

DANCE OF THE FIREFLIES

by

A.D. Penedo

A.D. Penedo  
815 W. 181<sup>st</sup> Street, Apt. 4F  
New York, NY 10033  
(646) 319-9982  
[adpenedo@gmail.com](mailto:adpenedo@gmail.com)  
[www.adpenedo.com](http://www.adpenedo.com)

## CHARACTERS

RUSS                   Laid-back party-man exterior struggling to mask raw vulnerable interior. Age spans from 17 to 28.

LINDSAY               Goody two-shoes over-achieving exterior struggling to mask cold vacant interior. Age spans from 17 to 28.

## SETTING

A medium-sized town in Tennessee.

## THE TIME

Late Spring 1974 through Summer 1985.

## NOTE ON SCRIPT FORMAT

A backslash \ means the character with the next line should interrupt the character speaking at that point.

## SCENE 1

Summer 1985. There is an early evening sky, the sound of crickets and the occasional hoot owl. Lights up on RUSS on the night of his tenth high school reunion party. HE is sitting atop the highest boulder in a boulder field, taking the occasional swig from a can of cheap domestic beer, staring out into space, deep in thought. HE is clean-shaven, wearing jeans, sneakers, a light sport coat and a thin solid tie with the knot loosened down a couple of inches and the top button of his shirt unbuttoned. Enter LINDSAY, smartly dressed. SHE takes off her heels and starts climbing the boulders. THEY don't notice each other until SHE reaches the top.

RUSS

Hello?

LINDSAY gasps.

Who's that?

LINDSAY

Who's *that*?

RUSS

Lindsay Kramer?

LINDSAY

Russ.

RUSS

(Getting up, shaking her hand)

Hi. God. Were you at the reunion? I didn't see you.

LINDSAY

I just got there a little while ago. Thunderstorms. The plane took forever.

RUSS

From where?

LINDSAY

L.A.

RUSS

Wow. You live there?

LINDSAY

Yep.

RUSS

Shit. That's amazing. Damn.

LINDSAY

You?

RUSS

Here. In this cesspool. For now at least. Pretty far up, off 80... It looks like you look great.

LINDSAY

Do you have less hair than you used to?

RUSS

I might be thinning a little bit.

LINDSAY

Not there. Was it your face?

RUSS

Oh yeah, I think I was working on a beard. That last time...

Right.

LINDSAY

Didn't keep it very long.

RUSS

That's good.

LINDSAY

Yeah. Thanks for the Buddha by the way. Still have it on my night table.

RUSS

You're kidding, right?

LINDSAY

No. I like him.

RUSS

That's weird, Russ.

LINDSAY

I like him.

RUSS

(With feigned snootiness)  
So, me lady, shall we presume you ascended to this realm of the gods to attend the evening's ballet?

LINDSAY

The "ballet" - that's what you called it.

RUSS

That's what you called it first.  
(While sitting back down)  
Have a seat, my lady.

LINDSAY

Nah, I like to stand.

RUSS

Me too. I'm gonna start jogging next week.

HE takes a swig of beer, then holds it out to her.

LINDSAY

I'll pass, thanks.

RUSS

Did you see anybody good at the party?

LINDSAY

How so?

RUSS

You know, that you were glad to see?

LINDSAY

I probably shouldn't have come - I just had this morbid anthropological curiosity.

RUSS

Me too.

LINDSAY

Speaking of anthropology, I did have the misfortune to run into that Neanderthal little gang of yours.

RUSS

(Laughing)

Yeah.

LINDSAY

Nothing's changed much there in ten years, except their waistlines.

RUSS

(Pinching his roll furtively)

Yeah.

LINDSAY

You still hang out with them?

RUSS

No. Every now and then. You know, sometimes.

LINDSAY

How about that skanky girlfriend of yours? What was her name?

Meg?

RUSS

No. Junior year.

LINDSAY

Amanda Bell?

RUSS

Yeah. Her.

LINDSAY

You didn't hear?

RUSS

No. What?

LINDSAY

Nothing, it's too depressing... I'm married, you know.

RUSS

You married Amanda Bell? That is depressing.

LINDSAY

I married somebody else. No more about Amanda, okay?  
Please?

RUSS

Why, do you still have a thing for her even though you  
married someone else?

LINDSAY

I'm serious, Lindsay.

RUSS

Hunh. Is the lucky Missus here tonight?

LINDSAY

No, we've got a one year old.

RUSS

Ever heard of a babysitter?

LINDSAY

RUSS

Too expensive. At least for now.

LINDSAY

That's not it - you're ashamed of her.

RUSS

(While taking the last swig of his  
beer, then crushing the can)

You know, you're starting to bring back some sour memories  
about you. Which is really too bad, because they're  
crowding out the sweet ones.

LINDSAY

Oh yeah?

RUSS

(Casting the beer can aside)

Oh yeah.

LINDSAY

How sweet?

RUSS

As sweet as... As sweet as artificial sweetener.

LINDSAY

(Sitting down next to him)

Hah! Very funny. Tell me about them.

RUSS

Seriously?

LINDSAY

Seriously.

RUSS

Seriously?

LINDSAY

(Pushing him flirtatiously)

Seriously.

RUSS

Okay. First of all, *man* were you hot. Not that you're not now.

LINDSAY

(Punching him)

Uh huh, right.

RUSS

Ow.

LINDSAY

Keep going.

RUSS

And then, you were such an unbelievable fucking bitch. Not that you're not now.

LINDSAY

(While poking him in various spots)

Oh, that's... That's very very sweet.

RUSS

Ow. It was, in a sick kind of way. Cuz it made us all wanna just... You know...

LINDSAY

Rip my clothes off?

RUSS

Exactly.

LINDSAY

How charming. What else?

RUSS

Come on... You know what else.

LINDSAY

(Cozying up)

No. You have to keep going.

RUSS

Really?

LINDSAY

This is much better than that stupid party.

RUSS

Okay. Okay. Let's see... One beautiful fine spring day in 1974... No, that's not quite... Hold on, I got it: One god-awful piss-poor day...

LINDSAY

(Physically assaulting him)

Ru-uss!!

RUSS

...in 1974!

LINDSAY

Yes? I'm listening.

RUSS

Tricky Dick Nixon woke up with his ass in a sling?

LINDSAY

Oh, now you're in big trouble!

RUSS

Ow! Okay! When Lindsay and Russ were... Ow!! Juniors at Eastman High!

LINDSAY

Better. Continue.

RUSS retreats into  
introspection.

Hello? What happened that day? You have to tell.

RUSS

Something began.

LINDSAY

My, how articulate you've become. Come on, Russy boy.

RUSS

Stop.

LINDSAY

You can do it. Tell Lindsay what began.

RUSS

I don't know. Whatever it was that that was...

Lights fade, as the sounds of crickets and the occasional owl hoot get louder, then segue to the following segment from Jethro Tull's "Thick as a Brick":

*Spin me back down the years  
And the days of my youth.  
Draw the lace and black  
curtains  
And shut out the whole truth.*

## SCENE 2

Lights up on RUSS and LINDSAY, spring 1974. THEY are high school juniors, in an empty classroom. HE has mid-length unkempt hair parted in the middle, faded Levi's, T-shirt preferably with a logo from one of the bands featured in the play's scene interludes (no heavy metal), old ratty tennis sneakers. SHE is wearing a full-length printed sundress, no discernable makeup, her hair plain and pinned back on one side with a barrette or two. RUSS is perched on a teacher's size desk (or work table), looking down, brooding, with a moderate weed-induced haze about him. LINDSAY is pacing, shuffling, sighing, arm-crossing, etc. Occasional minimal eye contact.

LINDSAY

What was that all about!?

RUSS

What? Was *what* all about?

LINDSAY

That... "speech" you gave. I can't believe they - half of them anyway - bought into it.

RUSS

How's that? I *don't* have anything else worthwhile to do this semester.

LINDSAY

No. That part we all know is true. I'm talking about the "Man like I only wanna do this because I really wanna do this *man* because like *man* I have this like passion for poetry and stuff *man*" part.

RUSS

You know that's not true?

LINDSAY

Come on.

RUSS

Oh that's right. I almost forgot. We're in the presence of the great and almighty Lindsay Kramer -

LINDSAY

Shut up.

RUSS

The brown-nose goody-goody genius who thinks she knows everything about me even though she's never lowered herself once in three years to acknowledge my existence.

LINDSAY

That's not why we don't talk \ to each...

RUSS

Hey, you know, I'm thinkin' maybe the half of them who voted for me weren't really voting *for* me. I'm thinkin' maybe they were voting *against* you. Yeah, that's it - maybe your "I'm number one in the class and a concert violinist and doing 500 other really 'super' things this semester you could never dream of and going to whatever college I want on scholarship anyway so I don't even need this credit, but I should be editor of Words instead of Russ anyway because I'm just so much better than he is in every \ possible..."

LINDSAY

I said shut up!

RUSS

Whoa.

LINDSAY

It's not my fault the vote was a tie.

RUSS

But it was your fault you didn't tell Mosely that making us "co-editors" was the lamest idea he ever had.

LINDSAY

You could have told him yourself.

RUSS

Yeah right, me and Mosely go way back - like back a couple of weeks ago when he sent me to Spillman's office.

LINDSAY

If this upsets you so much, why don't you just back out? I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

RUSS

Why don't you just back out?

LINDSAY

Because... I really do want to do this. It has nothing to do with the credit.

RUSS

You just wanna make sure your own poems get put in there front and center.

LINDSAY

I don't write poems.

RUSS

There's something you don't do?

LINDSAY

But it's important to me that I appreciate my classmates' poems.

RUSS

No shit?

LINDSAY

You can't imagine actually caring about anything other than... than smoking marijuana with that little gang of yours or or engaging in foreplay and having intercourse with Amanda Bell, can you?

RUSS

Excuse me!?

LINDSAY

Don't deny it. I see you two making out under that tree every day. I don't even want to think about what goes on when you're by yourselves.

RUSS

Why would I have to admit or deny something that's not even any of your... Hey, whoa, hold on a sec - did you just say "intercourse?"

LINDSAY

Is that too big a word for you?

RUSS

Uh, no. It's just very not a very normal thing for a person our age to say.

LINDSAY

Why, what do you call it no please don't, I really don't want to know.

RUSS

Oh, but I want to tell you what I call it. In fact, you're gonna hear what I call it in T minus five, four, three...

LINDSAY

(Covering her ears)

No Russ!!!

RUSS

...two, one...

HE silently mouths something, which tricks LINDSAY into uncovering her ears.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
...“doing each other.”

LINDSAY  
Uch, that's so demeaning.

RUSS  
It beats “intercourse.” That sounds like something a couple of amoebas would do.

