

CRAZY S.O.B.

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - DAY

MANFRED SMITH, about 30 with roguish good looks, sits on an icy lake. He stands slowly, takes a step forward and

His feet slip out from under him and he falls on his ass.

A duck walks over to him with and looks at him.

MANFRED

What are you looking at?

He stands up and falls back down. The duck bites his leg. He kicks at it.

The duck quacks and scurries away.

Manfred LAUGHS and then stands again.

Loud CRACKING noise.

Manfred sees that the ice is cracking beneath him.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE/HALLWAY - DAY

The lounge where the communication teachers hang out is an old journalism room.

Manfred sits with ERIC HOLDMAN, who has a literature book sitting in front of him and BEV BOSLEY, youngish, also with a literature book, a stack of papers in front of her.

Lunch sacks and bottles clutter the table.

MANFRED

That's the way I feel sometimes.
Standing on ice. My mind and my
body racing, the feeling I'm
totally out of control.

Bev looks up from her papers.

BEV

Maybe ice is a symbol your life is
going nowhere and if you don't get
off, you're going to fall in and
drown.

Eric laughs.

ERIC
The ice is not a thing ...

He pauses dramatically.

ERIC (CONT'D)
It's Kally.

MANFRED
What the hell is that supposed to mean?

ERIC
She's frigid.

Bev laughs again. She slaps her hands on the table --

BEV
No. It's someone he's hurt, and his guilt is the cracking ice.

ERIC
Bev, that's bullshit.

He turns serious, but Manfred knows it's coming.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Or maybe Manfred is just a crazy S.O.B.

MANFRED
Thank you for all the support.

BEV
If you want my support, grade my papers.

MANFRED
If you need dream therapy, talk to Lizzy.

BEV
I'm sure she's quite ... Freudian.

ERIC
I bet she could help you with your dreams ... or something.

Eric stands.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Drama class. Dumping ground.

He leaves the room.

BEV

Now that he's gone, maybe we can be
a little more serious.

MANFRED

Oh?

Bev reaches across the table and puts her hand on top of his.

He stares at her, puppy love expression on his face.

BEV

Seriously, Manfred, maybe you ought
to see some Lizzy. She's a licensed
therapist who works a side
practice.

MANFRED

I don't think so.

She pats his hand, and then stands.

KALLY JONES, younger than the others, always busy and in
movement, almost antsy, enters the room.

KALLY

Bev.

Bev smiles.

BEV

Kally.

Kally turns her attention back to Manfred.

KALLY

I thought we could eat lunch
together.

MANFRED

I have papers to grade.

KALLY

Your loss.

She bounces back out the door.

Manfred stands and walks toward the door with Bev walking
beside him.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

When they get out in the hallway, Bev turns to him.

BEV
You do know ... your girlfriend ...
can be a big bitch.

MANFRED
I'm committed.

BEV
Probably soon.

Manfred and Bev pass some students in the hallway. One, TESSA LONG, confident and well dressed, strides up to them, makes it a point to single out Manfred when she talks.

TESSA
I can't wait for the play tryouts,
Mr. Smith.

Manfred gives her a quizzical, why should I care, look.

MANFRED
Good for you, Tessa.

Tessa looks at him like he's weird. Starts to say something. Shrugs and walks away.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
She's just like jock itch.

BEV
Jock itch?

MANFRED
Annoying as hell, hard to get rid
of, and makes my butt itch.

Bev CHUCKLES. They walk on down the hall. Reach the main office's door.

The principal, DAVID MILBURN, sticks his head out the door.

DAVID
Smith, I need to talk to you.

Slams the office door.

MANFRED
I have to go to the principal's
office.

BEV

Someone wants to spank you.

She walks down the hall. He smiles, stares at her, as she goes.

MANFRED

Was that a hint?

Pauses at the door briefly.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

CAROL CLEERLY, main secretary, smiles at him. SHERRY STEVENS, assistant CLAPS.

He stands still taking it all in.

CAROL

Never in the history of Hill Street High School have our students performed so well on the BAT-CHIT test.

David steps out of his office with a sheaf of papers.

DAVID

These scores are unbelievable, Manny.

He reaches out and shakes Manfred's hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You are unbelievable, Manny.

David hands Manfred a business sized envelop.

DAVID (CONT'D)

A bonus.

Manfred pulls something from the envelope that looks like money. He stares at them, his eyes grow wide, and a huge smile splits his face.

MANFRED

Pizza Hut coupons!

INT. OUTSIDE OFFICE DOOR - DAY

Manfred stands at the principal's door, eyes still focusing in Bev's direction.

He smiles.

MANFRED
Pizza Hut is better than sex.

DAVID
Pardon me?

MANFRED
Oh. Dr. Milburn.

DAVID
Why are you just standing there?

MANFRED
I was... uh ... talking to Bev.

DAVID
Talk to Bev about sex off campus.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Manfred and David walk into the office.

MANFRED
I was pleased with the BAT scores.

DAVID
When teachers do their jobs,
students learn.

Manfred follows David into the inner sanctum of the principal's office.

David closes the door behind him, turns to look at Manfred, doesn't offer him a seat.

Manfred sits anyway, stares at his principal.

Even though it's only a few seconds, Manfred starts to get nervous. Taps his feet on the floor. Reaches forward and grabs a handful of candy sitting on top of David's desk.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Save some for everyone else.

Manfred drops the candy back in the dish, recoils as if he's been slapped.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You may wonder why I've asked you
here.

Manfred CHUCKLES nervously.

MANFRED

I hope I'm not in trouble.

He chuckles. David just looks at him like a disgusted parent looks at a kid who has just said something a touch inappropriate.

DAVID

You're not. ... Yet.

David sits up. All motion ceases.

MANFRED

I wasn't really talking about sex with Bev. I was talking about how Pizza Hut was really good almost ... not quite ... better than...never mind.

DAVID

Do you want you to direct the fall play?

Manfred stiffens, frowns.

MANFRED

Eric directs the fall play.

DAVID

He's coaching cross country.

MANFRED

I'm not qualified to direct --

DAVID

You've published two plays.

MANFRED

Three. And some poetry.

DAVID

See. Eric runs. He's the only one who can do cross country. Anybody can do a play if they have Tessa Long as the lead.

MANFRED

Tessa is annoying.

DAVID

Her mother is school board president.

Manfred frowns.

DAVID (CONT'D)
There's a stipend.

Manfred leans forward, grabs candy. David frowns.

MANFRED
How much?

DAVID
\$500.

MANFRED
It's not worth it.

Manfred leans back in his seat as if to say. "I'm not doing this."

DAVID
You don't have a choice. It's in
your contract.

Manfred eyes David, leans forward, grabs a handful of candy, like a petulant child, and stands.

David turns to some papers, dismisses Manfred who starts for the door, pauses, turns.

MANFRED
Any play?

DAVID
It better not suck.

Manfred walks into the outer office.

No one acknowledges him.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Manfred steps through the door.

Tessa waits for him.

TESSA
What play are we doing?

Pauses. Enlightenment.

MANFRED
One of mine.

TESSA
It better not suck.

As she walks down the hall, Manfred scratches his butt.

