

PERUSAL SCRIPT

MESS OF POTTAGE

Marriage and Other Eternal Constructs

by
Eric Samuelson



Newport, Maine

© 2012 by Eric Samuelsen
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

MESS OF POTTAGE

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

A requisite number of script and music copies must be purchased from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).

Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 for each infringement, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through ZION THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights inquiries may be made to the authors through ZION THEATRICALS Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT whether bought or rented, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made and license granted before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be bought and/or rented from:

ZION THEATRICALS
PO Box 536, Newport, ME 04953-0536

www.ziontheatricals.com

Printed in the United States Of America

THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:

“Mess of Pottage’ is presented through special arrangement with Zion Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by ZT, www.ziontheatricals.com”

NOTE: Your contract with Zion Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Zion Theatricals.

CAST of CHARACTERS 3m 2f, all early 20s

CRAIG and CHANDRA CARMACK
MIKE and GRETA ALVAREZ
STUART and MELISSA HANSON

SET: Three apartments' living rooms, indicated by three sofas, with coffee tables in front of each. The apartments overlap; the CARMACKS are R, the HANSONS are L, the ALVAREZES are C. Shared by all of the apartments, one upstage door leads to bedrooms, bathrooms. Maybe there's a counter, with toaster, microwave, oven, UC: all the apartments share it too. DS, in front of each apartment, is a front door, probably mimed.

COSTUMES: Contemporary

MESS OF POTTAGE: Marriage and Other Eternal Constructs by Eric Samuelsen 3f 3m, all early 20s. 3 representations of apartments onstage in a single setting. Contemporary costumes. About 90 minutes. Three couples and their married life at BYU. They are neighbors in an apartment complex, and have been thrown together by proximity. They become friends, despite their differences, obvious or not, because they believe that 'to love one another' is to live as God has asked us to live. As tensions and personalities shift, change and grow, we find that, despite our best efforts, all is not well in Zion. We are targets for the Evil one to insert himself into our lives and cause dissension. Not that this is overtly stated in the script, but it is a presence, like it should be in all great drama. There is laughter and tears. Emotions run hot and cold. Pride ever-present in the seemingly smallest of transgressions. For LDS young marrieds this play is a vital lesson on loving with all your heart, because then, maybe, your heart will change a little, too. Received a Staged Reading at Orem Public Library in 2013. PART OF THE PREMIERE PLAY FILE. **ORDER #3289**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric', including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandinavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at Mormoniconoclast.com. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

MESS OF POTTAGE

ACT ONE

(As the play begins, STUART faces the upstage door.)

STUART: Look. Look. Look, I'm sorry, okay? Mel? I said I was sorry.

(Suddenly smashes the door with his fist, one sharp blow.)

Mel!

(Pleadingly.)

Okay, now. Okay? One two three.

(Pause. Change of tone.)

Mel? Honey?

(Pause.)

They're gonna be here and this is not the kind of thing...

(Pause.)

Look, I know you're ticked off at me, and I probably deserve it. Meantime, we need to, like, get over this, and be hosts or something. So can we do that?

(Pause.)

Can we do that?

(Pause.)

There are people coming over.

(Pause.)

Mel?

(Enter MELISSA.)

Finally.

MELISSA: Don't start with me, we are going to talk about this, if there's one thing—

STUART: You look great.

MELISSA: That doesn't help to—

STUART: I love your hair like that.

MELISSA: No, Stuart, it doesn't—

STUART: You are so hot. Seriously, you have no idea what you do to me.

MELISSA: *(Brief pause.)* Okay. Fine, I appreciate that. It doesn't have anything to do with the fact that—

STUART: *(Smiling, charming.)* I was wrong. I admit it.

MELISSA: Okay. . .

STUART: I do things that I think are funny and they turn out not to be. I screwed up.

MELISSA: *(Reluctantly.)* You did. Yes. You absolutely—

STUART: So. We're good?

(We see MIKE and GRETA ALVAREZ approach the 'door' area. The CARMACKS, CRAIG and CHANDRA start to cross to them, hesitate.)

MELISSA: It doesn't . . . you think that's how it works, you just—

STUART: People. Coming over.

(MIKE knocks on the door. Notices the CARMACKS)

MIKE: Oh, hi. The Carmacks?

CHANDRA: That's right. I'm Chandra...Carmack.

CRAIG: Craig.

STUART: You okay?

GRETA: Hi, Greta and Mike Alvarez.

MELISSA: *(Deep breath.)* Yeah.

STUART: Here goes.

(Mimes opening the door.)

Welcome welcome!

MIKE: Hi!

GRETA: Hello.

STUART: Come on in. Oh, hope you don't mind, we kinda prefer to do the shoe thing.

MIKE: What's that?

GRETA: Of course.

(She reaches down to take off her shoes; MIKE notices.)

MIKE: Oh, right.

(Follows suit.)

STUART: So, let me see, it's Mike and...

GRETA: Greta.

STUART: Alvarez?

MIKE: That's right.

MELISSA: And we're the Hansons. Stuart and Melissa. You must be the Carmacks.

CHANDRA: Craig and Chandra.

STUART: Great, great.

(Awkward pause.)

Well, come on in.

(Light shift. MELISSA talks while MIKE and GRETA sit on the sofa with CRAIG, CHANDRA crosses, gets a chair from off, sits it next to CRAIG, sits, meanwhile STUART gets chairs from off, then gets plates with hors d'oeuvres, hands them around.)

MELISSA: Okay, getting this straight, Mike and Greta, you're in twenty-one sixteen, and Craig and Chandra, you're in twenty-one twenty-two, I remember. And...I just don't remember the names of the couple in twenty-one twenty. We did invite them too. DeWitt, DeWinter, DeMill, something like that. Have you guys talked to them at all? All I know is, the Salt Lake Tribune is in front of their door every morning, and it's not there every afternoon, so there is someone there, at least picking it up.

(MELISSA and STUART sit. Light shift, scene resumes.)

STUART:...says St. Peter, 'that's the Mormon section, they like to think they're the only ones up here.'

(He and MELISSA laugh hard, MIKE and GRETA politely, CRAIG laughs moderately, CHANDRA laughs as though puzzled.)

Anyone for some chips?

CRAIG: Sounds great. Honey?

CHANDRA: Sure.

STUART: (*Standing.*) Mike, Greta?

MIKE: No thanks.