LINDSAY  
Amoebas don't even have intercourse. They... Okay. I know I sometimes don't say things the way... in a way that...

RUSS  
Us savages can comprehend?

LINDSAY  
Let's get back to the point.

RUSS  
I agree. What was the point?

LINDSAY  
It was, why don't you just back out?

RUSS  
Can't happen. No way.

LINDSAY  
Why not?

RUSS  
You've really gotta learn to mind your own business.

LINDSAY  
All right, how about this - I'll do the whole thing myself, but I won't tell anyone. And I'll let you take credit for being the co-editor.

RUSS  
You're crazy.

LINDSAY  
Don't call me that.

RUSS  
Whatever. But seriously...

LINDSAY  
I don't mind. Really.

RUSS  
You hate the thought of being around me that much?

LINDSAY  
As much as you hate the thought of being around me. Go on, admit it.

RUSS  
What the fuck?

LINDSAY  
Everybody else does. Why would you be any different?

RUSS  
You are crazy.

LINDSAY  
Didn't I just say don't call me that?

RUSS  
Okay, you are bonkers, you are wacked - take your pick. But what's your problem with me? You don't even know me.

LINDSAY  
I know enough to know you won't take this seriously.

RUSS  
How do you know that?

LINDSAY  
I know.

RUSS  
Man, you really are The Ice Bitch of Eastman High.

LINDSAY

So then, that means you're taking me up on my offer?

RUSS

What was your offer again?

LINDSAY

To do it without you.

RUSS

Oh yeah. No way.

LINDSAY

You'll regret it. I guarantee you. Okay. Let's set the rules right up front so we'll have no misunderstandings later on.

RUSS

There's rules?

LINDSAY

Number one - I am not going to work with someone who's high on marijuana, so you'd better not be. Ever again. Okay?

RUSS

Like, as in cold turkey?

LINDSAY

Like as in.

RUSS

(Deeply troubled)

Oh, man... Hey! I have another idea that's more fair... to both of us - you don't want to have to watch me go through withdrawal symptoms.

(Miming some sort of exaggerated withdrawal symptom)

That would be nasty.

LINDSAY

You don't get physical withdrawal symptoms when you stop smoking marijuana. I read, remember?

RUSS

No, I meant the, you know, emotional agony. Like I lost a best friend. Or a pet! I'd be in a bad mood all the time - and I'd blame it all on you. That would suck ass.

LINDSAY

What's your idea?

RUSS

Rule number one will be no getting high within two hours before any time we're supposed to work on Words.

LINDSAY

Twenty-four hours.

RUSS

Okay, ten, it's a deal, cool. Any more rules?

LINDSAY

Just one more - under no circumstances will we be making out, engaging in foreplay or having intercourse, so don't even think about it.

RUSS

Oh Jesus!!

LINDSAY

You think I'm ugly, don't you.

RUSS

What? You're...

LINDSAY

I'm?

RUSS

*This* is getting... Moving right along. So how do we do this journal?

LINDSAY

No. I need to know what you were going to say.

RUSS

About?

LINDSAY

About whether you think I'm ugly.

RUSS

I can't remember.

LINDSAY

You're like a two year old.

RUSS

You're like a... thirty-two year old.

LINDSAY

I'll take that as a "yes," you think I'm ugly.

RUSS

Take it however you want. The journal?

LINDSAY

(After collecting herself)

We need to collect as many poems as we can from as many students as we can.

RUSS

O-kay...

LINDSAY

We ask every teacher who might have some saved up and we also go up to each student in our class privately \ and...

RUSS

Ho ho whoa there - everybody?

LINDSAY

Yes.

RUSS

In the whole class?

LINDSAY

Yes.

RUSS

Holy shit.

## LINDSAY

And we ask them if they want to contribute something and we don't just take "no" for an answer, because Mr. Mosely said the best poets are always the ones you least expect and it is our duty to discover them.

In this, and for each subsequent scene transition except where illogical, Russ and Lindsay face the audience and change their clothes, miming that they are alone in their rooms in front of full-length mirrors. RUSS wears the same jeans until the Scene 8-9 transition. The respective arcs of their clothing changes track their arcs in the play, such that Russ starts out very cocky and Lindsay very insecure. As the play progresses, Russ increasingly loses confidence, while Lindsay gains in self-esteem and awakening sexuality. This scene transition occurs to Jimi Hendrix's "Foxy Lady."

## SCENE 3

Lights up on LINDSAY, in the same classroom, busily organizing piles of student poems she has collected. Her violin case is close by. Enter RUSS, with about a half-inch worth of wrinkled papers with high school students' handwriting on them.

RUSS

(Singing along off-key to "Foxy Lady,"  
rocking a little air guitar)

"You've got to be all mine, all mine. Ooh, Foxy Lady!"

Music stops abruptly as HE notices LINDSAY staring at him with withering disdain.

What? What's the problem? What is the problem? What - the fuck - is the problem?

LINDSAY

Nothing.

RUSS

Yeah right nothing.

LINDSAY

I'll just have to remember not to take you seriously next time you say you're going to take something seriously, that's all.

RUSS

I'm not taking this seriously? I'm here, right?

LINDSAY

Late.

RUSS

How late? Ten minutes?

LINDSAY

Fourteen.

RUSS

Fourteen? What's the big deal?

LINDSAY

You wouldn't be late at all if you were going to engage in intercourse with Amanda Bell or go smoke \ some more m...

RUSS

Oh no, we're not doing that one again! I'm here. I'm not that late. And I'm taking this seriously. Man... So let's work on this stupid... the journal... already... Okay?

SHE approaches him, smells his shirt, then puts her face close to his and pulls one of his eyelids up and then the other, inspects his eyes. HE doesn't mind it as much as he pretends.

RUSS (cont'd)

What the hell?

LINDSAY

You just used Visine, didn't you?

RUSS

No I did not. I swear. Jesus.

LINDSAY

(Stepping away)

Where's all the poems you were supposed to collect?

RUSS

(Brandishing his papers triumphantly)

Here. So there. Where's all the poems you were...

(Eyeing her impressive haul for the first time)

...supposed to...

LINDSAY

See what I mean.

RUSS

That's no fair. How'd you get all those?

LINDSAY

It's the difference between caring and pretending to care.

RUSS

No, it's the difference between being "in good" with all the teachers like you are, and having them get back at me for mocking them and skipping class all the time. I worked pretty hard to get this much, trust me.

LINDSAY takes RUSS's poems,  
begins sorting through them,  
integrating them meticulously  
into her stacks.

LINDSAY

Okay. Which teachers wouldn't help you?

RUSS

Fisher, Jones... McGinnis.

LINDSAY

Three. Out of a total of the four on your list.

RUSS

Very impressive. Now we know how you got that math award.

LINDSAY

I'll talk to them. How many students on your list have you talked to?

RUSS

Yeah, I think we need to rethink this part. Like, man, it's just not realistic. How do you expect me to go up to anybody at this school and say, "Ah yes, good day my fine fellow - me good lady - and might you have a contribution to make to our esteemed lit'ry journal this year?" It's just too... You know, it's not me.

LINDSAY

You mean it's bad for your outlaw image.

RUSS

I mean it's not going to get the job done.

LINDSAY

But you're so popular. Mister party man.

RUSS

No one takes me seriously. They respect you.

LINDSAY

So much that they hate me.

RUSS

We'll get a lot more submissions if you ask them. Isn't that what really matters? The journal?

LINDSAY

(Handing him a stack of poems)

Alright, well, let's start by narrowing them down to the ones we think deserve further consideration. Discards go here.

RUSS

Whoa whoa, wait a minute.

LINDSAY

What's wrong now?

RUSS

I mean, come on, we both know I don't know anything about poems. What if I reject some all-time masterpiece before you even get a chance to see it? Seriously. I think you better do this part.

LINDSAY

So where we are then is that I go to all the teachers, I ask all the students and I judge all the submissions.

RUSS

Sort of.

LINDSAY

Fine, but it's not what you said you wanted.

RUSS

Shit man. Now I feel guilty.

LINDSAY

You should.

RUSS

What a f... Okay, I'll try.

THEY each start reading a poem from his/her stack, LINDSAY very intently, RUSS half-heartedly and begrudgingly. RUSS starts snickering.

LINDSAY

What's so funny?

RUSS

How lame can you get? "I stab blindly urging away another world while birds' wings flutter furiously to evade scratching claws."

(Slapping the poem in the discard pile)

What's that supposed to mean?!

LINDSAY

At least she tried.

RUSS

Jesus.

HE picks up the next poem, begins reading it to himself, then starts snickering again.

LINDSAY

What is it this time?

RUSS

I'm sorry, really I am. But this... It makes absolutely no sense. It's like Carl went to the dictionary and picked out

RUSS (CONT'D)

the biggest words he could find and just wrote them down on the paper in random order.

LINDSAY takes the poem from him, begins to read it.

See what I mean?

LINDSAY

No. It makes perfect sense.

RUSS

Oh bullshit, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

It does. It's about death.

RUSS

(While taking the poem back from her, re-reading it intently)

Death? How's that?

LINDSAY

The fallen oak. What do you think that stands for? Why do you think he can't step over it or go around it?

RUSS

He can't step over it... Or go around it... That's what that's supposed to mean?

LINDSAY

Yes.

RUSS

No way.

LINDSAY

Yes, Russ.

RUSS

What a crock.

RUSS puts the poem in the discard file, picks up

another poem and begins to read it. HE gets increasingly agitated until HE implodes in full-blown existential despair.

RUSS

Oh, man... This is really intense.

LINDSAY

"Intense." That means "good" in pothead talk, right?

RUSS

No, I mean "intense" as in "intense." Oh Jesus... I think I'm freaking out.

LINDSAY

You did use Visine, didn't you?

RUSS

No, it's not that. Help me out here, Lindsay! This is serious!

LINDSAY

(Taking the poem from him)

Let me see it. "Bumblebee sailing from blossom to blossom until it tastes the sweetest nectar with its feet." You're allergic to bees or something?

RUSS

Not that.

LINDSAY

What? Being here with me?

RUSS

Death.

LINDSAY

(At a loss)

Death.

RUSS

Don't you see - it's going to happen - not just to somebody else - to me. Maybe today. Maybe eighty years from now. But

RUSS (CONT'D)

it's going to happen. For sure. Poof. After that, no more me. Not the next day. Not eighty years from then. Not a billion years from then. Not infinity years from then. Just... Poof. Forever. See ya.

LINDSAY

You just figured that out? I've known that since I was four.

RUSS

I knew it, of course I knew it. I just didn't ... I don't know...

LINDSAY

Wow, I never thought I'd see you - of all people - like this.

RUSS

Would you get off your fucking high horse for one second, please, and help me! Oh man! This is such a bummer! It's unbearable! Please.