KALLY (O.C.)
She makes mine itch too.

Manfred jumps.

KALLY (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

MANFRED
Making money. See you tonight.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Manfred stands at the door just inside the auditorium.

As he walks slowly toward the stage, all the house lights go down and a single spotlight follows him.

APPLAUSE, soft at first and then louder as he gets closer and closer to the stage.

When he walks up the stage steps and moves toward the podium, the APPLAUSE is thunderous.

He steps behind a podium and raises his hands for quiet.

Like little ripples, the APPLAUSE begins to die down until it is just barely audible.

MANFRED
I want to thank everyone who made
this Tony award possible.

Another BLAST of APPLAUSE and roses fall almost miraculously from heaven, and audience members throw more from their seats.

One hits him in the eye.

He waves to the crowd, picks up one lone rose, and heads to the stage steps where

His feet slide out from under him and he BUMPS down the steps on his ass.

The lights are off, no flowers, no crowd, no applause.

Kally pokes her head in through the auditorium's side door.

KALLY

What are you doing in here?

MANFRED

I'm uh ...

KALLY

Late to your class. Getting fired
does not fit into our plans.

Manfred slowly stands up and rubs his ass.

KALLY (CONT'D)

We'll talk tonight.

Door slams.

INT. MANFRED'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Manfred stands behind his podium. A handful of students sit
in his class.

MANFRED

So what do you think about Carlos's
"Red Wheelbarrow" poem?

Manfred looks up.

Only Tessa has her hand raised.

Looking at her is enough to get her started.

TESSA

I think the white chicken is
people. The wheelbarrow is like a
way out of the rut we're in, and
the rain is like the barriers that
scare the chicken from getting in
the wheelbarrow. So, if you don't
climb into the red wheelbarrow you
don't go anywhere.

Manfred nods his head in a tired, bored manner.

MANFRED

Impressive.

A boy, RON HUNT, raises his hand. He has a buzz hair cut and
he wears an AC-DC t-shirt.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

(Surprised.)

Ron?

RON

Maybe this guy Williams was just a farmer thinking about his farm.

MANFRED

Poetry can be pretty deep.

RON

So can a cesspool.

The bell rings, and the kids jump up to leave.

MANFRED

I didn't dismiss ...

They are already on their way to the door.

Tessa stops at Manfred's podium.

TESSA

See you at tryouts.

She hums as she walks out of the room.

Manfred scratches his butt.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kally and Manfred sit on the couch. He tries to put his arm around her, but she stands up.

KALLY

I need a drink.

A lecherous grin spreads over Manfred's face.

She gets a cup of crushed ice from the fridge and then pulls a whiskey bottle out of the cabinet.

She pours herself a good, stout drink.

MANFRED

(ignoring her)

Could I have one of those?

KALLY

You know where the ice is.

Manfred passes Kally as she goes into the living room.

He gets his ice, pours in whiskey, and heads back to the living room to see Kally sitting on the chair, not the sofa.

He sits on the sofa closest to Kally and tries to look into her eyes. She stares straight ahead.

He gives up, leans back into the sofa, takes a big gulp.

KALLY (CONT'D)
Manny, where do you want to go?

He pats the sofa.

MANFRED
This looks fine.

KALLY
Think with your other head.

He sets his drink down.

MANFRED
Honestly? I want to get out of teaching as soon as I can.

KALLY
Teaching is safe.

MANFRED
I have to do the play.

KALLY
So?

MANFRED
That means less time with you.

KALLY
Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Manfred says nothing, just kind of looks at Kally.

KALLY (CONT'D)
What's the stipend?

MANFRED
Not nearly enough.

KALLY
Every little bit helps.

MANFRED
I feel trapped.

FLASH:

Sound of GURGLING water from a fish tank.

One fish has its nose stuck right up to the glass.

END OF FLASH:

KALLY

Don't be so dramatic.

MANFRED

I'm a writer.

KALLY

You've had two plays published --

Manfred, with an edge.

MANFRED

Three. And poetry.

KALLY

What were your royalties last year?

MANFRED

Every little bit helps.

Mocking tone which Kally ignores.

KALLY

You're not even working on anything.

MANFRED

I'm working on a verse novel.

KALLY

I haven't noticed.

MANFRED

I know.

Kally looks into her drink.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

My poetry is good. My buddy says he can turn it into a song. His band is up and coming.

KALLY

Sing it.

His voice trails off and he looks into his drink. Smiles.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Metal band on stage. Lights down except for the ones flashing on the band.

Singer in black with tats all over his arms and neck.

Discordant CHORD REVERBERATES, fans SCREAM.

EXPLOSION spitting fire.

More SCREAMS.

SINGER

(screams)

I'm in love with you. It's a love
that's true.

SHREDDING guitar, SCREAMS from audience and singer.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Love is like a summer breeze. It
rattles in the autumn leaves. I
want you more than I want life.
Need for you to end my strife.

Everything on the stage freezes.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kally stares at him.

KALLY

You, true; breeze, leaves; life,
strife? Summer breeze and autumn
leaves. Good poets avoid mixed
metaphors.

MANFRED

It needs work.

KALLY

Writing is a great hobby.

MANFRED

My writing is my way out of this
cesspool.

Anger flashes in his face, but it quickly subsides in the
silence.

Manfred sags with an almost explosive exhalation.

KALLY

My roommate in college wrote the best poetry I've ever read.

This gets Manfred's attention, and he sits up.

KALLY (CONT'D)

She got herself a tat and went Bohemian. She works as a bartender in a dive in the middle of nowhere.

MANFRED

You've never told me about her.

Kally takes a drink and glares at him.

KALLY

She gets lonely, and I go have drinks with her.

MANFRED

When do you do that?

KALLY

When you're doing your duties.

MANFRED

You go without me?

KALLY

You do stuff without me.

MANFRED

No, I don't.

Kally falls silent, looks guilty.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I work extra hours for extra income, and you drink it up.

KALLY

You better stop right there.

Manfred does. He starts to take a drink, notices her look, and sets the glass on the table.

KALLY (CONT'D)

She doesn't think teaching's a trap.

MANFRED

I'm not gonna quit until my writing comes through.

Kally gets up from her chair and sits beside Manfred on the couch.

KALLY
I love you, Manny, but the truth
about hope --

MANFRED
Hope is a thing with--

She leans forward to kiss him, pushes him down on the couch
kisses him again.

KALLY
Let me show you some reality.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Stars sprinkle the sky. Water laps up on the beach.

Manfred lies on a blanket with *Bev*, both in swim suits.

A yacht is in a dock nearby. On a hill behind them are lights
illuminating a beautiful mansion.

A falling star streaks across the sky.

MANFRED
We get a wish.

Silence for about two seconds.

BEV
What did you wish for?

MANFRED
I'm not saying.

BEV
Then lets communicate nonverbally.

MANFRED
Once a speech teacher --

She kisses him, lies on top of him.

He unhooks her bra, chuckles.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I'm getting my wish.

He rolls over with her, fumbles with her bottoms.

BEV

We need to talk about my biological clock.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Manfred and Kally lie on the couch. Kally is down to her undergarments.

KALLY

We're not getting any younger.