(*STUART gets up to get chips.*)

GRETA: So. How long you been married?

MELISSA: Year and a half. This is our, you know, first post-Wymount apartment.

GRETA: Been two years for us. Big step up; we were in this horrible basement place off Eighth East the last two years.

(*To CHANDRA.*)

How 'bout you guys?

CHANDRA: We were just married over Christmas.

MIKE: Ah hah. The newlyweds of the group, then.

STUART: Here you go.

(*Passing around potato chips in a bag. Bit of a pause.*)

CHANDRA: So...um...how'd you guys meet?

STUART: Saved her from drowning.

MELISSA: You did not.

STUART: Excuse me, you were totally drowning.

MELISSA: Okay, my family home evening group decides to go swimming one night, right? And this guy—

STUART: Not me.

MELISSA: Am I telling this? This guy, he dares me to dive off the ten meter platform.

MIKE: Okay . . .

MELISSA: Well, I...didn't make such a great dive.

STUART: She over-rotated. Comes right down on her back.

MELISSA: Sort of my back. Okay, I landed on my butt. Hurt like crazy. And it kinda knocked my breath out.

STUART: Anyway, I'd spent the whole summer lifeguarding, right? I look up, I see this stunningly beautiful chick—

MELISSA: You're so sweet.

STUART: Thank you, at the bottom of the pool. I'm telling you, ten more seconds—

MELISSA: I was fine, I was in no danger.

STUART: Five more seconds, it woulda been curtains. I dive in, I pull her out—

MELISSA: You helped three guys from my ward pull me out—

STUART: I fight off three guys who want to pull her out, then it's major CPR time.

MELISSA: You are such a liar, no CPR, I was fine—

STUART: Your heart was in defib, no pulse—

MELISSA: Oh, yeah, and there was a tunnel with a light at the end, my grandmother calling to me—

STUART: Charge up the paddles. Clear.

(*Mimes electro-shocking her heart, a la ER.*)

Thoomp.

MELISSA: And you're just carrying a whole EMT kit around with you.

STUART: It could happen. Anyway, that was it. Got her phone number—

MELISSA: My hero.

STUART: We were engaged three months later.

(General laughter.)

CHANDRA: That's a great story.

CRAIG: Yeah, that's just—

GRETA: Okay, we can top it.

MIKE: No, now wait.

STUART: You're welcome to try.

MIKE: It's just so embarrassing. Okay, we met in a men's room in the H-FAC.

MELISSA: No!

MIKE: Honest truth.

GRETA: Okay, you gotta tell the whole story though.

CHANDRA: The men's room!?

MIKE: Thing is, I run. Every morning, apartment to the RB, then up the stairs, across campus to that walkway leads up to the Marriott Center, Bean Museum, then back across campus to the RB, where I'd shower and everything. So, every morning six o'clock, that was my routine. Still is.

CRAIG: How far is that?

MIKE: I don't really know, four miles maybe. Up those stairs, it's a pretty good workout.

GRETA: We run it together now.

STUART: Good for you.

CHANDRA: Really. That's amazing.

STUART: See, my philosophy, never run unless something's chasing you.

(General laughter.)

A bear or something. You know. Then maybe I'd consider it.

MELISSA: I used to run. That indoor track in the Fieldhouse, every day. You're supposed to get to where you enjoy it? Right? Hah! Never happened.

MIKE: I mean, it's just something we do. No big deal.

GRETA: Whip his butt, too.

STUART: You do not.

GRETA: Cold weather, I just kill him.

MIKE: Yeah, well, that's Minnesota talking. I swear, she cuts her finger, anti-freeze oozes out.

GRETA: Hello, Mr. San Diego here, it drops below ninety, he's piling on sweaters.

MIKE: Absolutely true. How can you people stand this? White stuff falling outta the sky, what's that about?

GRETA: Hi, it's called 'snow,' there's this season called winter, you may have heard of—

MIKE: Ice belongs in drinks, not on your driveway.

GRETA: Wuss.

MELISSA: Okay, I'm still waiting to hear about the H-FAC men's room.

MIKE: Right, right, sorry. Okay, one morning, I'm doing my run, right? And allasudden I really need to, you know, go. Something awful. And it's early, and I'm like, what's gonna be open? JKB, no, all locked up. ASB, forget it. And then I think, H-FAC. All those music majors, gotta get up at like five to get a practice room. And so I bear east a bit, and sure enough, one of the doors is unlocked, and there's the men's room. Imagine my relief.

GRETA: All right, so I had one of those four in the morning custodial jobs, right? Cleaning floors, wastebaskets. And toilets, right? And, okay, it was close to seven, but still, the building wasn't officially

open yet or anything. So, open the door, shout 'custodial!' and then right on in. And there he was.

MIKE: Sweat pants around my ankles.

(General laughter.)

And not at a point where I could, you know, stop.

GRETA: I'm opening the door, and all I hear is this 'Um...'

MIKE: I'm totally tongue-tied.

GRETA: And by then, I'm half-way in the door, and I've got momentum.

(Laughter.)

MELISSA: What did you say?

GRETA: "Uh. Custodial." Trying not to stare.

(More laughter.)

MIKE: Meanwhile, my hands were very busy doing five things at once. And so, of course, I whack my elbow on the urinal, like on the funny bone?

GRETA: At which point, I turn to go, and totally smack my head right into the door. I mean, I'm seeing stars. And I stumble on out, and there's the second door, and I smack into that. And I just sit down, you know, right in that little, what is that, like, foyer between the two doors in the men's room?

MIKE: So I'm cussing in there. I mean, not really bad, but I knew she was long gone, so what did it matter? Shaking my arm, elbow tingling. And I finally get my pants back on, and wash my hands and all, and open the door, and there she is.

GRETA: And that's how we met.

MELISSA: That is amazing.

STUART: What a story.

CRAIG: I can't believe it. What did you say?

GRETA: Well, he was very nice. I mean, I'd hit my head, and there was this lump there on my forehead, and he brought me some wet paper towels. And I was finally able to actually speak English.

MIKE: And I...asked for her phone number.

MELISSA: Honestly, guys, you pick the most opportune times. Me, half-drowned, her with a concussion—

STUART: It seems to have worked out okay.

MELISSA: Seriously, though. You could drive past an auto wreck, see some poor woman flung through the windshield half dead, and you'd be thinking, 'hey, she's pretty hot.' Guys, I swear.

CHANDRA: Totally.