LINDSAY

I don't know what to do.

RUSS

You're number one in the class - figure something out!

LINDSAY

Maybe... You should think about how you can make the most of your time here on Earth by doing such things as working on Words... With me.

RUSS

But how's that gonna... You're right! Of course. You're so smart. It makes me sick.

LINDSAY

(Retrieving Carl's poem from the  
discard file)

So, I suppose this means we think Carl's poem deserves further consideration.

RUSS

Hell no! That bastard just ruined my life!

LINDSAY

But it made you feel something.

RUSS

Yeah, like I wanna go chop my head off! Whatever. Just don't make me look at that thing again - or even think about it. I'm serious.

LINDSAY

(Returning Carl's poem to the discard pile)

We don't need to use it.

(Holding up the bumblebee poem)

What did you think of this one?

RUSS

Boring. As shit.

LINDSAY

(Putting the poem in the discard pile)

Let's move on, okay?

RUSS

I guess.

(Starts another poem, but his agitation continues to crescendo)

Fuck! Oh fucking Christ almighty!

LINDSAY

What!?

RUSS

Here it goes again.

LINDSAY

What goes again?

RUSS

The, you know... The thing.

LINDSAY

What thing?

RUSS

I've gotta skedaddle! Like now! Like outside or something.  
Like now!

LINDSAY

Sure, go ahead. I understand.

RUSS

You're not coming!? You have to come. I can't be alone.  
Please.

LINDSAY

But, the journal... We're not meeting again until next  
week.

RUSS

We'll make it up. I can work on it tomorrow after school if  
you want.

LINDSAY

Student council.

RUSS

The day after.

LINDSAY

Violin... I guess I could reschedule it. But, what would  
Amanda Bell and your little gang say about us spending all  
this time together?

RUSS

Amanda's cool with me doing this, believe it or not, and if  
the guys have a problem, I mean let's face it, they won't  
remember it the next day anyway... I am taking this  
seriously, Lindsay. I'm just having... a problem right now  
and I need to get out of here, okay? Very very soon.

LINDSAY

But what if someone sees us?

RUSS

You obviously do not appreciate the seriousness of what I  
am going through! What I am trying to say to you is please!

LINDSAY

Where should we go?

RUSS

I don't care! Just somewhere.

THEY begin to exit, RUSS  
following LINDSAY.

LINDSAY

I know a place I bet you've never seen before. Nobody knows about it. Do you like climbing boulders?

RUSS

I used to. When I was a kid.

LINDSAY

There's this one boulder that sits on top of the pile, higher than all the others. We can climb up there. Then after it gets dark, thousands of fireflies come out and it's like they're dancing a ballet just for you. I think you might like it.

RUSS

Ballet?

THEY exit. Scene transition  
to "And You and I" by Yes.

## SCENE 4

Two days later. Lights up on RUSS, in the same classroom, reading two poems that are rocking his world. HE hears footsteps outside the door, very quickly puts the poems into a cardboard box on the desk with "JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS" written on the side in perfect "girl's handwriting" in thick magic marker, and hides behind the door. LINDSAY enters with her violin case, looks around for RUSS, then looks at her watch with her back to RUSS. RUSS jumps out and grabs her shoulders.

RUSS

Boo!

LINDSAY screams, jerks away from him.

Ha ha! You thought I was gonna be late again! But I beat your ass! Admit it, little Miss Goody-Goody! I already did five poems! Your ass has been beaten good!

LINDSAY

Don't ever do that again, Russ!

RUSS

Sure... I was just, you know, just kidding around.

LINDSAY

I'm not good with that kind of thing!

RUSS

(Contritely)

Jesus, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

Just don't do it again... So, great, you've already gotten started. What do you think? Any keepers?

RUSS

(Gesturing to his shirt and eyes)

You're not gonna... You know?

LINDSAY

Check if you're high again? It's fine, I believe you.

RUSS

I think you probably oughta check anyway, don't you? I mean, if I know you're not going to check anymore, I might, you know, fall off the wagon or something.

LINDSAY

(Approaching him, beginning to inspect)

You're not quite as irresponsible as I thought. I make these assumptions about people.

LINDSAY finishes the inspection. THEY stay close together, eyes locked in a gaze.

What?

RUSS

Thank you for taking me to that boulder field. I really liked it.

LINDSAY

You're welcome.

RUSS

I took the guys there yesterday. They thought it was really cool.

LINDSAY

What...?

RUSS

Yeah, and when the firefly ballet started they were all like, "Far out, man!" And... And then we climbed down and started chasing after them and jumping up and swatting them down like wild men and... What?

LINDSAY

You took *them* there?

RUSS

That's a problem?

LINDSAY

I thought I told you...

RUSS

What, you think it's your own private property just because you found it first?

LINDSAY

Don't you understand anything?

RUSS

Guess not.

LINDSAY

You didn't smoke marijuana there, did y... Of course you did.

RUSS

It was more than ten hours ago. Rule number one, remember?

LINDSAY

You're not going to take anyone else there, right?

RUSS

Nobody else, I promise. 'cept Amanda.

LINDSAY

Please don't do that. Please.

RUSS

What do you have against her? Just tell me!

LINDSAY

It's not that I have anything \ against...

RUSS

Remember what you just said about making assumptions about people? I think that goes for Amanda too. She may not be as smart as you or do all the fancy shit you do, but she's... a likeable person.

LINDSAY

How would I know? She never says one word. Even when I tried to ask her about the journal yesterday - just that same blank expression like no one's home.

RUSS

She's shy, that's all.

LINDSAY

Oh, come on. She just knows she doesn't have to say anything - all she has to do is slink around, spraying her scent, and you guys'll start howling at the moon.

RUSS

You're talking about my girlfriend, Lindsay. Officially. We've been going steady for three weeks almost.

LINDSAY

Congratulations Russ! So what number does that make you for her this year, eight or nine? I lost count.

RUSS

She says I'm different.

LINDSAY

How so?

RUSS

I'm nice to her.

LINDSAY

Ooh. That's profound. She must be very intellectually stimulating for you.

RUSS

"Intellectually stimulating"? That's what you think a high school girlfriend's supposed to be?

LINDSAY

What I think is that you've got a lot more going for you than you want to admit. That's why you numb your mind with marijuana and hang out with a bunch of morons and settle for the school slut. That's what I think.

RUSS

Thanks Dad. Can we do some poems now?

LINDSAY

Just please at least try to understand? I never would have taken you there if I'd known you were going to do this. Try, that's all I ask.

RUSS

I'll think about it.

LINDSAY

(After composing herself)

So, have you checked the student submission box yet?

RUSS

Why do you ask?

LINDSAY

I want to know, that's why.

RUSS

Why do you want to know?

LINDSAY

Let's get over the boulder field incident and work on this, okay?

RUSS

I'm over it. I want to know why you're so interested in the student submission box.

LINDSAY

Because... I'm the co-editor of Words?

RUSS

Try again.

LINDSAY

This isn't funny.

RUSS

(While opening the box, pulling out the poems)

Okay, I'll play along. The answer is "yes," I did go through the box. And there are five poems in it: one by Leslie, kind of okay I think but what do I know. One by Parker, sucked ass I'm pretty sure. One by Marybeth, I have no idea what she was on. And two by... Guess who?

LINDSAY

I don't know.

RUSS

Very good. You're an actress too. Two by... Drum roll please! [*or he does a drum roll on the desk*] Nobody.

LINDSAY

Nobody?

RUSS

(*Mocking her*)

"Nobody?" Typed - so that we can't check her handwriting. Very clever.

(*Reading the poem reverently*)

"words haunt me  
until  
I  
have written them  
into the paper  
as pure  
and  
unblemished  
thoughts."

By... Oops, she forgot to say who it was by.

LINDSAY

You think that poem's good or bad?

RUSS

This isn't like you, Lindsay, to be so modest. It's short and to the point, unlike that other B.S. over there, but so heavy and so powerful, like a canon going off in your gut. Like *Hendrix*. "Into the paper," not "onto the paper" - I didn't catch that before. But then, aha, what do have here:

"country ma'am,  
 still believes  
     the streets in heaven  
     are paved with gold.  
 hellfire and brimstone  
     every Sabbath.  
     God bless you, Sister -  
 Lord, have mercy upon your soul  
     and  
     save you from those  
 damned sinners.  
     Amen."

Pow!

LINDSAY

Let me see those.

RUSS

But you don't need to see them, do you?

LINDSAY

Why not?

RUSS

You wrote them.

LINDSAY

It's a different side of the brain, Russ.

RUSS

It is?

LINDSAY

Yes.

RUSS

Which side?

LINDSAY

I think it's the right, but the point is that just because I might be good at school or taking tests or even playing notes on a violin, doesn't mean I can write poems.

RUSS

But you wrote these. It's so obvious, now that I know you a little better.

LINDSAY

What's that supposed to mean?!

RUSS

Don't get so defensive - I was trying to compliment you.

LINDSAY

You really think they're good?

RUSS

Definitely. You should let people in on that right side of your brain - they'd like you more.

LINDSAY

People like you would like me more?

RUSS

I think so.

LINDSAY

Russ, can this be our very special secret, you know, like the boulder field should have been?

RUSS

You mean about the right side of your brain?

LINDSAY

The poems.

RUSS

Why?

LINDSAY

Because they're very personal.

RUSS

(After the revelation overtakes him)

That's why you didn't put your name on them. Lindsay... Oh man.

LINDSAY

What?

RUSS

(Approaching her)

I'm such a jackass.

LINDSAY

Why?

RUSS

(While putting a hand on her shoulder,  
rubbing it tenderly)

Because first I screwed up with the boulder field - I'm not gonna take Amanda there if that helps at all. And now I'm about to blow this one too. You are... an amazing poet, but it comes from a different part of your brain - that's very personal and nobody's business.

(While putting his other hand on her  
other shoulder, drawing her to him)

I just couldn't help figuring it out - it was so obvious. I'm sorry, Lindsay. I should have pretended I didn't know. Your poetry is just so... fuckin'...

RUSS moves to kiss her. SHE  
is nervous but willing. HE  
stops at the last moment.

Oh man, that was bad. Almost broke rule number two. You're too smart for me. I have a girlfriend.

SHE is stung badly.

Lindsay? Jesus! It was an accident. Nothing even happened! Are you mad at me? You're mad at me.

SHE reaches for the poems,  
but HE holds them behind his  
back, third grade style. SHE  
tries to reach around him.

LINDSAY

Give them to me. Please?

RUSS

No. They're going in the journal.

LINDSAY

They're not going in the journal.

RUSS

Then why did you submit them? That makes no sense.

LINDSAY

I changed my mind, okay? You promised this would be our  
secret.

