's husband.

Mr. Butcher

Excuse me?

Ross

I wrote an essay in college about Streetcar Named Desire--the idea was that Blanche isn't damned because she's a hypocrite, she's damned because she expects everyone else to try and not be so base--she expects them to evolve. She's damned because she disrupts their comfortable little universe--oh, it doesn't matter, you don't give a shit--the point is your son handed in one of my essays as his own. As well as a short story.

Mr. Butcher

And how do you know about this?

Ross

I've been going over my essays with your daughter for about a month now.

Mr. Butcher

I think it's for the best that we just keep everything quiet. Don't you?

Ross

Yeah. We'll keep it quiet.

(Lights Fade)

Act Three

Scene Six

(Scene: The classroom.)

(At rise: Regina is lecturing at the podium. John's desk is empty.)

Regina

Upon her arrival at Elysian Fields, Blanche is more than disgusted--she almost appears to be terrified of the place. Elysian Fields--the Greek paradise, her salvation, a place for the righteous dead. And yet to Blanche, it is comparable to "the ghoulish haunted woodland of Weir"--a reference to the Edgar Allan Poe poem entitled Ulalume. Do you know the poem? In it, a man is unwittingly led to the tomb of his lost Ulalume on the one year anniversary of her death:

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crisped and sere-
As the leaves that were withering and sere-
And I cried--"It was surely October
On this very night of last year
That I journeyed--I journeyed down here-
That I brought a dread burden down here-
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber-
This misty mid region of Weir-
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,
This ghoulish haunted woodland of Weir.

A place for the righteous dead. A place where one is forced to confront the horrors of one's past. Are the two contradictory? Can the two simultaneously exist?

(Regina says this last sentence as she transitions into the living room set. She sits down to drink a cup of coffee. Ross enters abruptly)

Regina

What are you doing here?

Ross

I live here, silly. Did we get the paper today?

Regina

It's on the table.

(Ross grabs the paper and sits in his chair, reading. Regina transitions back to the classroom.)

Regina

Imagine Blanche before her arrival. She's lost her husband. She's lost Belle Reeve. At best, the towns-people regard her as a joke, at worst they hold her in utter contempt and disgust. She is broken. She is scared. There is no salvation.

Imagine the promise she saw in Elysian Fields--a place for the righteous dead, a place to meet her salvation, a place to forget the past, to move to another plane, to be seen in a dim light that reveals only her best self--the self that Stella remembers, the self she had hoped to be and never became. Not the promise of a fresh start, but of an end. A death. The death of her mistakes. The death of her past. A place to cast off her aging body, her human baseness, her hideous flaws, her hideous desires, a place to let her soul have free reign. A place to be among the righteous dead. Imagine the promise of this glorious suicide. Imagine the horror of her arrival. It is grim. It is grimy. It is the Tarantula Arms with an innocuous name. She has unwittingly been led to a replica of her horrible past.

We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright,
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom-
And conquered her scruples and gloom;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb-
By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said-"What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?"
She replied-"Ulalume-Ulalume-
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

(Regina transitions back to the living room)

Regina

Are you here to stay?

Ross

No, I'm not.

Regina

Oh...

Ross

We've got to move.

Regina

Did he speak to you?

Ross

My publisher is insistent that I move to New York.

Regina

You're going to New York?

Ross

I know you hate big cities, but this is really the best thing for us.

Regina

You want me to come with you?

Ross

You are my wife, aren't you?

(Regina returns to the classroom)

Regina

The Greeks believed in a fate harsher than Hell for those who were undeserving of Elysian Fields. They were believers in reincarnation. A never-ending cycle of one's own, horrible self. Truly, is there a harsher fate? Many view reincarnation as a fairly optimistic outcome of death--to not die. To live forever. But to a woman like Blanche, a woman so disgusted with herself, a woman so disgusted with the very things that make her human, that make her alive, that she shrouds herself in delusion and fantasy and lies and loftier aspirations, what harsher fate could one endure than to be given the promise of

Elysian Fields--a promise of death, of a death that is beautiful and without care and without need and temperate and righteous--only to be reincarnated, to ultimately go in circles, continuously circle back to the baseness of one's self.

(Regina transitions back to the living room)

Regina

You must hate me.

Ross

I don't hate you.

Regina

I'm awful.

Ross

It's in the past.

Regina

I don't know how you can look at me.

Ross

I like looking at you.

Regina

Ross?

Ross

Yes?

Regina

I really like your writing. I promise I do.

Ross

I know that you do.

(Regina transitions back to the classroom)

Regina

What is the answer, then? Exactly what is Williams trying to say? What becomes of Blanche, and what does this mean for the rest of us? It's funny--not funny, I suppose...ironic perhaps. Unfortunately I'm flooded now with only a string of cliché's to explain what Williams was after: "Be careful what you wish for."; "Be yourself."; "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."; etc; etc; etc. In truth, this is all that separates Stanley from Blanche: He is not just accepting of his imperfections--he relishes them. He flaunts them. He is as God made him--a brute, an ape, a human being. And what is Blanche? Afraid. Judgemental. False. Hypocritical. Vain. She wants to be beautiful. Is she beautiful? If you squint, if you dim the lights, if you distort her image--she can be seen that way. But can you trust to her gleaming? Can you trust her beautiful words, her high ideals, her costumes, the dim and romantic light? Vampires hide in the shadows as well...

(Regina transitions back to the living room)

Ross

Things will be better in New York.

Regina

Yes.

Ross

A fresh start.

Regina

Yes.

Ross

This town is too small anyway. Everyone knows everyone's business.

Regina

It will be nice to be able to breathe.

Ross

We can be among people and still be alone.

Regina

A fresh start.

(Regina transitions back to the classroom.)

Regina

Blanche is bullshit. That's all. No homework. Enjoy the break.

(Lights fade to Blackout)

END OF PLAY