MANFRED

I'm 25.

KALLY

Let me tell you what I want.

MANFRED

(under his breath)

Oh, no.

KALLY

What?

MANFRED

What do you want?

KALLY

I want to get married and have kids. I want to teach until I'm 55 and then I want to retire and travel before I get old and wrinkly.

He reaches for her again, and they kiss.

MANFRED

You will never wrinkle. I love your body.

He studies her up and down.

KALLY

But do you love me?

MANFRED

You know you're my only girl.

She SQUEALS and grabs his face to kiss it.

FLASH

Nearby, the fish tank gurgles and fish happily chase one another except for the one with his nose pressed up against the glass.

It slowly turns over on its back and floats to the top of the water.

EXT. DRIVEWAY IN FRONT OF MANFRED'S HOUSE - DAY

Manfred pulls his car into the driveway. When he gets out, he goes straight to his mailbox, pulls out a business sized envelope.

He hurries as quickly as he can to his front door, unlocks it, and flips on a light.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Six empty beer cans sit on a coffee table. A long slip of paper is ripped in two.

Manfred snores on the couch.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Manfred sits on a stage shrouded in darkness.

Two spotlights shine on his face. His heart THUDS like a bass drum in his head.

Chains wrap his body.

The GODITER, in black robes and wearing a SCREAM mask, sits in the light and sound booth twenty feet above the floor.

He stares at Manfred.

MANFRED

Could I have something for my
headache?

GODITER

No!

The voice booms like the wizard from Oz.

MANFRED

Mr. uh ... what should I call you?

GODITER

I am Goditer and I will decide.

MANFRED

Decide what?

GODITER

Your fate, stupid. And you call yourself a writer.

MANFRED

Speaking of writing.

GODITER

What kind of transition is that?

MANFRED

Uh, what was wrong with the poems I sent to you.

GODITER

Mr. Smith, thank you for your submission. While we appreciate the thought and care that you put into it, it doesn't fit our current needs. We wish you luck in placing it elsewhere.

MANFRED

It's a form letter.

GODITER

Let me be more personal then. Manny. Your poetry sucks. Please refrain from dirtying the literary waters with this flotsam.

The Goditor stands.

GODITER (CONT'D)

Feed him to the pit.

The chains tighten and lift Manfred in the air.

Metal SCREECHES, chains JANGLE.

A hole opens in the stage and Manfred dangles over it.

In the hole is a swirling whirlpool of papers.

The chain lowers him closer and closer to the hole.

Manfred squirms and twists, the chains making horrible JANGLING noises.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alarm clock SHRIEKING.

Manfred squirms on the couch, falls off, and thuds to the floor.

He looks at his phone.

Runs out the door.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Manfred gargles mouthwash.

LIZZY LUKENS, school counselor, comes into the dark room.

LIZZY

Oh, there you are.

She sniffs.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I hope that mouthwash is alcohol free.

He looks up, dribbles down his chin. Spits.

MANFRED

That bad?

LIZZY

I'd avoid the principal.

She looks him over.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

So, you didn't change last night?

MANFRED

How'd you know?

LIZZY

Kally mentioned it to the entire office staff.

Manfred leans on the sink; his face twists.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I'm a professional counselor.

Manfred pulls a coffee cup out of a cabinet, a small mug at first, but then he puts it back and pulls out a 16 ounce red Solo cup and fills it with coffee.

When he picks it up ...

MANFRED

Shit!

He drops it in the sink, the coffee spills all over the front of his shirt. He jumps around yelling shit several times. When he finally stops...

LIZZY

Maybe they won't smell the beer now. I want to see you in my office during your prep period.

She looks at him and laughs.

Eric comes in as Lizzy exits.

Manfred spies him.

MANFRED

You prick.

Eric holds up his hand.

ERIC

It wasn't my idea, so don't get pissed at me.

MANFRED

You didn't complain.

ERIC

I'm not stupid.

MANFRED

You're not a runner either.

Eric LAUGHS.

ERIC

Speaking of running. I think Kally's looking for you.

Manfred flees.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Manfred strides down the hallway just as Tessa comes out of the girls' bathroom.

She flips her hair.

TESSA
Hello, Mr. Smith.

She walks away. He scratches his butt.

Then he sees Kally turning the hallway corner. He ducks into the boys' bathroom.

Ron Hunt looks at himself in the mirror. He turns to see Manfred.

RON
You wore those yesterday

Ron sniffs.

RON (CONT'D)
I wouldn't go near Milburn today.

MANFRED
Go in the hallway and tell me if it's safe.

RON
Sure thing.

He pops out, pops back in.

RON (CONT'D)
It's safe.

Manfred steps out of the bathroom where Kally leans against some lockers.

He glares at Ron who smiles.

RON (CONT'D)
You didn't say from what.

KALLY
Were you hiding from me?

MANFRED
Of course not.

KALLY
Are you lying?

Ron steps between the two of them.

RON

Not at all. In fact, he wanted me to be on the lookout for you.

KALLY

How sweet.

She starts toward him, but Ron intercedes again.

RON

I think I know how I can pull my grade up, Mr. Smith.

KALLY

My kids are going to the LMC during your plan period. I'll be alone in my room.

He takes a step back.

MANFRED

I'm going to the counselor.

Kelly frowns.

KALLY

Lizzy? You're not going to talk about me, are you?

MANFRED

She thinks I might have a mental issue.

She giggles.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

School stuff. Go on down to my room, Ron.

He walks away.

KALLY

Maybe you should talk to her about your drinking.

He ignores her and keeps walking.

KALLY (CONT'D)

Will I see you after school?

MANFRED

Later, sweetheart.

He walks down the hall.

Kally heads off in the opposite direction.

INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Manfred closes the door behind him, and Lizzy hands him a shirt.

He holds the shirt, looks around.

She points to a small door at one end of her office and watches him until he gets to the door.

He looks back over his shoulder at her, and she gives him a quick wave and a smile.

Lizzy picks up the phone.

LIZZY
Julie, hold my calls.

She pauses.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Thanks, I'm perfectly safe.

Toilet FLUSHES.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
I have to go.

Manfred comes out of the toilet, looking a little unmatched with his Hill Street High School Heroes sweat shirt and a pair of black dress pants.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Did you take a dump?

She GROANS.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Oh my god, you did. Beer shit is the worst.

She takes a can of air freshener and sprays it all over the room.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Sit down.

He starts to sit right in front of her desk. On it is a bowl of round candies.

He helps himself.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Not too close.

She waves her hand in front of her nose. The sprays him.

He grabs some more candy and scoots his chair back. His feet start tapping.

MANFRED
What do you need, Ms. Lukens?

LIZZY
Lizzy. You have a master's degree
in English, don't you?

He reaches the few feet from his chair to her desk and gets more candy.

With his mouth full...

MANFRED
It ain't done me no good.

He chuckles, but Lizzy doesn't.

LIZZY
I can make life easier for you.

MANFRED
You know a hit man?

Lizzy glares at him.

LIZZY
Kally's your problem.

Manfred taps his feet a little faster.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Maybe you're not right for this.
Eric has a master's --

MANFRED
Screw, Eric!