RUSS

We'll put them in under "Anonymous." I'm sorry, they're  
just too good not to go in.

LINDSAY

But what if someone else thinks it was me?

RUSS

No way. Everybody thinks you've got a cork up your ass.

SHE rips them out of his  
hands, the pages tear.

Nice try. But I already know them by heart. They're going  
in - that's final.

LINDSAY

We should move on, okay?

Lights dim. We hear The  
Allman Brothers' "Little  
Martha" as THEY sit at the  
desk and go through some  
poems. This interval lasts

just long enough to connote  
the passage of fifteen  
minutes or so. Lights up,  
music ends. LINDSAY is  
looking at a particular  
submission intently.

LINDSAY

You didn't tell me you were a writer.

RUSS

Yeah sure.

LINDSAY

No, really. I think this alphabet thing you did in Ms.  
Peterson's class is kind of cute.

RUSS

She gave you that? What torture will that bitch think of  
next?

LINDSAY

Oh relax. I like this one you did for "O" - "O is for those  
Obnoxious Ostriches who are Obviously trying to Overthrow  
the Otters in Oregon after Observing Occasionally Obscene  
Orgies that Occur in the Ocean Often in October."

THEY both are giggling now.

"P is for the Pythons of Persia who take great Pride in  
Painstakingly choking Poultry as a Private Pastime of their  
Permanent jobs Producing Perverted..."

THEY are laughing so hard by  
now, SHE is having trouble  
finishing it.

...Propaganda Programs about Poor...

SHE looks up at RUSS,  
impressed by the big word.

RUSS

Plebian.

LINDSAY

Polish Pets."

BOTH

"Pow!"

RUSS

How wasted was I? Do you really think it's good?

LINDSAY

It's funny.

RUSS

I just winged it at the last minute so she wouldn't flunk me.

LINDSAY

Mr. Mosely said sometimes the best stuff gets written that way. It'll be a nice break from all this pseudo-angst and despair and trite symbolism.

RUSS

Wait. You're not talking about putting that in the journal, are you?

LINDSAY

It's going in. That's final.

RUSS

So then, you're saying you think I have potential?

LINDSAY

I said it before, Russ - I think you have a lot of potential.

RUSS

Really? Wow.

LINDSAY

Let's keep reading, okay? We have to catch up.

THEY read for a very short while.

Lindsay?  
RUSS

What?  
LINDSAY

RUSS  
Do you think if we really bear down for the next half-hour  
or so we could, you know, go check out the ballet again?

LINDSAY  
There's a debate team meeting... It's just organizational  
stuff I already know. I'll think about it.

Lights fade. We begin to hear  
the sounds of crickets and  
the occasional hoot owl.

## SCENE 5

Later the same evening. A night sky. Lights up on RUSS and LINDSAY sitting on the highest boulder in the boulder field. Firefly effect. RUSS is entranced, LINDSAY acts as if SHE is watching a morbidly fascinating horror movie.

RUSS

And there they glow! Ladies and gentlemen, sit back, relax and enjoy tonight's presentation of the dance of the fireflies! Whoa, man, look at that! How many times you seen this?

LINDSAY

I don't know... Lots.

RUSS

Does it seem as amazing to you still?

LINDSAY

It seems pretty much the same as it did the first time.

RUSS

Far out.

LINDSAY

Okay, so now that you've learned something personal about me, it's your turn - why did you all the sudden decide you wanted to be the editor of Words?

RUSS

Do I have to? Shit. Okay, I'll try. It's just that... Who I am... What I am... It's not working so great anymore, as you may have noticed. I'm like this aquamarine Pontiac GTO with a black vinyl top, you know what I mean?

LINDSAY

No.

RUSS

It's like, I used to be cool, and I'm still exactly the same person as I was when I was cool, but now for some reason, just cuz a little time has gone by, I'm kind of ridiculous. But then, I have absolutely no clue what I'm supposed to change into. Just thinking about it freaks me out, so then I get high, and that makes it hard to think about it anymore, which freaks me out even more, so then it's time for another doobee. See what I'm saying? I'm like... this ant... stuck in an ant lion pit, clawing like a spaz to get out, but all I do is sink down deeper into the ant lion's jaws.

LINDSAY

Who's the ant lion?

RUSS

The ant lion? Cut me some slack, would you, I just made that up four seconds ago.

THEY laugh.

I'm sorry, I apologize.

LINDSAY

No, I apologize. Continue.

RUSS

But then, by some miracle I did pretty good on my SATs - they must've mixed mine up with somebody else's or something. So I start thinking, "Hey, maybe, I'm not stuck in this town going to the same dumb ass college with those guys. If I can get in somewhere else and figure out how to pay for it, maybe I can change into something better. But my grades suck and the teachers hate me, so other than my scores, what else can I say good about myself. Ah ha, I know! I'll be the editor of the poetry journal. No one else could possibly want to do that." Except, as it turns out, Lindsay fucking Kramer of all people.

LINDSAY

So... Where does going steady with Amanda Bell fit into this, you know, this decision to change yourself?

RUSS

I don't know. I feel good about myself when I'm with her.

LINDSAY

Doesn't it gross you out that she smokes cigarettes?

RUSS

It's not so bad. I'm not perfect either.

LINDSAY

Did you want to kiss me or was it an accident like you said?

RUSS

It's just that those poems of yours made me so...

LINDSAY

Sad?

RUSS

No.

LINDSAY

Confused?

RUSS

Kind of, I guess, not really.

LINDSAY

Then what?

RUSS

Sort of like... horny.

LINDSAY

Russ, that's very...

RUSS

I know. Do you think it means I might be a queer?

LINDSAY

Were you feeling these feelings for another guy?

RUSS

What!?! Fuck no!

LINDSAY

Then why would you think it means you might be a homosexual?

RUSS

I guess you're right.

LINDSAY

I think it means that underneath that black vinyl top, you're much more sensitive than people would ever expect, that's all.

RUSS

How do you know so much?

LINDSAY

It only seems like a lot - you know, by comparison.

RUSS

(Teasing)

You bitch.

THEY laugh a bit.

Did you want me to?

LINDSAY

Definitely not.

RUSS

Sorry I asked.

LINDSAY

Actually, how would I know? I've never done it before.

RUSS

I was talking about kissing. Jesus, who do you think I am?

LINDSAY

That's what I meant - kissing.

RUSS

You've never even... Come on, that's impossible.

LINDSAY

Why is that?

RUSS

Cuz you're so pretty. I mean, I don't think so personally, but, trust me, a lot of guys do.

LINDSAY

Which ones?

RUSS

Lindsay, relax, don't worry about it. They're just scared of you, that's all.

LINDSAY

Thanks Russ.

RUSS

Sure.

Lights fade as sounds of crickets and the occasional owl hoot get louder. Segue into scene transition to the Jefferson Airplane's "We Should Be Together."

## SCENE 6

About a week later. Lights up on classroom. Enter LINDSAY hurriedly, closes the door behind her, goes quickly to the submission box, opens it. SHE leafs through the few poems inside, finds one that catches her attention. SHE reads it and becomes visibly troubled. SHE folds it up and starts to shove it into her back jeans pocket as RUSS enters.

RUSS

Dang you. Beat me two times in a... What's that?

LINDSAY

What?

RUSS

Come on - what is it?

LINDSAY

Something that has nothing to do with you.

RUSS

Really. How come the box is open then?

LINDSAY

I was just about to go through it.

RUSS

(Approaching her)

You said the exact same thing on Wednesday. Let me see it.

LINDSAY

It's none of your business.

RUSS

(While backing her onto the desk,  
trying to reach around her to grab the  
poem)

This is crazy. You write these poems, you know how much  
they mean to me.

LINDSAY

Get off me!

RUSS

You put them in the box so I'll know they're there, but  
then you don't let me see them! You're like some nightmare  
kind of cock tease! You're a *soul* tease, that's what you  
are!

LINDSAY

Stop it!

RUSS

(While pinning her arms over her head)  
You stop it, Lindsay! Now let. Me Have it!

LINDSAY

Take it! Okay. Just take it.

RUSS

(While pulling the poem from her  
pocket)

Thank you.

(After composing himself)

    "how sad  
i can talk to no one but me and you.  
    they  
won't help me out of this dark corner.  
    i  
can't find the light under the crack in the  
    door -  
    maybe  
there is no light at all....."

Man... Lindsay...

LINDSAY

Did that make you horny?

RUSS

Times infinity.

LINDSAY

How is that possible - that a poem could make you feel that way, particularly one like that?

RUSS

It's only because... you wrote it.

LINDSAY

You said you don't think I'm pretty.

RUSS

I lied. But it's not just that. It's that, plus the way you're so smart and out to conquer the world but at the same time inside you're so fragile and wondering if there's any light under the door and, oh man, knowing that you've never even been kissed before. Why did you have to tell me that? It haunts me. All the time.

LINDSAY

What do you think you should do about it?

RUSS

Nothing. I wouldn't know what to do with somebody as complicated as you. And... you'd never go for me anyway.

LINDSAY

You're sure about that?

RUSS

Very. Who's "you" anyway. You know, in the poem - the only one you can talk to besides yourself.

LINDSAY

Who do you think it is?

RUSS

Don't tell me that. I see you talking to other people all time.

LINDSAY

Not like we talk.

RUSS

What is this, Lindsay? You know I have a girlfriend.

LINDSAY

Really? Every time I've seen her this week, she's been all by her lonesome, puffing away.

RUSS

I've had some other things on my mind - such as the fact that you're fucking with it. But that doesn't mean she's not my girlfriend anymore.

LINDSAY

Okay, I understand.

RUSS

How are you doing this to me? I'm feeling guilty for having a girlfriend, like having a girlfriend is cheating on you somehow. That's insane. I should be feeling guilty about cheating on my girlfriend for even having this conversation!

LINDSAY

I'm sorry, Russ, I didn't mean to upset you.

RUSS

No, don't get sad. Please. There's light under the door, I promise you. You've got to believe that. Please believe that. You're so pretty. You really are.

Scene transition to "Done  
Somebody Wrong" by The Allman  
Brothers.

## SCENE 7

About a week later. Lights up on classroom. LINDSAY is at the desk considering two poems, obviously perturbed, restless, looking at her watch, etc. Enter RUSS, clearly intoxicated, but not to the point of being dysfunctional.

RUSS

Lindsay, where have you been? I've been waiting up for you for hours. Go to your room. You're grounded.

LINDSAY

Very funny. What's going on, Russ?

RUSS

Not much. What's going on with you?

LINDSAY

You're high, aren't you?

RUSS

I thought you said you read. This isn't how people act when they're high. This is how they drunk when they're... when they're... How they...

LINDSAY

You switched from marijuana to alcohol? That's your idea of changing yourself?