GRETA: We're just as bad. I mean, I thought about it later, of course completely mortified, and part of me is thinking 'he's kinda cute.' I mean, I liked what I'd seen.

(Hoots of laughter from STUART and MELISSA.)

You know what I mean!

MIKE: Anyway, we just started dating, and that was that.

GRETA: The thing is, I was on full scholarship then. Women's soccer. And he'd run track in high school.

MIKE: Cross country.

GRETA: So we were both, you know, kinda physical people.

(Another hoot from STUART and MELISSA.)

You know what I mean!

CHANDRA: So you still play soccer?

GRETA: Some. I'm not on the team anymore; took too much time from schoolwork.

MIKE: You should see her play, though. She says she's not that good, but don't believe her.

MELISSA: Did you ever see the women's team, I mean, the World Cup team.

GRETA: The women's National team? Totally. Brandi Chastain in her sports' bra poster on my wall growing up, right?

MIKE: I saw 'em. Live. In San Diego.

GRETA: Yeah, and does he ever stop rubbing it in? Jerk.

MIKE: You shoulda seen it, they were so awesome—

GRETA: The sofa beckons, pal.

MIKE: Ah, you love me anyway.

(They kiss briefly and affectionately.)

MELISSA: *(To CHANDRA.)* So how about you guys? Where did you guys meet?

CHANDRA: Oh. Well, it's nowhere near as exciting as either of your stories.

CRAIG: It's really pretty typical.

CHANDRA: Boring, really. Um. I mean, I came to school as a freshman .

CRAIG: I just got off my mission in August.

CHANDRA: Yeah, and he was in my ward. And he was really nice, and we went out. And, um, we got married over Christmas break. Three weeks ago.

GRETA: So how long did you date then before you, you know, got engaged.

CHANDRA: It was just last semester. I'm still...just a freshman.

CRAIG: Actually, me too. We just...knew.

CHANDRA: And when you know, then...why wait. We figured.

(Pause.)

Excuse me.

(She gets up.)

I'm sorry...Melissa, um, your bathroom.

MELISSA: Probably the same setup as your apartment. Down the hall, there.

(CHANDRA exits. Pause.)

GRETA: Well.

(To CRAIG.)

So you're both freshmen.

CRAIG: That's right.

GRETA: Well. Good for you.

(Another pause. Light change. CRAIG gets up, crosses downstage, talks as though to the others. As he does so, CRAIG and STUART take chairs off, MELISSA and GRETA plates. They get their shoes on.)

CRAIG: I didn't go to school before my mission. I served in the Philipines, actually. So this is my freshman year. And I felt just sort of lost, you know. And then I met Chandra. And she seemed sort of lost too, we had that in common. And then we were up at, you know, up behind the temple one night, in my car. And we both knew.

(CRAIG crosses to CARMACK apartment, where he sits crosslegged in front of TV, plays video games on his PS3 controller. STUART watch TV, MELISSA studies. GRETA and MIKE in their apartment, he's reading a book, she's pacing.)

GRETA: She's pregnant. I swear she is.

MIKE: It's really none of our business.

GRETA: No, it isn't, of course it isn't, but. Still. She's pregnant. She can't be nineteen.

MIKE: She probably is nineteen.

GRETA: Just amazes me.

(MELISSA stands.)

STUART: Could you get me another Coke?

MELISSA: I was just gonna put in a Pop Tart.

STUART: Since you're up?

MELISSA: Okay.

(CHANDRA enters, sits on the sofa with a textbook. Distracted by the video game.)

GRETA: I swear, this culture, it's just marry marry marry, no other thoughts in their heads, some of these kids.

MIKE: These kids?

GRETA: I need a run.

MIKE: We ran this morning, look, you're twenty-two, she's nineteen, you're calling her a 'kid?'

GRETA: All day long, I thought about it. Couldn't even pay attention in my lab, it's a wonder I didn't poison anyone. I need a run.

MIKE: Have a good one.

GRETA: You wanna come with me?

MIKE: I ran this morning. So did you, but...

GRETA: Just makes me wild. I'll be back.

(She exits. MELISSA brings STUART a Pop Tart.)

MELISSA: Here you go.

STUART: Strawberry?

MELISSA: It's what we have.

STUART: I like the s'mores ones.

(Back to TV. Laughs.)

That Kramer, I swear.

MELISSA: I'm trying to study.

STUART: You see that, he and Jerry just—

MELISSA: *(Shows him her book.)* Studying.

STUART: Okay.

(CHANDRA moves closer to CRAIG. Puts her head on his shoulder. He turns.)

CRAIG: You okay?

(She nods.)

CHANDRA: I'm fine.

STUART: Bowl of soup.

MELISSA: I've seen the episode, Stuart. I probably saw it fifteen years ago when it—

STUART: I just think it's funny. Whassa matter?

MELISSA: What's the matter? Is that the question?

STUART: Yeah.

MELISSA: Nothing.

STUART: Something's the matter.

MELISSA: Nope. Absolutely nothing is wrong at all, not even a little bit, everything's completely and totally fine.

STUART: You're getting—

MELISSA: Not at all, I'm just trying to study, you go ahead and spend some time with your friends, Jerry and Elaine and Kramer, and—

STUART: Okay, something is definitely wrong.

MELISSA: I'll just study in the bedroom. I'd hate to bother you.

STUART: What is up with you?

MELISSA: *(Stops.)* What is *up* with me?...What could possibly be up with me?

STUART: That's what I'm asking.

MELISSA: Well, you know, we were going to talk, but we didn't talk, we had a party instead, and that's fine, so I thought maybe we'd talk after the party, but no, you wanted to have sex, so fine, maybe we'd talk after that, but you fell asleep, and in the morning we had breakfast, we were late for class, yada yada yada, to quote your pal Jerry.

STUART: And now I'm watching Seinfeld. And we're still not talking.

MELISSA: No, we're not. But I guess that's . . .

(Starts to cry.)

I'm not going to do this.

STUART: Honey....

(Crosses to her.)

Honey, honey... .

(Tries to embrace her.)

MELISSA: *(Breaks away from him.)* Never mind.

(Heads towards bedroom.)

Forget I said a thing, I have to study for this test, it's tomorrow morning.

(She's gone. He stares after her.)

STUART: Honey?

(No answer.)

Next time, get the s'mores ones.