He pauses.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Uh, sorry, just feeling a little,
uh ...

LIZZY

Angry?

Manfred's knees are bouncing a little now. Lizzy watches him.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

You've always had the ... less motivated students dumped into your classes.

MANFRED

Now they've dumped the play on me.

LIZZY

I've always thought I could make you happy.

Lizzy looks at him, stares actually.

MANFRED

(suddenly serious, eyes narrowing)

What are you suggesting?

LIZZY

Something you'll like, I'm sure, if what I've heard about you is true.

MANFRED

This is kind of sudden.

She blinks, comes back to the task.

LIZZY

Northeast Community College wants someone to teach dual-credit classes.

MANFRED

Oh.

LIZZY

Just oh? You'll have the best Hill Street students

MANFRED

If they're like Tessa--

LIZZY

She graduates this year.

MANFRED

I'm listening.

Manfred reaches for more candy. His nervous movement has settled.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I got my master's because I always wanted to teach at a university.

LIZZY

This is the next best thing. Actually, most dual-credit students are more motivated than your typical college freshman.

MANFRED

I should talk to Kally.

LIZZY

Get her permission then.

His face grows angry. He grabs more candy and stuffs it in his mouth.

MANFRED

I don't need her permission.

LIZZY

Oh?

MANFRED

She makes me crazy sometimes.

LIZZY

Do you *feel* crazy?

MANFRED

No. Maybe. I don't know. Sometimes?

LIZZY

Drinking a lot is a form of self medication.

MANFRED

I don't drink that ...

He sags in his chair.

LIZZY

Have you ever wanted to kill yourself?

MANFRED

Geez, no.

LIZZY

Ever?

MANFRED

Not since high school. Maybe once in middle school. And then in college ...

Lizzy begins scratching notes.

LIZZY

Racing thoughts? Insomnia?

MANFRED

If I ever get lucky enough to sleep, I have some freaky dreams.

LIZZY

Have you gotten tired of the things that you used to find pleasure in?

MANFRED

Maybe.

LIZZY

Mood swings? Feeling high one moment, talking fast, the life of the party; down in the dumps the next. Feeling like you want to cry?

Manfred just nods.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

How's your sex life?

MANFRED

I've never lost pleasure in -- that's a pretty personal question there.

LIZZY

I'm a counselor.

He jumps up.

MANFRED

I'm not crazy.

LIZZY

I didn't say you were.

He starts to leave but then stops.

MANFRED

If I were, what would be my
treatment options?

LIZZY

Besides psychotropic drugs?

He nods, suddenly interested in what she's saying.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Exercise. Personally, I like to
walk in University Park at night. I
got my degree there.

She smiles wistfully.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

When I was young.

MANFRED

You're not old.

Manfred stands up, grabs a couple more pieces of candy.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I'll teach the classes.

He shuts the door behind him. Lizzy taps her pen on her
desk.

INT. MANFRED'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Manfred sits on his desk.

MANFRED

About those plums in the
refrigerator.

Tessa's hand shoots up. Manfred nonchalantly nods to her
like, "Go ahead. I won't get you to shut up anyway."

TESSA

I think the plums represent
something good we save up for
ourselves -- like money for a rainy
day -- but then someone comes along
and takes it.

MANFRED

Very insightful.

Ron raises his hand.

Manfred gestures to him.

RON

I think the guy ate his wife's
plums because they looked awesome.

Kids in class LAUGH.

TESSA

You're so ignorant.

MANFRED

Actually, Tessa, Williams is an
imagist poet. His poetry captures
the everyday. Only English teachers
and snobs think it's deeper.

Bell RINGS.

The kids flee. Tessa lays three play books on his desk.

TESSA

*The Antigone and the Ecstasy. The
Twelfth Night of the Tempest. If
These Walls Could Talk.*

MANFRED

My plays?

TESSA

I had them shipped overnight. Would
you autograph them?

MANFRED

Sure.

He gets a pen.

She leans forward as he starts to write, covers her nose.

TESSA

To Tessa. Hill Street's Starlet.

He scrawls on it and gives it to her. She reads it.

TESSA (CONT'D)

It looks like Harlot.

He scrawls on the other two.

TESSA (CONT'D)

When are we going to have a drama
meeting?

MANFRED

I think ... I think ... After school.

TESSA

I like Antigone. It's got a great female lead. The language of Tempest is too difficult and the other reminds me of that boring play we read last year.

MANFRED

Our Town.

TESSA

That was it.

She starts to leave but then pauses and smiles at him.

Manfred stares at her for a moment and watches her go, and then he walks from his room into the

INT. HALLWAY

Where Kally meets him.

KALLY

You coming over?

MANFRED

Can't. Got a drama meeting.

KALLY

How'd your visit with--

MANFRED

Later, Kally.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

About a dozen kids are scattered on the stage.

Manfred walks down front and sees Tessa sitting on center stage, her legs dangling over the edge.

She smiles at him.

MANFRED

Welcome to our fall play.

He sees Ron.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Ron? Is that you?

RON
Hallucination.

MANFRED
Don't be a smart ass.

Several of the kids look up in surprise, but Ron and HALEY HILL a freshman laugh.

Tessa snarls and turns her back on them.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Not all of you are going to get big parts. You can be a part of the team by taking a small role or working on the crew if I ask. If that doesn't suit you, leave now.

He looks around.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I see no ones' leaving. I'd like to think that all of you are willing to do any small thing to make this play a success.
(He sits down in an auditorium seat.)
I'd like to think that, but I'm guessing you all think you're going to get a big part.

Haley sits on the stage a few kids down from Tessa.

HALEY
That's a little cynical, isn't it?

MANFRED
What?

HALEY
That comment.

Manfred frowns in confusion, sits up in his chair from his slouched position.

MANFRED
Did I say that aloud?

Several of the kids look at him as if he's crazy.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Let's get started.

He sits there. As silence engulfs the auditorium, the kids look in confusion at each other.

TESSA
(quietly)
You're the director.

MANFRED
No one wants to take on a leadership role?

HALEY
We don't even know what the play is.

MANFRED
What did you say your name was?

HALEY
Haley Hill.

MANFRED
I don't recall seeing you around.

HALEY
I'm a freshman.

Tessa barely suppresses a laugh.

MANFRED
Ah, yes, the play.

TESSA
Antigone and the Ecstasy?

MANFRED
(annoyed)
No.

TESSA
The 12th Night of the Tempest? It has some good female roles.

MANFRED
(even more annoyed)
We're not going to do that one either. We're going to do
(dramatic pause)
If These Walls Could Talk about our School. It's a lot like the play *Our Town*.

RON
That was boring.

TESSA
Mr. Smith wrote this one.

HALEY
(To Ron)
You just lost your part.

MANFRED
Our Town is about ... a town. My
play is about ... a school. It has
a narrator in it. Can you guess
his name?

No one answers.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Woody Walls -- and he's the actual
walls of the school. If these *Walls*
could talk.

TESSA
Why does the narrator have to be
male?

HALEY
It's a play on the name. Wooden
Walls. Woody. Geez.

She dismisses Tessa and turns back to Manfred.

HALEY (CONT'D)
You'll never get enough guys to
fill the parts.