RUSS

No. If you must know I can't get high anymore cuz every time I do I think about Carl the fallen oak bastard's death poem again. So there.

LINDSAY

I'm extremely disappointed.

RUSS

Why is that? Rule number one didn't say anything about Wild Turkey.

LINDSAY

Seriously.

RUSS

Well, you won't be disappointed for long cuz you're about to be proud of me because... Drum roll please! [*or he does a drum roll on the desk*] I broke up with Amanda last night!

LINDSAY

Did you really?

RUSS

Yes I really.

LINDSAY

What did you tell her?

RUSS

What did I tell her... I told her "Amanda, I really dig you and everything I really do. I love just driving around in my step dad's pick-up, listening to FM tunes with your head  
(Gesturing to the right side of his chest)

right here, please believe that, but I'm going through some gnarly-ass shit in my head right now that I wasn't planning on and I just don't think there's any room in there for you right now, I'm so sorry."

LINDSAY

I *am* proud of you, Russ. What did she say?

RUSS

That's the problem.

LINDSAY

Oh, that's just the way girls like that are. They cry and yell and throw things. But before you know it, they're in somebody else's step dad's pick-up.

RUSS

That's not what she did though.

LINDSAY

What did she do?

RUSS

Nothing. Just like you said before - a blank stare like no one's home. That's it. Nothing.

LINDSAY

Where's the problem? Did it hurt your ego that she didn't have a nervous breakdown or something?

RUSS

No, that's not it. It was just so spooky. Made me start shaking.

LINDSAY

You get yourself too worked up over things. It'll be fine. Hey, I've got something to cheer you up. It's in my back pocket. Wanna try to get it from me?

RUSS

I don't know, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

Then I'll have to read it to you myself:

"i was crushed  
    once  
    slowly --  
    like a  
    cigarette butt  
    into  
    the  
    sidewalk.  
who knows those sidewalk city blues"

RUSS

That's good. Damn good.

LINDSAY

I'm glad you like it.

RUSS

But... I can't believe you compared yourself to a cigarette butt. I thought cigarettes gross you out.

LINDSAY

It's just a metaphor.

RUSS

I know what it is, Lindsay, I'm the co-editor of the poetry fucking journal, in case you didn't notice. But still...

LINDSAY

Hey you're in luck - there's another one:

"i feel like a broken doll  
and... \  
nobody...

RUSS

(Reaching for the poem)

You know what, why don't I just read it myself. I don't know, it sounds weird, but you reading it, it's just not the same for some reason.

LINDSAY

Okay.

RUSS

(After reading the poem to himself)

Oh Jesus, Lindsay. Oh man. That's just... unbearable. I wish you could feel how you just made me feel.

LINDSAY

Try to describe it for me. I know you're inebriated, but try.

RUSS

It's not complicated. I feel like I want to break rule number two. In the worst way.

LINDSAY

Then maybe I should consider granting you an exemption, just for today.

RUSS

What the hell does that mean?

LINDSAY

It means, go ahead. Do it. Break rule number two.

RUSS

You're fucking with me.

LINDSAY

No.

RUSS

Thank you, Jesus.

HE approaches her cautiously.  
The whole process is drawn  
out and awkward, ending with  
a kiss that blows him away,  
but doesn't move her.

Oh, man. Lindsay, that was amazing.

LINDSAY

You think?

RUSS

Yes I do. What do you think?

LINDSAY

I don't know. Maybe it was the Wild Turkey. Too many new  
things to taste at once, you know?

RUSS

(While clumsily pulling first Visine  
mistakenly, then breath spray out of  
his jeans pocket)

Oh shit. I'm such a douche bag.

(After a couple of sprays)

Wanna try again?

LINDSAY

Okay.

THEY kiss again, having the same effect on each as before.

RUSS

Well?

LINDSAY

This isn't fair. You've done this so many times before. How am I supposed to feel as much as you do when it's just my first time?

RUSS

This isn't like math or... or the debate team. If you didn't feel anything, it's because you didn't feel anything. For me. Not because you didn't win the National Merit Award for Kissing.

LINDSAY

Then I think we should engage in foreplay. Maybe I'll feel something then.

RUSS

No, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

Why not?

RUSS

It's just not right. You're supposed to go in order.

LINDSAY

Oh.

RUSS

Yeah.

LINDSAY

But remember when you had me on the desk, trying to get those poems from me?

RUSS

Yeah?

LINDSAY

I felt something then.

RUSS

What!?! That's... I wasn't even trying anything!

LINDSAY

Well, it worked. A lot better than those kisses did.

RUSS

You're cr...

LINDSAY

Don't call me that.

RUSS

I don't believe this!

LINDSAY

What's wrong?

RUSS

I broke up with Amanda because of you! She could kiss me for five hours straight and never get tired of it.

LINDSAY

Then obviously I'm defective. Maybe you should get back with her.

RUSS

Maybe I should. But first, you know what, I need to go puke. Excuse me.

Exit RUSS. Scene transition to Joni Mitchell's "Case of You."

## SCENE 8

Several days later. Lights up on classroom. LINDSAY is busy sorting out poems, having trouble making up her mind - it is almost time to go to print. Enter RUSS soberly and tentatively. SHE notices him out of the corner of her eye, goes quickly back to work. Everything is awkward at first.

RUSS

How did you get here so early? You have violin today.

LINDSAY

Not any more.

RUSS

Why? I mean, the music sucks, but... I heard you play at that assembly. Damn, you was tearin' up them strings, woman! Rastapanovichinsky or something?

LINDSAY

Let's not talk about it, okay?

RUSS

Right. Personal. So... As I was about to say last week... before I needed to, you know, depart all the sudden?

LINDSAY

Let's not talk about that either, okay?

RUSS

No, I mean all I was gonna say \ was it...

LINDSAY

Please Russ.

RUSS

was it's probably not your fault you didn't like kissing me. Some of my best friends don't like kissing me. But it is your fault that rule number one didn't say anything about Wild Turkey.

LINDSAY

(Looking down, stifling a smile)

Did you get back with Amanda?

RUSS

As you probably noticed since you monitor her so closely, she hasn't been at school. So I called her on Saturday. Her dad answers the phone: "Don't you ever call this house again, you got that, boy!" I'm like, 'Okay fine - I guess I'll just have to go over to her house Monday after school when you're at work, you dick.' But her mom, who I thought liked me, answers the door and right away starts going, "You get off this property right this minute or I'll call the police! You are the Anti-Christ young man, you hear me? The Anti-Christ!"

HE pulls a necklace out of his jeans pocket. HE will keep this necklace in his pocket for the rest of the play and occasionally put his hand in that pocket and play with it as a nervous habit.

Then she throws this necklace I gave Amanda right in my face and slams the door on me. I mean, what the fuck? All I wanted to do was talk to her. I wasn't even gonna *do* anything.

LINDSAY

That sounds awful.

RUSS

They're serious ass Christians, her parents, did you know that? Serious. Like you said in that poem, "Hellfire and brimstone every Sabbath."

LINDSAY

I didn't know that.

RUSS

She must be pretty sick. To be out all week.

LINDSAY

My best guess would be syphilis.

RUSS

That's hilarious, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

I still think we should engage in foreplay, Russ. Or maybe even intercourse. I really think that might work.

RUSS

See, here's the problem with what you just said - it's one of those things where I'm going to look back twenty years from now and say to myself "Russ, back when you were seventeen, *the Lindsay Kramer*, who every guy in the \

LINDSAY

Whom.

RUSS

(Continuous)

school wanted in the worst way, who had never even been kissed before, offered to have sex with you without even having to make out with her or get her wasted or take her to a drive-in movie, but you turned her down because you were feeling loyal to a girl you already broke up with for her. Russ, what the fuck were you thinking, you stupid worthless piece of shit!!!" So, please... Lindsay... Please don't say anything else that's gonna torment me for the rest of my life and let's do some poems now, okay?

LINDSAY

If that's how you really feel.

RUSS

It is.

(Gesturing at the desk)

Where are we?

LINDSAY

(While spreading some poems out on the desk.)

Almost done. I was just trying to figure out the final ones to go in. What do you think?

RUSS

Hey, you know what I just realized?

LINDSAY

What?

RUSS

Let's do an experiment - what do you think?

LINDSAY

I don't know - what kind of experiment?

RUSS

No. I meant what poems do you think should go in?

LINDSAY

I asked you first.

RUSS

See? I'm right. You've made me pick every poem except my alphabet thing. What the hell?

LINDSAY

I want you to develop your own feel for this stuff, that's all.

RUSS

No shit? Hmmm. Okay. I don't like any of these as much as Carl's. I think his should go in.

LINDSAY

It ruined your life.

RUSS

It's a good poem.

LINDSAY

Okay, I think so too. And also, there's no way we can use all these "Anonymous" poems, so you're going to have to pick three of them.

RUSS

They're yours. You should pick them.

LINDSAY

I'd rather you - they mean so much to you.

RUSS

(Not looking at the poems - he knows them by heart)

Man... It's so hard... Okay - the "words" one, the "light under the door" one and the "cigarette butt" one, no, the "broken doll" one.

LINDSAY

I like the "cigarette butt" one better than the "words" one.

RUSS

No way, get out of here! If you wanna use the "cigarette butt" one instead of the "light under the door" one, that's fine, but the "words" one? Come on! That's so perfect! For a literary journal? Which happens to be called Words? What's wrong with you?

LINDSAY

We ripped up the "words" one that day, remember? When we had our little fight?

RUSS

So? You don't remember your own poem? It was one sentence.

LINDSAY

You didn't memorize it after all, did you?

RUSS

(Without hesitation)

"words haunt me until I have \ written them..."

LINDSAY

(Offering him a no. 2 pencil)

No, I meant that weird way it was laid out on the page.  
That's the real test.

RUSS

(Writing the poem without hesitation)

There's nothing "weird" about it. Jesus.

LINDSAY

Good job. I'm impressed. Did you see where I'm putting your  
alphabet thing?

RUSS

Wow. Do you really think I have potential?

LINDSAY

How many times are you going to ask me that?

RUSS

Sorry, it's just hard to believe, that's all.

LINDSAY

Which brings us to how are your college applications going?

RUSS

Good. I guess. Have you ever heard of Waterville State?

LINDSAY

Sure. You know who goes there, I think?

RUSS

Who?

LINDSAY

Charlie Reznick.

RUSS

That jackass? Are you serious? Fuck me.

LINDSAY

It's a pretty big school, Russ. Don't worry about it. I  
shouldn't have said anything.

RUSS

Okay. You're right. Whatever. Fine. That jackass!