(He turns up Seinfeld. GRETA stands by the CARMACK's apartment, knocks. CHANDRA crosses to the door.)

GRETA: Hi. Listen, um. My husband and I were thinking...of maybe going out, getting some ice cream. Wondered if you guys would like to come along.

CHANDRA: Well, Craig's studying.

GRETA: Well then, girls' night out.

CHANDRA: Well. Okay. Let me just get my...um.

(She gets her purse, while GRETA waits impatiently. Light shift: she and GRETA sit on GRETA's sofa, finishing ice cream sundaes. After a pause.)

GRETA: So.

CHANDRA: Mmm?

GRETA: How's yours?

CHANDRA: Oh, it's good. Rocky road, I sort of like the marshmallows.

GRETA: I've never heard of that craving, marshmallows.

CHANDRA: It's not really a craving I don't think. I think I just like marshmallows.

(GRETA nods. Pause.)

My one real craving is...mustard. I never really liked it, you know on sandwiches, and now I want it on everything.

GRETA: I've heard. Strong flavors.

CHANDRA: Yeah, I guess.

GRETA: So, you're from Idaho, right? Did you always want to go to BYU? Is that like a thing?

CHANDRA: Oh, no. Hardly anyone from my high school ever went to BYU. I mean, we all took the ACT and when I got my score, 28? I thought it had to be a typo. I just never thought of myself that way. Smart.

GRETA: Well, you know. Here you are, so—

CHANDRA: I know. I like my major. Elementary Ed. Or I will once I get done with GE's. How 'bout you? You're from Minnesota, right?

GRETA: Yeah, BYU was absolutely NOT on my radar.

CHANDRA: Where did you want to go?

GRETA: Wasn't sure. Somewhere small, I thought, like maybe Carleton.

CHANDRA: I don't know that school.

GRETA: It's good, it's in Northfield. Good pre-med program.

CHANDRA: And that's what you want, to be a doctor?

GRETA: I'm going to be a doctor.

(Looks at CHANDRA, goes on impulsively.)

Thing is, my Dad's a drunk, my Mom's a pillhead.

CHANDRA: I'm...really sorry.

GRETA: It's just what it is. They were...functional. My Dad would come home from work, have a couple of cocktails, then about eight more watching TV. Mom mostly just slept. So dinner, dishes, laundry: all me. I have two sisters and a brother; I got 'em up, got 'em breakfast, took care of things. It was just the way things were. And I wanted out, more than anything on earth I wanted out, but what would happen to them, you know? And then, when I was fifteen, we got a new bishop.

CHANDRA: Really.

GRETA: Bishop Rasmussen. We were members of record, but that was about it, totally inactive. But we got new home teachers. And Bishop Rasmussen, he was over like twice a month, really. And here's the thing. When he looked at my Dad, he didn't see what I saw, he didn't see a drunk. He saw someone who could maybe serve as assistant scoutmaster. You know?

CHANDRA: And he served?

GRETA: My Dad's been clean and sober for five and a half years. My Dad got himself worthy to see me and Mike sealed in the temple. So when Bishop Rasmussen asked if I'd ever considered BYU, believe me, I considered it.

CHANDRA: How about your Mom?

GRETA: We're still hoping.

(She gets up.)

You done with that?

(Clears away ice cream bowls. Light shift, CHANDRA goes back to her apartment. Next morning. GRETA gets weights, MIKE spots for her.)

MIKE: So you told her.

GRETA: Weird, huh.

MIKE: You never do that.

GRETA: I don't know. It just felt right. I like her. I feel sort of protective.

(CRAIG heads for the door.)

CRAIG: It's quarter of.

CHANDRA: I've only got English at eleven.

CRAIG: I have that lab, I can't come back and get you.

CHANDRA: I'll ride in with Greta. It's okay, she offered.

CRAIG: Okay.

GRETA: I wanna help 'em.

MIKE: Okay, how?

STUART: Pass the milk.

(MELISSA passes it silently.)

GRETA: I don't know. She's nineteen, and she's pregnant, and she's married. Maybe she needs a big sister.

MIKE: Maybe she has a big sister.

GRETA: She's the oldest of six, she told me.

CRAIG: You okay?

(CHANDRA nods.)

See ya.

CHANDRA: Kiss?

(CRAIG crosses back to CHANDRA, quick peck, exits. She sits there, holding her stomach. Suddenly gets up, exits back into the apartment.)

GRETA: Okay, that's fifteen. Shower time.

(She starts to exit.)

MIKE: English muffins okay?

GRETA: Fine.

STUART: Is it okay with you if I get the paper?

(MELISSA ignores him.)

Why don't I just do that then.

(He crosses to 'door,' opens it. At the same moment, MIKE opens his 'door.')

STUART: Hey.

MIKE: Hey.

(They pick up their papers.)

STUART: We had a good time the other night.

MIKE: Yeah, so did we.

STUART: Hey, Mike?

MIKE: Yeah?

STUART: Can I ask you a question?

MIKE: Sure.

STUART: (*Loudly enough so MELISSA can hear it.*) What do you do when your wife gives you *the silent treatment*? I mean, how do you handle that *deep freeze stuff*?

(*MIKE has no idea how to respond.*)

Huh? How do ya?

MIKE: I...uh—

STUART: Right. Me too.

(*Turns back into the house.*)

See ya later, man.

(*MIKE, shocked, goes back into the house.*)

MELISSA: Real mature, Stuart.

(*She exits upstage. CHANDRA comes out of the bathroom, wiping her mouth.*)

MIKE: There's something going on over there.

GRETA: Sounds like. None of our business.

MIKE: Guess not.

GRETA: (*Holds up her book.*) Meanwhile...

MIKE: Right.

(*All three couples study. Mike tosses his book down.*)

This is just totally kicking my butt.

GRETA: What is it?

MIKE: Proust. Marcel Proust.

GRETA: Who's that?

MIKE: Okay, he's this sick guy, I mean he's on his deathbed and all he does, all day, is sit and watch people, all these rich snobs who are friends with his family and stuff. Right? And—

GRETA: Mike?

MIKE: —he can spend like fifty pages on like one dinner party. And all the time, he's obsessed with his health, like taking his own pulse and giving himself—

GRETA: Mike!

MIKE: I'm telling you about this.

GRETA: Novelist or poet, French or English or whatever, that's all I was asking, I'm not that interested.

MIKE: Oh.

(*Pause.*)

Novelist. French.

GRETA: Thank you.