RON
He's got me.

MANFRED
I guess I do.

Manfred stands.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
That's all for today.

He walks out of the auditorium.

TESSA
He smells like a brewery.

RON
I like him.

HALEY
So do I.

Tessa laughs and struts off the stage. Ron and Haley look at each other and in unison make GAGGING noises. Then they laugh.

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - DAY

Bev and Eric sit in a large, round booth near the bar and drink beer.

A soccer game plays on the big screen behind the bar. The place has screens everywhere.

Bev munches peanuts from a can on the table.

BEV
He won't come.

ERIC
Or he'll bring her.

Bev CHUCKLES.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You ought to go after Manfred.

BEV
No chance.

ERIC
He's good looking. And definitely faithful.

Eric looks at the big screen. Bev watches him and SIGHS, but he doesn't hear.

BEV
I like someone else.

Eric turns back to her.

BEV (CONT'D)
I don't think he'll ever see me the way I see him.

ERIC
Who's the lucky guy?

When she starts to speak, he interrupts.

ERIC (CONT'D)
There he is. Alone.

Manfred glances at the two of them and then proceeds cautiously.

MANFRED
Bev, I didn't expect to see you here.

ERIC
How'd you shake Kally?

MANFRED
Do you know she goes off and drinks with a friend when I stay late at school?

Manfred sits beside Bev. She scoots away from him a little bit, but he doesn't even notice.

Eric grins at her.

BEV
You didn't tell Kally you were coming?

MANFRED
I don't have to get approval --

ERIC
Where does she think you are?

Beaten, Manfred shifts nervously in his seat.

MANFRED
A drama meeting.

BEV
You lied to her?

Bev and Eric wait for more.

MANFRED
We had a meeting.

ERIC
See there. Not only do you get that gigantic stipend, you get time away from Kally.

The waiter comes to their table.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Beer all around --

MANFRED
I want a Jack and coke.

ERIC
I'll take the mini pizza -- cheese
and sausage.

WAITER
Do you want your regular wings, Mr.
Smith?

He glances over the menu, furrows his brow.

MANFRED
I don't know--

ERIC
You've never gotten anything but
the honey-barbecue, boneless wings
here.

BEV
I'll take a cheeseburger. Plain, no
fries.

ERIC
Come on, Bev. Live a little.

The waiter looks at Manfred who still studies his menu.

WAITER
Perhaps I can come back.

MANFRED
I'll take the chicken tenders.

The waiter starts to walk away.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
With honey barbecue sauce on the
side.

BEV
What did you do at play practice?

MANFRED
Told them which play we're doing.

BEV
What are you doing?

MANFRED

If These Walls Could Talk about Our School.

BEV

Isn't that one of yours?

He nods.

The waiter sets their drinks down. Manfred empties half of his in one chug and then coughs.

ERIC

It's kind of ballsy to direct one of your own.

BEV

He'll get royalties too.

Manfred downs most of the rest of his drink.

ERIC

Royalties and a stipend?

MANFRED

(angrily)

You want the damn play back?

Manfred catches the attention of the waiter who goes to their table.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Give me another one. A little more jack and a little less coke.

Bev and Eric exchange glance.

ERIC

I'm surprised Kally hasn't called you.

MANFRED

I turned my phone off.

BEV

You guys fight?

Waiter gives him a drink; he takes a swig, makes face.

MANFRED

I don't always have to be with her.

He takes another big drink.

(MORE)

MANFRED (CONT'D)

And apparently, she doesn't always
have to be with me.

Manfred leans back in his chair, defensive, arms crossed in
front of him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Two people who are supposed to be
committed to each other --

ERIC

This isn't about commitment; it's
about control.

BEV

She's strangling you.

ERIC

And breathing on her own.

Manfred drinks most of his drink and sets his glass down. His
arms are no longer crossed and he's leaning forward
listening.

BEV

I've seen toxic relationships
before -- high school kids anyway.
Kids gets so wrapped up in someone
they lose themselves.

ERIC

No one calls you Manfred. It's
Kally's boyfriend or lover or
fiance -- whatever rumor they've
heard.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Bev and Eric step into the night air.

Manfred staggers after them. He stumbles, but Eric catches
him. Manfred fumbles in his pockets and pulls his keys out;
they fall to the ground.

Out of nowhere, he looks up and straight at Bev.

MANFRED

Kally is a total bitch. Total.
Totally bitch ... bitchy ...

He stumbles a little more, and Bev keeps him from falling.

Eric gets Manfred's keys off the ground.

BEV
I'll drive him home, and you can
follow me.

MANFRED
I can drive myself.

He drops to his knees on the parking lot and pukes.

Bev helps him up.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Maybe not.

BEV
After I get him in his apartment,
you can bring me back here.

Eric pauses.

BEV (CONT'D)
Help me get him into his car.

The two of them wrangle him into the back seat where he
sprawls out.

Bev pulls away in the car.

Eric stands on the lot.

ERIC
She must like him.

As Bev drives away, she looks back in her mirror at Eric and
SIGHS.

EXT./INT. MANFRED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bev pulls into Manfred's driveway, sees a car there.
Manfred's head appears above the back seat.

The lights in the house are off except for one lamp in the
living room.

MANFRED
Uh, oh, the bitch is back.

BEV
Don't call her a bitch.

MANFRED
You did.

BEV
Can you get in by yourself?

MANFRED
Yeah.

He nods his head, gets out of the car, staggers, falls on his knees to the ground.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Nah.

Shakes his head, tries to get back up, makes it to his knees, fall back down, face plants into the lawn, gets back up on his knees.

Bev gets out of the car and goes to him.

The porch light comes on, and out barrels Kally.

KALLY
What did you do to him?

MANFRED
There's the --

Bev covers his mouth. MUFFLED word.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Now. I'm home, darlin.

He staggers to his feet and stands, with a little sway thrown in.

KALLY
You're supposed to be my best friend --

BEV
I brought him home so he wouldn't kill himself.

Kally grabs Manfred's arms and tries to steady him.

KALLY
That's convenient --

ERIC (O.S.)
I see you have him standing up at least. What's up, Kally?

KALLY
Eric?

ERIC
He got a little drunk.

Manfred looks at Bev and then at Kally.

MANFRED
I drank a few Jack and Cokes.

He sways, looks confused.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Jacks and cokes?

He tries to break free of Kally and stumbles into Bev. Eric pushes him back and he almost topples into Kally.

BEV
Drinks and wings after his play practice. He got carried away.

KALLY
Why didn't he invite me?

MANFRED
The play sucks.

BEV
No, it doesn't.

ERIC
He wanted to brag about how he would get his stipend and royalties for using his own play. I bought him a drink for his ingenuity.

BEV
Then I did. One drink led to another.

MANFRED
Bev is so sweet.

He reaches for her, but she steps back. Eric comes forward and puts his arm around her.

Manfred slowly shakes his head.

ERIC
It was sweet for her to take you home.

Bev gives Kally Manfred's car keys as Kally glares.

Bev and Eric turn away.

KALLY
(to Manfred)
I need to get you to bed.

MANFRED
I need to go to bed.

KALLY
You need to sleep this off.