Scene transition to Jackson Browne's "Doctor My Eyes."  
RUSS changes into straight-leg khaki pants and a casual very loose-fitting white or blue button-down shirt, not tucked in, sleeves haphazardly rolled up. HE parts his hair on the side, sports some weak facial hair. LINSLEY changes into something earthy.

## SCENE 9

February 1976. RUSS and LINDSAY are freshmen at Waterville State and Princeton, respectively, in their respective dorm rooms. THEY each are opening an envelope they just received in the mail.

RUSS

Who the heck? New Jersey?

(HE looks on either side of the envelope, not finding any return address, opens Lindsay's typewritten letter and skips to the end.)

Lindsay!

LINDSAY

(Opening Russ's hand written letter)

Russ? Get out of here!

RUSS

How could this happen?

BOTH

(In unison, reading the other's letter)

"February 10, 1976. Dear Russ/Lindsay..."

Lights fade on RUSS or use another device to make it clear whose letter is being read at the time.

LINDSAY

"I'm sure you're not happy to hear from me after I let you down last year, slipping back into my old ways. Sorry about that. But I tried to tell you our first night at the ballet that I had to get away from that town and those guys to have any chance..."

RUSS

(Quoting his letter)

"So here I am, at last, at W. State. It's not paradise or anything close to that, but it's away from *there* and that's all that really matters. You deserve a lot of credit that I'm here and I thank you for that a lot."

LINDSAY

Oh Russ.

Lighting or other device reverses to make clear that we are shifting to Lindsay's letter.

RUSS

(Reading her letter)

"I bet you want to throw this letter in the trash now that you know it's from The Ice Bitch of Eastman High..." Come on, you're too hard on yourself. "...that's why I didn't put a return address on it - so at least you'd have to open it. Please don't throw this away before you read it. I think you might like what I have to say..." Okay.

LINDSAY

(Quoting her letter)

"Princeton is definitely an adjustment from high school. One thing is, you know how out of place I was because I was so driven and ambitious and arrogant and stiff and stuck up, as you pointed out at least a million times?"

RUSS

It was two or three times.

LINDSAY

"Well, just about everybody's like that here, and I'm not used to being around people like myself. I can see now why you all thought I was such a bitch."

RUSS

Better late than never.

LINDSAY

"So I've learned my lesson. I'm not like that anymore, I promise."

RUSS

For real?

LINDSAY

(Reading his letter)

"There's a couple of things I would like to clear up and then I'll never bother you again, I promise. This is kind of embarrassing, but at this point what the heck?" Heck?

RUSS

(Quoting his letter)

"I never had sex or anything close to that with Amanda."

LINDSAY

You're kidding me.

RUSS

"All we ever did was kiss and I would hold her a lot also."

LINDSAY

Oh, you poor thing.

RUSS

"That's all she wanted to do and that was fine with me. Anyway, it was important to me that you know that because even though she never came back to school, I can't stand the thought of you thinking she did all those things when she didn't."

LINDSAY

And you're still worrying about her two years later?!

RUSS

(Reading her letter)

"But not everybody's like that here, Russ. This is what I just had to tell you. I met this senior named Warren and he agreed that we could engage in foreplay and have intercourse without making out first!" I need to know this?

LINDSAY

(Quoting her letter)

"And you know what - just like I predicted with you but you didn't believe me, it worked. Boy, did it work! It worked

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

so well, I got an 88 on my calc exam and I didn't even care. Can you believe that!?"

RUSS

Okay, it worked. I get it.

LINDSAY

(Reading his letter)

"But also, okay here it goes - I'm a virgin, Lindsay." Sure you are. "I know I was the 'party man' and everybody assumed I was so experienced, but that was the problem - by last year, girls expected me to be such a stud, and I knew I couldn't live up to their expectations so, like with you and then with Meg last year, I would always make excuses for why we couldn't go too far..." Russ!?"

RUSS

(Quoting his letter)

"I know this sounds like a girl, but I waited so long because I wanted to make sure the first time was with someone really special that I would never live to regret. I thought that might have been you, but when you wanted to skip making out and go right to it, it scared the heck out of me. So I wanted you to know that it had nothing to do with you. You didn't do anything wrong, it was all my fault. It's worth having you think less of me for you to know that."

LINDSAY

This is unfortunate.

RUSS

(Reading her letter)

"But Russ, as amazing as Warren is in bed, I know that he's not half the lover you are. That's why I think about having sex with you all the time and learning new techniques from you. It's driving me crazy, Russ, kind of like those poems did to you." Oh my...

LINDSAY

(Quoting her letter)

"Is there any way you could take a weekend off and take a bus or hitchhike up here. I know it's far but I promise you, it will be worth it."

RUSS

Oh boy.

LINDSAY

"At least I think so. I hope I don't disappoint you. Anyway let me know. I have a single room - think about that, Russ. Two days, just you and me going at it non-stop, swapping trade secrets. At least think about it? Please? Okay? I hope you do. Your more horny than you can imagine former sort of friend, Lindsay."

RUSS

(Crumbling up her letter, throwing it away.)

Oh man.

LINDSAY

(Reading his letter)

"So now I feel better that you know this. And one more thing, even though I said it many times before - you are an amazing poet, Lindsay..." Oh yeah, that.

RUSS

(Quoting his letter)

"...and I think that if you ever decide to let people know that, you could be one of the all-time greats. But I will respect if you don't as it's the other side of your brain and not my business. Anyway, I hope our paths cross again someday and I will be more intellectually stimulating. (Just a joke, remember?)"

LINDSAY

No.

RUSS

"Good luck at Princeton, even though I'm sure you don't need it. Russ."

LINDSAY

You are one adorable little cutie.

Lights fade, then up again on  
RUSS, opening another letter.

RUSS

(Reading the new letter)

"February 16, 1976. Dear Russ, I guess that was kind of unfortunate timing with our letters, huh?" You think?

LINDSAY

"I wrote back right away because I don't want you to feel bad about what you wrote. I think it's the sweetest and sexiest thing I've ever read and just the thought of you being fresh and raw like that has only made me want you more than ever."

RUSS

That's... That's just not right.

LINDSAY

"In fact, I am now officially stooping so low as to beg you to come see me. Please Russ. It's driving me crazy to the point where I'm having trouble studying and I've decided to be a pre-med."

RUSS

"Also, Russ, for your own good - if you wait too much longer, you'll fall hopelessly behind the curve. I'll go nice and slow, I promise. We can start off by..." Lindsay? What the heck?

Scene transition to Lynyrd  
Skynyrd's "I Know a Little."

## SCENE 10

The next weekend. LINDSAY, wearing something enticing but not too slutty, is sitting in her dorm room, studying a chemistry text intently. SHE hears a knock, puts her book down and excitedly runs over to open the door. Enter RUSS, in heavy winter clothing, recovering from how cold it was outside.

LINDSAY

Russ?

THEY hug - it's awkward.

RUSS

Hi.

LINDSAY

(Quickly stroking his facial hair with disdain)

What's this supposed to be?

RUSS

You don't like it.

LINDSAY

No.

RUSS

Why not?

LINDSAY

They itch. And besides, it's not you.

RUSS

Not me how?

LINDSAY

Not the "you" I was attracted to.

RUSS

But that was the "me" that needed to change, remember?

LINDSAY

We may have talked about you changing, but I don't remember talking about you growing out your peach fuzz.

RUSS

That's the whole point - so that every time I see myself in a mirror it'll remind me that I'm not that "me" any more.

LINDSAY

"That you" was a lot sexier. Why didn't you tell me about this in your letter? I would have told you to get rid of it.

RUSS

Gosh, I didn't think it would be that big a deal.

LINDSAY

"Gosh?" What's with these new words of yours - "heck," "gosh"? Are you a choirboy now or something?

RUSS

It's all part of me trying to improve myself.

LINDSAY

That means you had to become a nerd?

RUSS

Why are doing this? It took me eighteen hours to hitch here. It's cold as sh... It's freezing out there. Do you want me to turn around and go back? I will.

LINDSAY

No, I'll try to get used to it. Throw your coat over there somewhere.

RUSS

None of your poems were in last year's journal. You're still writing, aren't you?

LINDSAY

I sort of gave all that up.

RUSS

But you were so amazing.

LINDSAY

(Retrieving a joint or bong)

I'm going to be a doctor.

RUSS

Great. So was William Carlos Williams.

LINDSAY

Not just any doctor.

SHE lights up, nonchalantly  
takes a hit, offers him one.

RUSS

Don't you remember?

LINDSAY

(While exhaling)

Christ, it was two years ago, Russ. How many things am I  
supposed to remember?

RUSS

Carl's poem? The death thing?

LINDSAY

Oh, yeah! The death thing! I remember that! Russ, my God,  
grow up already.

SHE offers him another hit.  
HE waves it off.

RUSS

I think I've gotten over it pretty much, but still... No  
thanks. I can't believe you, of all people.

LINDSAY

It helps me loosen up. Pre-med's a bitch, Russ. Don't judge  
unless you've been there.

RUSS

You said you weren't going to be just any doctor?

LINDSAY

That's right. I'm going to help people.

RUSS

Isn't that what most doctors do?

LINDSAY

Getting overpaid to treat bourgeois Americans isn't really helping people, is it?

RUSS

I don't know. If you help them, you help them, even though they're bourgeois Americans. Don't look at me like that, I've never thought about this before.

LINDSAY

Then think about it now - if I don't treat them, somebody else will, right? Because they'll get paid, right?

RUSS

I guess so.

LINDSAY

So I'll only really help people if I treat people who won't be treated at all if I don't.

RUSS

Who would that be?

LINDSAY

Sub-Saharan Africans. Bangladeshis. The Appalachian poor. It's endless.

RUSS

That's great. Wow. Seriously. That's really great.

LINDSAY

What're you gonna major in?

RUSS

English, I think.

Why?

LINDSAY

Don't laugh at me, okay?

RUSS

Just tell me, Russ. Jesus.

LINDSAY

I want to be a writer.

RUSS

A "writer." What are you going to write?

LINDSAY

I don't know. Definitely not poetry. Whenever I try poetry, I remember your poems and then it's, you know, what's the point?

RUSS

You want to be a writer, but you don't have any idea what you want to write?

LINDSAY

It's just that, ever since you told me I had potential, I've been thinking about it. And the thought of writing something one day that will affect people like your poems affected me. I have to at least try it.

RUSS

Who is it that you think this thing you write is going to affect?

LINDSAY

Someone who reads it? You never know, right?

RUSS

Let's see... Do you think any Appalachian poor are going to read this thing you write?

LINDSAY

I don't know, maybe.

RUSS

LINDSAY

They can't read, Russ! How the hell are they going to read it!?

RUSS

I thought you'd be proud of me.