CRAIG: Geez I hate this.

CHANDRA: I don't know, honey.

CRAIG: I just don't know what the point is.

CHANDRA: It's a class. You have to pass it.

CRAIG: Okay, the positive series Exn is convergent if and only if the sequence of partial sums is bounded, that is, there exists a number M greater than zero, such that $s_n = x + x_1 + x_2 + \text{dot dot dot}$ —

CHANDRA: (*Awed pause.*) Dot dot dot.

CRAIG: Right there on the page.

CHANDRA: I didn't understand any of that.

CRAIG: Me neither. Not a word.

CHANDRA: Can you google? Maybe there's a website...

CRAIG: Yeah. Maybe. Let me. . .

(Opening his computer.)

MIKE: Anyway, I'm supposed to read it and I can't stand it.

GRETA: That's too bad.

MIKE: This guy makes Henry James seem interesting.

GRETA: Honey...

MIKE: I know, microbiology.

GRETA: Right.

(To herself.)

Getting someplace with it tonight, too, if I could just...

(She clearly wants to say more, refrains.)

MIKE: *(Pause.)* Plus he's gay.

GRETA: That's tough, honey.

MIKE: I think I'm going to go for a walk. Clear my mind a little.

GRETA: You got a C plus on your first paper in there.

MIKE: I know. I won't be long.

(Heads for the door.)

GRETA: We're out of milk.

MIKE: Okay.

CRAIG: *(Staring at his computer.)* Boy is this not helping.

CHANDRA: You just have to figure it out.

CRAIG: How?

CHANDRA: *(Almost in desperation.)* You have to, Craig.

CRAIG: That doesn't help, Chandra.

CHANDRA: You have to. You have to just...figure it out.

CRAIG: The TA doesn't even speak English.

(He stares at her, mutual panic..)

I've asked him. I don't even understand enough to know what to ask, but I've asked him and he answers me...I feel like I want to find someone who served their mission in China and bring them with me, see if they can translate.

(Irresolute, he looks over at his PS3. Tempting. Looks over at CHANDRA. Finally crosses back to the sofa, sits with her. As he does, GRETA crosses to the counter, pops toast in the toaster. MELISSA comes out of the bedroom, sits on the sofa with her knees drawn up, watching TV. GRETA looks on, frustrated, as the toaster pops the bread right back out.)

GRETA: Great.

(Enter MIKE.)

Can you get this thing to toast?

MIKE: What's the problem?

GRETA: Watch.

(Pops the bread down, it pops right back up.)

That's on the highest setting. Barely got it warm

MIKE: It's been acting up, that's for sure.

(Examining the toaster.)

GRETA: You get the milk?

MIKE: Right here.

GRETA: Did you have a nice walk?

MIKE: Yeah. Fine.

GRETA: Well. I know you wanted to get going on that paper.

MIKE: In a sec.

(Turns the toaster upside down, looking at it.)

GRETA: Okay.

(She goes back to studying.)

CHANDRA: Greta.

CRAIG: What about her?

CHANDRA: She's a pre-med student. I bet she knows math.

CRAIG: I don't feel right about that.

CHANDRA: Why not?

CRAIG: I just...

CHANDRA: In the church, we're supposed to ask for help if we need it. And...this is just Math 97. I mean, the class you have to take just to even prepare you for the class you have to take to graduate.

CRAIG: And I can't do it.

CHANDRA: It's not a matter of being smart, Craig.

(Enter STUART.)

STUART: Hi.

(MELISSA nods.)

What're you watching?

(MELISSA shrugs.)

Fine, no problem, that's what we're doing now, I'm there.

(Plops on the sofa, sulking. She moves away from him as far as she can go.)

CRAIG: Honey, I don't even get it enough to know what questions to ask.

CHANDRA: I believe in you.

STUART: Great, looks like we're watching, what, Scooby Doo re-runs, what fun.

CHANDRA: *(Pause.)* With some help, I think you can do this.

CRAIG: Why?

CHANDRA: Because you have to.

STUART: Betcha anything this is the one where they check out a haunted house, only it turns out it's not really haunted.

CHANDRA: To graduate, and if you don't graduate...then what?

STUART: "If it weren't for you meddling kids. . ."

CRAIG: Can you ask?

CHANDRA: *(A pause.)* Yeah. Of course.

MIKE: Look.

(Holds up a piece of burned toast.)

That's at the lightest setting.

GRETA: Maybe you got 'em reversed.

MIKE: No. No, it's burning toast at every setting.

(CHANDRA crosses to the ALVAREZ apartment.)

GRETA: Well, before, it was just warming it a little.

MIKE: Yeah.

GRETA: Great.

MIKE: Yeah, I fixed it good.

(CHANDRA knocks.)

I got it.

(At door.)

CHANDRA: Hi. Could I speak to Greta? Greta, uh, hi, it's me, Chandra. I just...

(She starts to cry briefly, gains control.)

I'm sorry, this is so stupid, I just . . .

(Loses control again briefly.)

I'm sorry.

(As she speaks, light shift, MIKE crosses over to the kitchen area. GRETA sits on the sofa, CRAIG joins her. CHANDRA sits on a kitchen chair, watching GRETA and CRAIG.)

GRETA: Okay, look, let me see if I can get this myself first.

CRAIG: I really do appreciate this.

GRETA: No problem.

STUART: Great, well, Shaggy and Scooby save the day. Whoddathunk it.

(MELISSA gets up from the couch.)

Where are you going?

MELISSA: Drink of water.

STUART: Oh, so she does speak.

MELISSA: Sorry. My mistake.

GRETA: Man.

CRAIG: See.

GRETA: Okay, here's what I think. No, wait. Just a second.

STUART: So how was your day, honey? It was fine. How'd you do on that test? I did great thanks, really feel good about it. How about you? My day was good too, thanks.

MELISSA: I'm going to bed.

STUART: Might as well, after such a pleasant evening.

MELISSA: You wanna talk, Stuart? Really talk?

STUART: Actually, I prefer the silent treatment and you scooped over as far from me as possible on the sofa.

MELISSA: 'Cause I can talk, you know—

STUART: You can? Wow.

MELISSA: I am capable of speech, yes.

STUART: Well so am I, what a coincid—

MELISSA: *Three days ago.* We were going to talk *three days ago*, about the the the the, and you—

STUART: Oh, come on, that's over, please, don't—

MELISSA: Over?