MANFRED
I need to sleep this off.

Kally gets the door open and starts to help him inside, but he puts his hand on her chest and stops her.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I can do it myself.

MEANWHILE:

Bev and Rick walk toward his car which is parked just up the street.

BEV
Surely she doesn't think that ...

She looks back toward the house.

Kally has come back outside and is getting into her car.

BEV (CONT'D)
Manfred and ... Uggh. No way.

Not even glancing at them, Kally passes them in her car.

ERIC
She usually spends the night with
him.

BEV
Maybe he kicked her out?

They look at each other.

BEV (CONT'D)
Nah.

ERIC
Nah.

BEV
Probably going out for a drink.

They laugh together, look into one another's eyes.

INT. WOODEN BOX THE SIZE OF A CASKET - NIGHT

Manfred lies in a wooden box with air holes poked in the top of it. (The box sits right on the edge of a stage.)

He breathes heavily, pushes against the box, screams but no sound comes out, struggles.

Box CREAKS and then shrinks by an inch or two on each side.

He screams soundlessly again.

Something hard hits the box, CRACKING loudly, the sound causing him to shriek wordlessly again.

Another loud BANG.

He leans to one side of the box and rocks it as much as he can.

Another BOOM rocks the box and it shrinks again, squeezing against his body tightly.

He flops as hard as he can and the box rolls over.

(It falls off the stage and cracks open.)

Manfred SCREAMS.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manfred awakens on the floor, a blanket wound around his body like a burial cloth.

Loud KNOCKING on the door, then a key in the lock, then Kally coming in.

KALLY
I heard screaming.

MANFRED
(mumbles)
A nightmare.

KALLY
Serves you right.

MANFRED
What happened to me?

Kally sits by him on the couch and places her hand on his shoulder. She squeezes it in an attempt to reassure him.

He frowns.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I remember ... play practice, I think.

KALLY

You had a blackout.

MANFRED

Excuse me.

Manfred climbs to his feet and wobbles back and forth between the walls and staggers into the bathroom, pukes and pukes, flushes the toilet, staggers back out.

Kally slides her arms under his and braces him as she leads him back to the couch.

KALLY

I guess you don't feel like jogging.

MANFRED

Not really.

KALLY

I need to. Do you want me to fix you something before I go?

MANFRED

Feeling a little queasy.

KALLY

You should stay in, take it easy -- maybe do some writing.

MANFRED

(breezy)

I have been thinking about an idea for a new play. A romantic comedy.

Kally pats his knee.

KALLY

I'm sure it will be great.

Kally walks toward the door.

MANFRED

Do you want to know what it's
about?

KALLY

Later.

She opens the door.

MANFRED

See you later?

KALLY

Maybe.

MANFRED

I think it was the ... uh ...
wings. Food poisoning.

He stands as swiftly as he can and staggers down the hall
again.

Kally opens the door, stands there, starts to go back, but
instead leaves.

Manfred PUKES from the bathroom.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A beer sits in front of Manfred and a bottle of Tylenol.

On the coffee table sits a blank piece of paper; a row of ink
pens arranged neatly by color sits next to the paper.

He picks up his phone and checks it.

He puts his phone down, picks up a pen, puts pen to paper ...
writes nothing.

He throws his pen and bounces it off the wall.

Then, he scatters everything off his table like a toddler
having a temper tantrum.

He picks up the phone again and checks it, texts, stands,
paces a little.

Then, he leaves.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARK - NIGHT

University Park has a huge pond in the middle of it with a walking path lit intermittently with softly glowing lamp posts.

The posts light the path but they don't block out the stars.

Near each lamp post is a wooden bench. Manfred sits on one and stares at the water where some ducks linger.

He tosses some bread out to them, and they flock to the pieces floating on the water.

Lizzy walks down the path and comes upon Manfred. She smiles.

LIZY

Manfred.

He looks up and smiles.

She sits by his side on the bench. He offers her a couple pieces of bread.

She takes it and drops them in a bag she has. She reaches down into the bag and pulls out some sliced grapes.

LIZZY

Bread isn't good for them.

She hands him some grapes which he tosses into the water.

More ducks have arrived, and they tussle for the tossed grapes.

MANFRED

They're so demanding.

LIZZY

Have you noticed how the drakes go after the hens? Whew!

Manfred tosses another few grapes into the water.

Lizzy looks longingly at Manfred.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

People could learn a lot from the animal kingdom ... I've never seen you here.

MANFRED

I haven't been here since I gave Kally her promise ring.

He chuckles.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

In fact, we were sitting on this very bench.

LIZZY

That must bring back memories.

MANFRED

You might say that. I needed to get out of the house.

Lizzy tosses her last bit of bread into the water, knocks the crumbs off her hands.

LIZZY

I'll let you alone then.

She stands.

MANFRED

No. It'd be nice to have someone to talk to.

She smiles.

LIZZY

I could pencil you in for tomorrow.

MANFRED

Tomorrow's Sunday.

LIZZY

Uh, a good day for clients -- what with school -- and people's work schedules. What do you need to talk about?

MANFRED

Women.

LIZZY

You can't tell me anything I haven't already heard.

She subtly leans against Manfred who appears to be oblivious.

Both of them suddenly sit up.

TOGETHER

Did you see that?

They laugh.

TOGETHER (CONT'D)
A falling star.

TOGETHER (CONT'D)
Make a wish

They giggle again ...like kids.

A brief pause.

MANFRED
What did you wish for?

LIZZY
If I tell you, it won't come true.

MANFRED
With my luck, it won't come true
anyway.

Lizzy puts her hand over his.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manfred looks over a copy of *If These Walls Could Talk about our School*, slams it front down, leans forward, and grabs a beer.

MANFRED
How can I let that girl get to me
like that?

He turns it back over, looks at the cover.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
This really does suck. What was I
thinking? *Twelfth Night of the
Tempest* -- now that's a good one.
Miranda finds true love.

Settles back into the couch, beer in hand.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Antigone and the Ecstasy. Classic
story. Beautiful, talented girl
says goodbye to old boyfriend who
is keeping her from her dreams of
doing caricatures on the beach.

The doorbell RINGS.

He makes his way to his feet, sways just a little, goes to the door -- beer can in hand - throws the door open with his other hand.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
My Miranda.

And sees Kally.

KALLY
You're drunk again.

MANFRED
No, I'm not.

She glares at his beer can.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
This is my first one. I swear.

KALLY
No matter.

MANFRED
Come in.

KALLY
For a minute.

She steps into the living room.

MANFRED
Can I get you something to drink?
To eat? Some coffee? I think I
might have some donuts ...
somewhere.

KALLY
I've come for my things.

MANFRED
Huh?

KALLY
I'm keeping the promise ring. I
want *something* out of this
relationship.

She disappears into the bedroom.

Manfred sinks into the sofa, stunned.

He downs his beer, goes to the refrigerator for another, goes back to couch.

Phone RINGS as Kally comes back into hallway.

MANFRED

Lizzy?

He smiles.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I enjoyed the park.

Kally stares.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I'm a little nervous.