LINDSAY

Sorry, but frankly the thought of you wasting your life trying to write something that you don't even know what it is, that maybe one day might make some spoiled idle whiney bourgeois jerk want to go down on you doesn't do a lot for me. There's so much suffering and pain and poverty and injustice in this world - if you're not going to try to make a real difference, I'm not proud of you at all. Warren's joining the Peace Corps as an engineer.

RUSS

Good for Warren. You know what -  
(Grabbing his coat)  
I'm out of here.

LINDSAY

(Stopping him)  
Oh don't be ridiculous.

SHE takes his hand, puts it on her breast. HE leaves it there, but doesn't move it.

RUSS

I'm serious Lindsay.

LINDSAY

(Unbuttoning his shirt)  
You know, I used to pick fights with you just because of how much it turned me on.

RUSS

Seriously?

LINDSAY

Seriously.

Lights fade to Neil Young's  
"Till the Mornin' Comes."

## SCENE 11

Dawn the next morning. Lights slightly up on the dorm room bed. LINDSAY is sound asleep, RUSS is sitting on the edge of the bed, hastily getting dressed. HE gets up warily, goes over to get his coat. LINDSAY awakens, squints her eyes.

LINDSAY

Danny?

RUSS

Danny? What happened to Warren the Peace Corps he-man?

LINDSAY

Russ. What the hell?

RUSS

I'm out of here. For real this time.

LINDSAY

Just because... Oh come on, it was probably all my fault for being in such a hurry.

RUSS

No, Lindsay. The things you said to me last night... You can't take them back now. I'll never forget them.

LINDSAY

I was just teasing you. Now that you got your cherry popped, it'll go much smoother. I promise. Come back to bed, cutie.

RUSS

I obviously don't have a particular style yet, but whatever it is, I don't think it's going to be compatible with yours.

LINDSAY

Just because I'm not into all that kissing and cuddling crap?

RUSS

That's probably a big part of it.

LINDSAY

Oh grow up, Russy boy.

RUSS

Stop saying that. I'm trying to grow up. To tell you the truth, I'm not so sure you're as grown up as you think you are. All I know is that you're bringing back bad memories of me feeling stupid and immature and... and worthless. In every way. I haven't felt this bad about myself in two years. Why do you think that is? You know what, I have a theory. No, it's an equation actually, something a fancy Ivy League pre-med like you can relate to: Lindsay equals Russ feels like... shit. That's right - shit. Some things never change. I pity the poor Bangladeshi bastard who gets treated by you. He'll probably wish he were dead instead.

Exit RUSS. LINDSAY sits up in bed, straightens herself up a bit, turns on the tensor lamp, grabs a pen and her text book and starts studying. Then SHE gets up, walks over to the mirror and looks at herself, grows increasingly disgusted. Lights fade to the Grateful Dead's "Goin' Down the Road."

## SCENE 12

May 1977. Lights up on RUSS, in his dorm room, opening a package HE just received in the mail. HE still wears khakis, but is clean-shaven.

RUSS

What do you want?

(Pulls out a New Testament, finds a typewritten letter wedged inside it.)

A bible?

Lights up on LINDSAY in her dorm room, writing the letter.

BOTH

"May 16, 1977. Dear Russ..."

RUSS

"I bet you want to throw this whole package in the trash now that you know it's from the Ice B dash-dash-dash-dash of Princeton..." Um, kind of. "Please don't. You need to hear what I have to say..." Whatever, Lindsay.

LINDSAY

"So much has changed since you came here freshman year. What a despicable person I was. The more I thought about how I acted, the worse I felt until I was so disgusted with myself, I could hardly bear to look in the mirror."

RUSS

Good.

LINDSAY

"So I went to Church, really for the first time in my life since my family wasn't religious, and, Russ, I was reborn on the spot and took Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."

RUSS

(Laughing)

Holy...

LINDSAY

"Don't laugh - it's not funny. I realized that I was getting washed away in the sins of the flesh. It repulses me to think how I was then. And I've sworn myself to celibacy until marriage."

RUSS

Fat chance.

LINDSAY

"Seriously, Russ. I don't care if you don't believe me. So, anyway, remember that big lecture I gave you about helping people?"

RUSS

Vaguely.

LINDSAY

"Well, I did it. Last summer, I went to Bangladesh and worked delivering food, meds and clothing to sick, starving, destitute people."

RUSS

Good for you.

LINDSAY

"I know you're probably impressed, but don't be."

RUSS

Why not?

LINDSAY

"The whole experience left me cold and empty. It's so obvious, I don't know why it took me so long to figure out. I was number one in the class after all (just joking!)."

RUSS

You're such a hoot.

LINDSAY

"Russ, don't you see? Wanting to tend to the earthly needs of those people was such a shallow, superficial goal compared to the idea of bringing the Word of the Lord to them, for it is they who knoweth not the Lord who are truly sick, underprivileged and malnourished and they who knoweth the Lord who are enriched beyond all worldly gains regardless of their circumstances in this temporary transient life."

RUSS

O-kay.

LINDSAY

"So once finals are over next week, I'm going to the jungles of Papua New Guinea to work with a mission devoted to bringing the Gospel to the indigenous tribes there. I'm finally going to get it right, Russ! I'm so excited, I can hardly wait!"

RUSS

Man. Lindsay.

LINDSAY

"Which bring us to you."

RUSS

Me?

LINDSAY

"I fear for your soul, Russ."

RUSS

Huh?

LINDSAY

"If you have not yet joined His flock, time is running out. Eternal damnation is just around the corner and you can't step over it or go around it."

RUSS

Carl's poem?

LINDSAY

"If you still want to be a writer, more power to you as long as what you write is in service to the Lord and Him alone. If not, Russ, words cannot come close to describing what awaits you."

RUSS

Hellfire and brimstone, right Lindsay?

LINDSAY

"I'm telling you this for your own good, for old time's sake. Read this Holy Book as a first priority and pay it heed. Stick it on your shelf at your own risk. Godspeed on your journey and may the Lord always be your shepherd. Lindsay."

During this monologue, HE  
puts his hand in his pocket,  
plays with Amanda's necklace,  
pulls it out towards the end.

RUSS

"Dear Lindsay,

Thanks for the present. Despite your orders to the contrary, it is sitting on my shelf because I have absolutely no time to read it right now, between finals, papers and working in the cafeteria. Not all of us are smart enough to get a full scholarship. But I did read your letter with alternating amusement and revulsion. From what little I recall from Sunday School about Jesus, he said it was very important to be humble - strange, then, that your letter would drip with arrogance from beginning to end. I also remember something about empathy, repentance and forgiveness. Good for you that you were disgusted with yourself, but did you feel bad for me for a second? Did you say "I'm sorry" or ask my forgiveness? No. You think that simply declaring that you found Jesus and ordering me to believe what you happen to think you believe right now wipes the slate clean. If Jesus were around today, I humbly suggest he might not agree with you.

"I'm much different than you. I'm not out to save the world or be the best person who ever lived. It's all I can do to keep up my grades here, pay my tuition and try to be an

RUSS (CONT'D)

okay person. Sometimes I don't do such a good job at it. But from what I remember about the real Jesus, as opposed to the one you claim to believe in, I think he might cut me slack. As for you, I'm not so sure about that. You fear for my soul? I fear for the poor natives you're about to terrorize. Don't kid yourself, Lindsay, you haven't changed at all. If you ever write to me again, I won't read it. That's my only defense against your unique brand of torture. Russ. P.S. Carl's poem had nothing to do with religion and you know it, because you're the one who explained it to me."

LINDSAY

Oh Russ. There might not be hope for you.

Scene transition to the  
Rolling Stones' "Shattered."

## SCENE 13

April 1979. Lights up on RUSS, in his dorm room, sitting on his desk chair, opening a package HE just received in the mail. HE is wearing a graduation cap and gown.

RUSS

Who the heck... Nepal?

HE brings out a small statue of the Buddha. Soothing Far-Eastern sitar music begins and continues throughout scene. HE finds a handwritten card taped to it.

Huh? Lindsay Kramer?

Enter LINDSAY, in a Buddhist robe, sitting on a mat with her legs crossed, preferably in lotus position, writing the letter.

BOTH

"May 17, 1979. Dear Russ..."

RUSS

"Happy graduation! You are graduating aren't you? Just kidding - I'm sure you made it. I know what you wrote in your last letter, but come on, we both know you can't resist reading this! Lindsay's in Nepal of all places? Why isn't she back at Princeton praying to Jesus and graduating on schedule?" Yeah, why isn't she?

LINDSAY

"Because she graduated last year, Russ! You know I was always in such a hurry (wink, wink)."

RUSS

That's just...

LINDSAY

"Anyway, everything you said in that last letter was true. I was arrogant and hypocritical back then and when I was in New Guinea, things just didn't feel right, ramming Christianity down those poor people's throats. But I finally realized what the problem was. All my life I had been looking outside myself for answers and meaning, when I should have been looking inside. For it is only from within that enlightenment springs. I know what you're thinking, but this is for real this time. Western religions rely on supernatural deities that command us to believe certain things and act certain ways. But believing and acting out of fear of vengeance from on high is not the same as believing and acting through knowledge from within of what is eternally true and just. After all my efforts since I was a little girl to know everything worth knowing in this world, I finally realize that the only thing I know for sure is that I don't know anything at all. I am humble now, Russ - more humble than someone like you could possibly grasp.

RUSS puts the letter away, then contemplates, perhaps imitates and plays with the Buddha respectfully for the rest of the scene.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

"That's why I decided to give up all my worldly possessions and go here, to this Ashram in the Himalayas, to spend all of my waking hours in contemplation and meditation. I am going to look deep within myself, and in so doing lose all ego and become one with the universe, as long as it takes for the truth to emerge. And then for the rest of my days I will act upon that truth. It is not my place to command you to follow the path to enlightenment, for it is ultimately your choice whether to continue to dwell in the world of endless suffering to which you are so deeply, but mistakenly, committed - a world which is, after all, a mere illusion. But please put this Holy Buddha on your shelf for

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

inspiration and a reminder that you have the power to deliver yourself from darkness if only you would follow the way. Namaste, Russy boy. P.S. I almost forgot to tell you - you can't respond to this letter because they don't accept incoming mail here. But I think I can be at peace with my assumption that you are deeply grateful for the wisdom and guidance which this letter graciously bestows. Namaste again, Russ. Remember, it's never too late to deliver yourself into the light."

RUSS

Never again, you...

Lights fade, as we begin to hear the sounds of crickets and the occasional hoot owl.

## SCENE 14

Back to the boulder field, later into the same evening of Scene 1, summer 1985. The stage is darker than in Scene 1, and becomes a full night sky by the time the fireflies come out midway through the scene. RUSS is winded and distraught, clumsily getting himself dressed. LINDSAY is calmly and expertly straightening herself up.