STUART: Come on, you can't hold a grudge that—

MELISSA: Grudge! This is about me having a *grudge*?

STUART: Being ticked off at me for three straight—

MELISSA: Ignore it for three days and suddenly it's my fault, my *grudge*—

STUART: I'm just saying what's the point in—

MELISSA: So you don't, in fact, really want to talk, is that what I'm hearin—

STUART: Gentle, pleasant convers—

MELISSA: Never mind, just forget the whole—

STUART: That's all I want, just a little gentle pleasant—

(MIKE moves closer to the wall, listening.)

MELISSA: And me to get over *my grudge*?

STUART: It was funny!

(Pause.)

MELISSA: Funny.

STUART: Yeah. It was funny. A joke.

MELISSA: *(Dangerously.)* In what way, exactly, was it funny?

STUART: I don't know. You were sitting there—

MELISSA: I got *ketchup* all over my *shirt*—

STUART: It was funny. It was.

MELISSA: Not to me.

(MIKE crosses to their door.)

STUART: Then maybe you need to work on...sense of humor...issues.

MELISSA: No no no, I'm not going to—

STUART: Maybe you have a problem, babe, and it wouldn't—

MELISSA: I have a *problem*, a, a, a *grudge* and sense of humor issues and and—

STUART: Well, you know, if the shoe fits—

MELISSA: No way, you do not get away with—!

STUART: I just think that you should—!

(MIKE knocks. A pause.)

MELISSA: You have no idea how much it hurts me that you would find that funny.

(Angrily, STUART crosses to the door.)

STUART: Yes?

MIKE: I'm sorry. I just wondered if...well, if there was a problem.

STUART: And I guess what I'm wondering right now is exactly how, exactly and precisely how, this is any of your business.

MIKE: I'm sorry. I guess it isn't.

STUART: No, I guess it isn—

MELISSA: Stuart, stop.

(STUART moves away from the door, sulking.)

You've made it your business because you can hear us through the walls. And you were concerned.

MIKE: I apologize.

MELISSA: No apology necessary. We understand.

STUART: Now maybe you can go back to—

MELISSA: Stuart.

(He stops.)

Everything's fine. We're working things out. Thanks for your concern.

MIKE: I'm right next door. If...

(He doesn't finish.)

MELISSA: Thank you.

(She closes the door.)

STUART: *(Shouts after MIKE.)* It's not like we haven't heard you!

MELISSA: Just stop. Okay?

STUART: Melissa, he just—

MELISSA: *(Crossing to him.)* You were shouting, I was shouting, these walls are very thin. It's okay.

STUART: It is not—

MELISSA: We're not going to worry about it tonight.

(She kisses him.)

We do need to talk. But not now.

STUART: Okay, then.

(Kisses her back. Silent vignette. MIKE stands irresolutely, watching GRETA tutor CRAIG. MELISSA and STUART slowly kiss, head upstage to the bedroom. CHANDRA sits on the floor, falls asleep. Then CRAIG wakes CHANDRA up, holds her hand tenderly as they go back to their apartment together. Light shift. MIKE sits with GRETA.)

MIKE: You did great with him.

GRETA: I barely remember that stuff. Hard bringing it back.

MIKE: I was proud of you.

GRETA: I just hope it doesn't happen too often.

MIKE: Me too. Come to bed.

GRETA: Can't.

(Holds up microbiology textbook.)

I've got at least a couple of hours left.

MIKE: It can wait. Come to bed.

GRETA: I can't. Hey, what happened next door?

MIKE: Later.

(Takes her hand.)

GRETA: Mike, I really can't.

MIKE: *(Caressing her shoulders.)* Yes you can.

GRETA: Mike! If I don't stay on top of this tonight, it'll be twice as much tomorrow.

MIKE: I know. But—

GRETA: Seriously. I have to do this. Go to bed. I'll wake you when I come in.

MIKE: Promise?

GRETA: Or...you could spend the next couple of hours with Proust.

MIKE: I...really can't.

GRETA: Okay.

(Lights dim. She's still studying. MIKE stands by the door, looks at her longingly, lovingly, frustrated.)

MIKE: I'll... work on my paper.

(Light shift, MELISSA and STUART are getting ready for school. CRAIG is putting the finishing touches on his homework. GRETA and MIKE get ready to go running together.)

GRETA: Water bottle.

MIKE: Check.

MELISSA: So, anyway...

STUART: Okay, so, gospel doctrine, well, you know Stan. Has to have the chairs in a circle, right? So they're sitting there in class, and this custodian comes in, and he says to them "you can't move the chairs like that. It's against the rules." And Stan's all, "we'll put 'em back when we're done." And the custodian's like "I'm sorry. You can't do it. It's against the rules."

GRETA: You wanna try by the stadium again?

MIKE: Sounds good.

(Exit, running.)

MELISSA: I know the type.

STUART: Don't we all. So the next week, they're in there, and they move the chairs again. And the same guy comes in, and again it's 'you can't move the chairs. Against the rules.' And so Stan gets out this piece of paper, all official looking, and on the top it says '18th Ward policies.' And number three on the list is 'in Gospel Doctrine class, the chairs shall be in a semi-circle.' And Stan goes "see, we have to move the chairs. It's official ward policy." And the guy looks at this piece of paper—

MELISSA: Which Stan had just created.

STUART: Exactly. And the guy goes "well, I guess it's okay then. Go ahead." I mean, it was official ward policy.

(MELISSA laughs.)

MELISSA: That's so great.

STUART: More bacon.

MELISSA: Maybe one more slice.

STUART: *(Brings it to her.)* Gotta keep your strength up, I figure. After a night like last night...

MELISSA: You weren't so bad yourself.

(Takes bacon.)

Okay, maybe another half piece.

STUART: Last night was great.

MELISSA: Yeah. It was.

STUART: I love you.

MELISSA: I love you too.

(They kiss.)

Only—

STUART: Don't.

MELISSA: Let me just say this. We do have to talk, Stuart. We really do. About the whole thing.

STUART: Tonight.

MELISSA: Promise?

STUART: Yeah. I won't get mad this time.

MELISSA: And we've really gotta do something with the Alvarezes. Have 'em over or something.

STUART: Totally. I'm embarrassed about that whole thing.

MELISSA: *(Thoughtfully.)* Yeah. Me too.

(Light shift, downstage move. MIKE and GRETA arrive back from their run.)