Kally moves closer so that she can hear better.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I promise. I'll go deep into --

He sees Kally.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

We can talk about it later. Dinner?
No, not necessary. Wine? Sure. Six
o'clock tonight, right?

He disconnects.

KALLY

That didn't take long.

MANFRED

She's my counselor.

KALLY

On Sunday? With wine? Please.

MANFRED

You say I need to see a counselor.

KALLY

Seeing a counselor and sleeping
with one are two different things.

MANFRED

I'm not sleeping --

KALLY

You were at the park with her?

Manfred stands and sways, drops back onto the sofa.

MANFRED

And we sat on our bench. Made wishes together.

He chuckles.

KALLY

Go ahead and be with your conniving little bitch.

She flies out the door and slams it behind her.

MANFRED

Lizzy?

He laughs and swigs his beer.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

No, Bitch, Bev. No bitch Bev? No. Bitch. Bev.

He closes his eyes and falls over on the couch. Beer spills on the floor.

INT. LIZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manfred stands at the doorway of Liz's living room while Lizzy lounges on the couch, a bottle of wine and two glasses on the coffee table in front of her.

LIZZY

Please, Manny, make yourself comfortable.

MANFRED

Manny?

LIZZY

I thought it might be less --

MANFRED

My mom calls me Manny. Well, when she actually does.

LIZZY

I thought by calling you a different name we could forget about our friendship and just be counselor/patient.

MANFRED

Manny's fine.

He sits down on a chair even as Lizzy makes room for him on the couch.

LIZZY

I have a wonderful wine here. I find that for some of my clients, a little wine loosens them up.

She pours him more than a little bit of wine.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

The couch is more comfortable.

Manfred LAUGHS

LIZZY (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

MANFRED

Where's your legal pad?

Lizzy takes him the wine.

He takes a big drink.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I might need a lot more if I'm going to talk.

LIZZY

Right. Talk.

She smiles and goes back to the couch.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

You were concerned about women.

MANFRED

Some of the worst times of my life revolved around women.

LIZZY

Maybe you just haven't found the right one.

MANFRED

Women caused my suicide attempts.

EXT. WALLY'S BACK YARD - DAY

Two boys about 12 play whiffle ball. One is a young Manfred. The other his cousin WALLY.

MANFRED (V.O.)

My cousin Wally and I were playing in his backyard, something we always did when we weren't at the river, but the river's later.

WALLY

Ground rule double.

MANFRED

That cleared the fence. Home run.

WALLY

It bounced first.

A girl: ROXANNE also about 12, sits on the top of a short rock wall behind the batter.

ROXANNE

It cleared the fence, home run, no doubt.

Manfred looks at her, his mouth agape.

MANFRED

My name is Man ...

ROXANNE

Man?

MANFRED

Manny.

ROXANNE

Watch it, Manny. Wally will screw you over.

She starts to climb back over the short fence into her own yard, but she turns back one last time.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

Wally never told me how cute you were.

Manfred sits on the ground.

Wally throws his glove down in disgust and walks toward Manfred.

MANFRED

She said I was cute.

WALLY

I heard.

MANFRED

Do you think she likes me?

Wally drops on the ground next to Manfred.

WALLY

How should I know?

Manfred suddenly sits up.

MANFRED

I'm sorry. Do you like her?

WALLY

Are you serious?

MANFRED

I wonder if she'd be my girlfriend.

WALLY

Ask her.

MANFRED

I can't talk to girls.

WALLY

Write her a letter.

MANFRED

Great idea.

INT. YOUNG MANFRED'S KITCHEN - DAY

MANFRED (V.O.)

It wasn't a great idea.

Manfred sits at the kitchen table and scratches on a piece of paper. He crumples it up.

MANFRED (V.O.)

I wasn't much of a writer then.

Manfred crumples up another piece of paper and tosses it at the trash can. Misses.

MANFRED (V.O.)

Or athlete. I was pretty stupid though.

Two boys LUKE, TIM, both about 17. Luke is Manfred's brother. Tim, their cousin.

LUKE

What are you trying to do, Bro?

TIM

Besides make a mess.

MANFRED

It's none of your business, Luke.

TIM

Sounds serious.

MANFRED

Yours either, Tim.

Luke picks up one of the papers and Manfred grabs for it.
Too late.

Luke dances away from him and tosses it to Tim who opens it.

TIM

Problems with women.

MANFRED

It's not funny.

Luke winks at Tim.

LUKE

Of course, it's not funny, brother.
We don't laugh at a man who's
trying to communicate with his
girl.

Tim reads a little bit of the letter, shakes his head.

MANFRED

I just can't get the words right.

Luke sits on one side of Manfred and Tim on the other.

LUKE

It looks like we got here just in
time.

Tim starts to write.

TIM

Dear, Rocky. You are the love of my
life, the foundation of all that is
beautiful.

MANFRED

Her name is Roxanne.

LUKE

Rocky can be your pet name for her.
Rocky -- foundation.

TIM

You have to admit it's a great
metaphor.

EXT. WALLY'S BACK YARD - DAY

Roxanne sits on the stone fence.

Manfred pulls a piece of paper from his pocket while Wally looks at several baseball cards spread out before him on the ground.

Wally is bored. Manfred, so scared, his hand trembles as he holds the paper.

MANFRED (V.O.)

The day came when I read the letter
to her.

Manfred takes a deep breath.

MANFRED

(To Roxanne)

I wrote a letter to you.

ROXANNE

Why?

MANFRED

I wanted to make sure my words were
perfect.

ROXANNE

That's sweet.

Manfred smiles and stares at her.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)

Read it.

He smiles.

MANFRED

Okay. Rocky, you are the love of my
life, the foundation of all that is
beautiful

ROXANNE

My name's Roxanne.

MANFRED

Rocky -- foundation. It's a metaphor.

ROXANNE

Go ahead.

MANFRED

I just had to tell you how I feel about you. Well, I feel about you with my fingers because love is blind and Cupid has loosed his mighty arrows so that you alone are all I see.

ROXANNE

Isn't that a mixed metaphor?

MANFRED

It gets better. I promise.

Manfred pauses and glances briefly at Roxanne. He swallows and turns to the letter.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

We go together like peanut butter and jelly, like milk and cookies, like ketchup with ham and beans. Loving you is a gas. Our romance will be explosive.

Wally snorts.

Manfred looks up at Roxanne, his expression desperate.

ROXANNE

Go on.

MANFRED

You are the pickle of my relish. You are like the gravy of my mashed potatoes. You are the bologna of my sandwich.

Wally falls on his side in the grass, howls.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Never mind.

ROXANNE

Read the rest of it.

Manfred smiles and regains some of his composure.

MANFRED

You are the glove that fits on my hand when I play catch. No errors in our relationship. You are the icing on my cake, the chocolate chips in my ice cream. My love for you is devouring me, taking little nibbles, bit after bit from my heart. Please be mine.

Dramatic pause. Finishing with a flourish.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Write back soon. Sincerely, Manny.

Roxanne gives him a look like she's going to melt into puddles, the kind of look people give cute puppies and kittens.

Then she suddenly smiles.

ROXANNE

Are you serious?

She laughs and climbs back over the fence into her own yard.

Manfred turns to look at Wally who still lies on the ground laughing.