LINDSAY

And then what? Hello? Russ? And then what?

RUSS

Are you serious? Do you realize what just happened here?

LINDSAY

Oh don't get all General Hospital on me. It was just something we needed to get out of our system. Like some phlegm we needed to cough up.

RUSS

I've got a wife, Lindsay. And a kid.

LINDSAY

That's what makes you family men so much fun - the stoic desperation giving way to infinite gratitude.

RUSS

I'll never do that again.

LINDSAY

Please. Spare me.

RUSS

I'm serious.

LINDSAY

Look, you can't ever say you've been faithful again, so you might as well go for it.

RUSS

No. It's only because it was you. And I never want to see your face again.

LINDSAY

What, you think you've always been in love with me or some other juvenile delusion?

RUSS

You've always had my number, there's nothing I can do about it. Knowing there's that other part of you that made those poems - it still gets to me after all this time. The mystery, the tragic irony, some B.S. like that, I don't know. But it's more an obsession than love. I think I might have been really in love once, but it wasn't with you.

LINDSAY

Who was it then, Amanda Bell?

RUSS

None of your business.

LINDSAY

I knew it! I could hear it just in the way you said her name!

Firefly effect.

RUSS

And there they glow. Ladies and gentlemen, sit back, relax and enjoy tonight's presentation of the dance of the fireflies.

THEY watch the fireflies for a while, expressionless.

RUSS

Are there less of them than there used to be?

LINDSAY

I don't think so.

RUSS

Why isn't it doing it for me, Lindsay, like it did back then?

LINDSAY

Maybe you're finally growing up. Continue, please. What next?

RUSS

Russ graduated from W. State with a 3.67 in English. He wanted to go for a Masters, but was buried in loans as it was. So he crawled back to this pit and found a job teaching English at Coburn Junior High. But you know that thing they always say about teaching - "it's that one kid - you make a difference in that one kid's life and that'll make it all worthwhile?"

LINDSAY

Bullshit propaganda, right?

RUSS

Exactly. In four years of ever living hell, I never met that kid. Not even close.

LINDSAY

I could have told you that.

RUSS

And then Susan - my wife - got knocked up. Well, she wasn't my wife at the time, but she was soon after that, by some coincidence.

LINDSAY

Way to go, Russy boy.

RUSS

So I finally took Trevor up on his offer to teach me how to flip burgers and deep fry and that's what I do now - night shift at his diner.

LINDSAY

Russ, what are you thinking? There's no money in that.

RUSS

Why, what do you do that makes so much money?

LINDSAY

I'm going to be a surgeon - start my internship next month.

RUSS

Wow. Damn. That's great. You went on and became a doctor. You're gonna help people, just like you said.

LINDSAY

Yeah. Rich people.

RUSS

They're not the only ones who need surgery.

LINDSAY

Not just any surgery - elective cosmetic surgery.

RUSS

Meaning...

LINDSAY

I'm gonna hack on tubs of narcissist lard so they can pretend they're not the sagging sacks of shit we all know they still are.

RUSS

That sounds gross.

LINDSAY

It's also a license to print money.

RUSS

If money's all you care about, why not just do it the old-fashioned way and marry a rich guy?

LINDSAY

Be some jerk's personal property? Those days are long gone, Russy boy.

RUSS

So... that means you have to do something gross?

LINDSAY

If you want to make *real* money before you turn into a geezer.

RUSS

My novel's not gross.

LINDSAY

You wrote a novel?

RUSS

I'm startin' it next week.

LINDSAY

You need to lose that writer facade, Russ. Quickly. As in, like, five years ago.

RUSS

It's not a facade. It's what keeps me going.

LINDSAY

Come on. First of all, you'd actually have to *write* it. Then, it would have to be a bestseller to make any money. You'd get better odds playing the slots in Vegas.

RUSS

What's with this money thing, anyway?

LINDSAY

"Money thing"? I guess you always were a step or two behind the game.

RUSS

Excuse me?

LINDSAY

I remember when you finally realized you were going to die someday - you went seventeen years before that basic fact dawned on you. And you know something, that day is a lot closer now than it was then. And all that horseshit about love and music and poetry and nature and higher consciousness blah blah blah - that's what *teenagers* do to try not to face that one simple unbearable fact. Don't you see? It's just a temporary diversionary tactic. But then most people, to varying degrees, grow up and realize that

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

the only thing that really matters is that "money thing" - because money may not buy you happiness - happiness doesn't happen, Russ.

RUSS

You don't know that.

LINDSAY

Yes. *I. Do.* And I hope you don't think that shotgun wife of yours you're already sick of or your little snot-nosed brat who'll get sick of you soon enough or, for Christ's sake, "writing" something, will make it happen. But that "money thing" - and only that - sure as hell can make you more comfortable. And that's all you can hope for - to be comfortable while you wait for the guillotine to drop. That's what it boils down to. You are extremely uncomfortable right now. The sooner you grow up, take your head out of your ass and figure out how to make some dough, the less uncomfortable you'll be.

RUSS

But you weren't a ditz-brain teenager. You were a serious person. Really serious.

LINDSAY

About what?

RUSS

The violin...

LINDSAY

Which I quit.

RUSS

(Continuous)

Poetry. This place. Helping people.

LINDSAY

And Jesus. Don't leave him out.

RUSS

Make fun of it now all you want. You were dead serious about those things.

LINDSAY

None of those things did anything for me. Ever. *That's* why I was so serious about them.

RUSS

You're crazy.

LINDSAY

Wrong. I *thought* I was crazy. Not to be able "feel" the way the rest of you claimed to feel. Poor little ole Lindsay, wasting all those precious years trying her heart out not to see the world for what she always knew it was.

RUSS

So, that's why you did the poetry journal?

LINDSAY

I thought it would help me learn to be more of a "girl," to appreciate everyone else's "deep poetic feelings." But all of it was just a load of crap. Particularly those anonymous poems you liked so much.

RUSS

Don't say that.

LINDSAY

They were all the same to me. That's why I let you pick everything.

RUSS

Except mine. Remember?

LINDSAY

Drop it, Russ.

RUSS

But you cared about *me*.

LINDSAY

Drop it, Russ.

RUSS

As a person.

LINDSAY

Before you get hurt.

RUSS

*Romantically.* Right? Right?

LINDSAY

I did try to like kissing you and being all "sensitive" and lovey-dovey \ and...

RUSS

That may not be your particular area of strength, but you cared about me. I felt it.

LINDSAY

Russ, from that very first day, the only thing I ever cared about was fucking you. If it would make you feel better to call that "romantic," be my guest.

RUSS

You disgust me, you know that? You always have.

LINDSAY

Hmmm, yeah, I sort of picked up on that a few minutes ago when you were in my arms all helpless and whimpering.

RUSS

I'm curious, Lindsay, when you went off to the Himalayas to be oh so humble and look deep inside yourself...? When you looked deep inside yourself in all that humility of yours, what did you see?

LINDSAY

What do *you* see - when you look at me?

RUSS

A delicate, beautiful poet I'll never understand.

LINDSAY

Try again.

RUSS

A sell-out... greedy....

That's better.

LINDSAY

Ruthless.

RUSS

Keep going.

LINDSAY

Slimy.

RUSS

Excellent.

LINDSAY

Whore.

RUSS

LINDSAY  
(Moving towards him)  
Whom you're already starting to want again, despite your disgust.

RUSS holds her off.

Or maybe because of it.

RUSS  
That's an inspiring story. I'll be sure to tell my grandkids that one.

LINDSAY  
You should - the sooner they learn it the better.

RUSS  
Unbelievable.

LINDSAY  
Why unbelievable? Because you've never heard it before? Or because you've never heard it from a "chick" before?

RUSS  
Because I've never heard it from anyone who was so full of it before. How come you came here, tonight? Huh? Cuz that

RUSS (CONT'D)

"Neanderthal gang" of mine told you this person you never cared about was up here, that's why.

LINDSAY

(Gesturing to the fireflies)

I just wanted to see this again.

RUSS

I thought it didn't do anything for you.

LINDSAY

Not in the way it was supposed to. But it did fascinate me. Time after time. Like a sick horror movie. Sitting on top of this foul wound in the Earth, listening to the infernal crickets, watching hideous little creatures with flashbulbs in their butts flit around like a bunch of imbeciles till they all fuck and die. And people like you try to convince yourselves you think it's beautiful.

RUSS

Amanda would have thought it was beautiful.

LINDSAY

Why do you have to bring her into everything!?

RUSS

You didn't let me take her here.

LINDSAY

Take her here tomorrow if it's that's so important to you. See what I care.

RUSS

It's too late.

LINDSAY

It was a joke, Russ. Jesus.

SHE takes a slip of paper and pen out of her purse and begins scribbling on it.

Anyway, all I have left to say, for old time's sake, is *get it together*. Time is ticking.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

(Offering him the slip of paper)

Here's my number in L.A. Things are really hopping out there. If you ever decide to get some cajones and make a real change, give me a call \ and I'll...

RUSS

Get out of my sight.

LINDSAY

(Beginning to exit)

Suit yourself.

RUSS

Wait.

LINDSAY

(Returning, offering him her number again)

That was quick.

RUSS

No. Why did you call them "those anonymous poems"?

LINDSAY

Huh?

RUSS

Your poems. I know it's the other side of your brain and it's personal, but, like tonight, you always called them "those anonymous poems" when we both knew you wrote them. That always bugged the hell out of me. How come you did that?

LINDSAY

Because I didn't write them.

RUSS

What are you, schizo or something?

LINDSAY

I just let you believe what you wanted to believe.

RUSS  
No.

LINDSAY  
Yes. Yes, Russ.

RUSS  
What for?

LINDSAY  
Because it made you want me. God knows why, but it did.

RUSS  
Then... Who wrote them?

LINDSAY  
(Beginning to exit)  
Who cares? Go make some money. Okay?

RUSS  
You know love is real, Lindsay.

LINDSAY  
Love? How so?

RUSS  
Because you heard it in the way I said her name.

SHE glares at him, starts to say something harsh but catches herself, makes a dismissive gesture to the fireflies, then exits. RUSS stays, brings out Amanda's necklace.

RUSS (cont'd)  
"i feel like a broken doll  
and  
nobody loves me -----  
enough  
to put  
all the pieces  
back together  
again

RUSS, AMANDA (V.O.)

and  
again  
and  
again  
and. . . . ."

RUSS

Amanda.

AMANDA (V.O.)

"i feel like a broken doll...  
and  
nobody loves me -----  
enough  
to put  
all the pieces  
back together  
again

RUSS, AMANDA (V.O.)

and  
again  
and  
again  
and. . . . ."

Lights and crickets fade,  
then off in sync with the  
last word "and."

THE END.