STUART: And the Carmack's too. Maybe. That first dinner went okay. They all seem like nice people. I've been thinking for some time that we should get to know them all better.

(He crosses up and off. Light shift. Enter CRAIG and CHANDRA. She sits on the sofa, takes off her shoes, CRAIG next to her. MIKE and GRETA sit, he's studying, she goes to the kitchen. MELISSA lies on the floor to study.)

CRAIG: You okay?

CHANDRA: I'm just so tired all the time.

CRAIG: Just lay down for a second.

(He crosses to the PS3.)

Okay if I play a game or two before dinner?

CHANDRA: I may just nap.

CRAIG: That's a good idea, honey.

GRETA: I got dinner?

MIKE: And I got dishes tonight.

GRETA: Pasta salad?

MIKE: Yum.

CRAIG: *(Sits with PS3.)* What did you think for dinner?

CHANDRA: Fishsticks or something. Give me a second.

CRAIG: Sure.

(Plays for a bit.)

GRETA: Dja get that paper finished?

MIKE: Not quite.

GRETA: I thought it was due today?

MIKE: It was actually. But he said we could have a few more days if we needed it.

GRETA: And you've also got Renaissance lit.

MIKE: Don't remind me.

CRAIG: Or I could cook dinner.

CHANDRA: It's okay.

CRAIG: If it's just fishsticks

CHANDRA: Really, I'll be all right.

MIKE: How was lab?

GRETA: Great, I'm getting pretty close to writing it up.

MIKE: Good.

MELISSA: You see my laptop?

STUART: *(Off.)* By the sofa.

GRETA: How was life at the MTC?

MIKE: Great, you know that one guy, Elder Stoggins.

GRETA: Doesn't ring a bell—

MIKE: With the girlfriend?

GRETA: Oh yeah! With the steamy letters?

MIKE: That's the one.

GRETA: What is she thinking? That one you showed me was getting me hot, and I don't even know the guy.

MIKE: And not just weekly. Three a day sometimes.

GRETA: Some girls, I swear.

MIKE: Well, good news on that front.

GRETA: Oh?

MIKE: She dumped him.

GRETA: Poor kid.

MIKE: I know. I mean, he was telling me and Brandt about it, bawling his eyes out, and we'll being all sympathetic and everything, and the whole time we're thinking 'good riddance.'

GRETA: So, she meet someone else, or what?

MIKE: And she had to tell him all about it. Every detail, how she met this guy at In and Out Burgers, knew he was the one, made out with him that night. And graphic. "He put his hand on my breast..."

GRETA: And she writes this to her missionary?

MIKE: Well, she wants him to come home. Quit before he gets to Korea and it's too late.

GRETA: Well, a letter like that will kill any feelings he might have for her.

MIKE: For sure. And now, he can just serve.

GRETA: Good for him going in the first place.

MIKE: Right.

CHANDRA: Do you have homework?

CRAIG: Some.

CHANDRA: Math 97.

CRAIG: Some.

(Plays a bit more.)

He explained it today pretty well. I think I'll be okay.

STUART: *(Off.)* What's for dinner?

MELISSA: Meatloaf or something. Hey, you get another printer cartridge?

STUART: It's in.

MIKE: Listen. Gret.

GRETA: What's up?

MIKE: I was just thinking.

GRETA: What?

MIKE: What would you think if I changed majors?

GRETA: What do you mean?

MIKE: Well, I was just thinking about it.

GRETA: English is a great major for law school. What were you thinking, Organizational Behavior again?

MIKE: Maybe.

GRETA: You're two semesters away. Why change now?

MIKE: The thing is, I've been thinking. And, uh, law school, it just doesn't seem...

(He tries again.)

It just doesn't feel right anymore.

GRETA: Okay...

MIKE: And that's what I've been thinking.

GRETA: Okay, this is more than just changing majors.

MIKE: Kind of.

GRETA: Kind of? I'm still confused. You're not going to major in English, what then? Business, OB, what?

MIKE: I was thinking of teaching.

GRETA: Okay, so English pedagogy...?

MIKE: I'm thinking maybe something like that.

GRETA: Well. That'd be great.

MIKE: You don't mind?

GRETA: As long as you're happy, of course not. So, high school, or maybe go for a Ph. D. . . ?

MIKE: No. Not...not entirely.

GRETA: Okay. I'm confused.

MIKE: Today was a good day. I mean, at the MTC. Great lesson, great kids, the thing with Stoggins. I mean, I've been teaching at the MTC now for two years.

GRETA: Right.

MIKE: Today was maybe the best day yet. I really love it anyway--

GRETA: I know you do.

MIKE: I've been thinking. That maybe that would be, I don't know, fulfilling.

GRETA: So?

MIKE: I'm thinking maybe career CES.

GRETA: CES.

MIKE: That's what I'm thinking.

GRETA: You're thinking of becoming a seminary teacher.

MIKE: Or institute director. That kind of...yeah. I am.

(Pause.)

I love kids. I love the gospel, teaching the gospel. It just feels like a good fit to me. And I was talking to Brandt, you know he's going for it, and he said that—

GRETA: You're serious about this?

MIKE: Yeah. I'm really serious.

(CHANDRA is asleep. CRAIG looks back at her. Goes back to his game. MELISSA crosses to the kitchen area.)

MELISSA: How 'bout mac and cheese?

STUART: *(Enters.)* Check out this on fail blog.

MELISSA: Yeah, funny. I think there's even one with cats. Internet, so clever.

STUART: It's funny.

MELISSA: So, mac and cheese and...?

STUART: Hot dogs?

MELISSA: If you think so.

(He kisses her neck.)

Stop it!

MIKE: *(Pause.)* What are you thinking?

GRETA: I'm thinking it's kind of a problem.

MELISSA: We need some kind of vegetable, don't we?

STUART: I don't see why.

(Kisses her again.)

MELISSA: Stuart! For health, okay?

STUART: Here we go. Fruit cocktail in a can. Fruit's as good as a vegetable.

MELISSA: Okay, fruit cocktail, mac and cheese and hot dogs. I think I'm going to gag.

MIKE: Here we go.

GRETA: What does that mean?

MIKE: Nothing.

GRETA: 'Here we go again,' you said. Like, here's she's going off on me again.

MIKE: No, I'm sorry.

GRETA: Do you want to hear what I think? Of this?

MIKE: Of course.

GRETA: 'Cause if you would rather not talk about...

MIKE: This is an important decision, it affects us both, of course I want to hear what you...have to say.

GRETA: Okay then.

(Deep breath.)

First. Um, what I've heard is, CES is like the army. For moving, I mean every couple of years .

MIKE: Not quite.

GRETA: Okay, not quite, but still—

MIKE: I understand that you can move a lot.

GRETA: Right. Exactly. And with no choice where you're going.

MIKE: That's what I've heard.

GRETA: So where do I fit in?

CRAIG: Chandra?

(She's sleeping.)

Chandra?

(He looks at her. Gets up.)

Honey?

(She wakes.)

CHANDRA: What—?

CRAIG: Fishsticks, you just stick 'em in the oven, right?

CHANDRA: Honey, I'll take care of it.

CRAIG: No, I can.

CHANDRA: No no no. I've got it. Just give me a second.

(She stands unsteadily.)

You go back to...whatever.

(CRAIG watches her. Looks longingly at the PS3. Picks up his backpack and gets out a textbook.)

MELISSA: There's gotta be some carrots, or celery, or... .

STUART: *(Makes a face.)* Rabbit food.

MELISSA: Now you stop.

GRETA: I'm talking med school. Stuck. The same place for four years. Then residency. Stuck. Same place for three plus years. And then a practice. You know? I mean, there's just not a lot of flexibility built into .

MIKE: I know. But...

(Stops himself.)

GRETA: But? But what?

MIKE: I understand the difficulties.

GRETA: But?

MIKE: I was wondering if we could talk about that.

GRETA: You were.

MIKE: I was wondering if we could...think about, maybe...

(Pause.)

GRETA: You thought we could...

(Very upset.)

Look, we have talked about this, we agreed, we came to a...a .

MIKE: Yes, I know but—

GRETA: We made a decision.

MIKE: You set a goal for yourself.

GRETA: A long time ago.

MIKE: I know. And what I'm saying is that goals can change.

(Pause.)

GRETA: Well this one isn't going to.

MIKE: Will you hear me —

GRETA: I am going to be a cardiologist, Mike. I am going to medical school, and, followed by a a a three year residency.

MIKE: I know.

GRETA: And that's what's going to happen. And that's —

MIKE: I know how you feel about—

GRETA: We talked about this, Mike. Many times, before we were married .

MIKE: I know, I remember.

GRETA: You agreed, we agreed, it was all settled.

MIKE: That's all true, except that—

GRETA: And so, okay, you're an institute teacher or, and, you get assigned to, like, Montana, or...some place in like Idaho where there's...and I'm in a residency, or finishing med school, or...I can't believe that you would even —

MIKE: You're not saying anything I don't know, Greta. But see, I want to do this, Greta. This is just...it's the only thing I can even think about.

GRETA: Wow.

MIKE: I'm serious.

GRETA: I can tell.

(Pause.)

They're all weird.

MIKE: What do you. . . ?

GRETA: Four years seminary in high school. And then religion classes at BYU. There wasn't a single teacher, not one, that wasn't loony.

(STUART kisses MELISSA.)

MELISSA: I'm trying to get dinner on.

STUART: It can wait.

MELISSA: No, it can't, I'm starved.

STUART: I'm starved for your body.

MELISSA: *(Mock firmly, laughing.)* After dinner!

MIKE: You can't say that.

GRETA: Come on. The Birchers, that was one of my high school teachers. Commies behind every bush. Had us read Cleon frickin' Skousen. The, you know, the guys who try to pretend the guys who wrote our 'inspired constitution' weren't all slave owners. The anti-rock crusaders, you've met those, want you to go home and burn all your Jay-Z albums? I mean, racists, even. And, the, what was that one guy, said that there was no such thing as clinical depression, but only people who need to repent. Say that to a class of college students, you're gonna get someone killed.. And the anti-evolution guys, I mean, you know, creationists, intelligent design, I'm a micro-biology major, I'm supposed to take that crap seriously? I mean, I pulled straight A's because I can quote the party line if I have to for a grade. But let's face it. They're all weirdos. Kooks.

MIKE: That's not...that hasn't been my experience.

GRETA: We've talked about this, Mike. We've laughed about, you know, clueless religion teachers and ...

MIKE: Maybe I could make a difference. For the better.

GRETA: *(Kindly, pleading.)* It's not going to happen.

STUART: See, it goes faster if you cut the hot dogs into the mac and cheese.

MELISSA: Okay, that is now totally inedible.

STUART: It's good!

MELISSA: I swear, guys, I'm starting to realize what a huge step it was for you when you figured out you could broil your mastodon steak over an actual fire.

(Holds up a pot.)

Dinner is served, I guess.

MIKE: I think we should talk about it.

GRETA: Mike, they look at me too. When they hire people at CES, they check out the marriage, you know, the, the partner. They really hire couples.

MIKE: I've heard that.

GRETA: I'll kill it for you. I won't even mean to. But I'm going to be a doctor. We have kids, I'm not staying home baking cookies. I love you, I support you, but they've got this whole June Cleaver definition of 'supportive wife.' And I will never fit it.

MIKE: No. I can see that.

GRETA: And...Mike, I don't even want to say this, but...

MIKE: What?

GRETA: No, sorry. I'm not going to go there.

MIKE: They won't take people who've been divorced.

GRETA: I wasn't going to say that.

MIKE: You were.

GRETA: I wasn't.

MIKE: You were.

GRETA: It's just...you married me. Which means...you really can't get there from here.

(MIKE shakes his head.)

But a high school English teacher, maybe coach cross country...

MIKE: Never mind. Forget I said anything. You finished with your pasta salad?

GRETA: Mike...

MIKE: I'm fine, it was just an idea, just conversation. Let's drop it.

GRETA: I really do support—

MIKE: Let's drop it. Okay?

GRETA: Okay.

MIKE: If you're finished with dinner, I'll do the dishes.

GRETA: Thanks.

MELISSA: I can't believe that this is our dinner.

STUART: Them's good vittles.

CHANDRA: How's it going, honey?

CRAIG: Good, I'm getting it better tonight.

CHANDRA: Great. Dinner will be about ten minutes.

CRAIG: Sounds good.

GRETA: Mike?

MIKE: What?

GRETA: Maybe we could talk about this?

MIKE: About what?

(Heads up and out.)

I've got a paper to write.

END ACT ONE

22 pages in Act Two