MANFRED

So how'd you think it went?

INT. LIZZY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lizzy takes a big drink of her wine.

She tries to keep from laughing, chokes on her wine a little, regains herself.

LIZZY

How do you remember that?

MANFRED

I paraphrased.

LIZZY

And this lead to a suicide attempt?

MANFRED

That's where the river comes in.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Manfred and Wally sit on the sand and drink sodas.

MANFRED

What did Roxanne say when you asked
her about me?

WALLY

She laughed.

MANFRED

Is that all?

WALLY

What did you expect? Pickle of my
relish?

He LAUGHS aloud.

Manfred downs his soda.

MANFRED

I don't want to live without her.

He sets the soda can in the sand, stands.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I'm going to do it.

Manfred starts up a narrow path that runs alongside the
river. Wally follows.

WALLY

I need to whiz.

They are pretty far above the water, at least ten feet or so.
The current is particularly swift at this part.

Manfred stops.

MANFRED

I'm going to jump.

WALLY

You'll kill yourself.

MANFRED

If I die, my body will go down the
current. Make sure Mom grabs me
before the fish eat me.

Manfred takes two steps and jumps off the cliff.

WALLY

Oh, shit.

He looks at the water and sees Manfred's head bob free.

WALLY (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

Wally runs as fast as he can until he gets back to his and Manfred's mom.

WALLY (CONT'D)

Manfred ... he ...

He tries to catch his breath, considers what he is going to say.

WALLY (CONT'D)

Fell off the cliff upriver. He's going to drown.

The two mothers wade up the water as fast as they can, but then stop.

Manfred swims calmly in their direction. His mom rushes to him and hugs him tightly.

INT. LIZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The wine glass is full again. The wine bottle half empty.

LIZZY

It sounds like it wasn't your time.

MANFRED

When I survived the fall, I couldn't do it. People thought I was some kind of whiz kid, swimming free from a terrible current. Wally never said otherwise.

Manfred stands and puts his wine glass on the table.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I should go.

LIZZY

Wait. There were two other times you thought about killing yourself - - because of girls if I remember. I think you need to talk about them.

Manfred sits down on the couch and smiles humorlessly.

MANFRED

In high school, I liked a girl and we had even made plans to go to the prom together. She gave me a dear John letter on April 1st. I knew I was in trouble when the first line said, "This is not an April Fool's day joke."

Manfred frowns, and over his face and in his voice, the depression spreads.

LIZZY

What happened?

MANFRED

I got drunk and tried to climb a tower on Party Drive. I wanted to jump off it, but Vertigo hit me so hard I threw up and had to climb back down.

LIZZY

Maybe you didn't really want to --

MANFRED

I did. In college there was another girl. I thought she was the one, but it didn't work out. There was a bridge that some college students ... Suicide heights. I decided I might as well ... My buddies took me out drinking -- one last fling, I thought. I drank so much I blacked out.

LIZZY

How much do you drink in a week, Manny?

MANFRED

It's what you do when you don't want to live but you're too afraid to die.

LIZZY

Let me refer you to psychiatrist.

MANFRED

Maybe some other time.

He heads for the door.

LIZZY

Manny.

He stops, his hand on the doorknob.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

The right woman for you is ...
closer than you think.

He smiles and opens the door.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Bev, Eric, and Manfred sit at the table eating their lunches.
Lizzy enters the room.

LIZZY

Do you mind if I join you?

She sits and opens a Tupperware lunch box with a sandwich, an
apple, and some carrot sticks packed neatly inside.

BEV

We don't see much of you here.

LIZZY

The office was crazy. I had to get
away. Want some carrots, Man ...
Manfred?

She offers them, but he shakes his head.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

You should probably eat better.

Manfred takes a bite of greasy pizza. He also has some chips,
a soda, and about six cookies.

BEV

Lizzy, Manny ...has a problem.

LIZZY

I prefer Liz.

Eric glances at Bev. She smiles, a quick smile and then her
face gets serious again.

BEV

Maybe you can give us your
professional opinion, Liz.

Lizzy sits and watches Manfred eat.

BEV (CONT'D)

Liz?

Lizzy quickly looks away from Manfred.

BEV (CONT'D)

Maybe you could give Manfred some advice.

LIZZY

I'd love to.

Another stolen glance between Bev and Eric.

BEV

Manny ... Manfred had play tryouts last night. There's a senior.

LIZZY

Tessa?

BEV

You know her?

LIZZY

Unfortunately. I guess I'm not supposed to say that.

BEV

Tessa has had the lead in both the fall and spring plays every year she's tried out. This year, there's a freshman, Haley Hill, who deserves the lead, but Manfred's afraid to give it to her.

LIZZY

If she earned it, she should get it.

BEV

But Tessa's mom is the president of the school board, and she's a bitch.

ERIC

I say he needs to save himself by giving Tessa the part. She does everything great.

LIZZY

If their auditions were close ...

MANFRED
They weren't.

LIZZY
Follow your heart, Manny.

She takes a dainty bite from her apple.

MANFRED
There's another good part.

ERIC
It's not the lead.

MANFRED
I'm tired of other people running
my life.

LIZZY
They can only do it if you let
them.

MANFRED
I'm not giving Tessa the part.

ERIC
Good luck.

LIZZY
I support you 100%.

BEV
It's nice to see someone around
here who has some balls.

LIZZY
Thank you.

Manfred stands, grabs one of Liz's carrots as he does.

MANFRED
I'm not going to post the list
until I'm ready to leave.

He walks into the hallway and nearly runs into Tessa.

TESSA
I can't wait until after school.
Tell me, Mr. Smith. I know it, but
tell me anyway.

MANFRED
I'm not sure what you want me to
tell you.

Tessa pats his shoulder.

TESSA

I know I got the lead. I can't wait
to tell my friends.

She starts off down the hall.

MANFRED

Tessa.

She stops, her smile wide.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

You didn't get the lead.

She whirls around and stomps down the hall. She turns the
corner out of his sight.

Manfred SIGHS and walks to his room.

He's about to step into it when he hears the intercom.

SHERRY

Mr. Smith, please report to the
office.

Manfred walks slowly to his desk and sets his lunch box down.

Just as slowly he walks out the door. When he walks up the
hallway, he sees Tessa turn the corner.

MANFRED

You won't get any part now.

TESSA

We'll see.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Milburn sits quietly and stares at Manfred who maintains
eye contact right back.

DAVID

It's a serious accusation.

MANFRED

Tessa's just mad about not getting
the lead.

He reaches for a piece of candy, pauses when David looks down
at his hand, and then grabs some anyway.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
And I'll tell her mom that too.

David stands and goes to the door.

DAVID
Wait in the outer office.

David opens the door, and Manfred heads toward one of the chairs.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Sherry, page Ron Hunt.

Manfred sags into one of the seats.

Bev enters and he can't help but perk up.

BEV
I was just thinking about you.

She smiles.

BEV (CONT'D)
You must be a very bad boy, Mr. Smith. Is Ms. Lukens?

SHERRY
Yes.

Sherry eyes Manfred warily.

Bev goes past her desk and into Lizzy's office.

Ron Hunt comes in the door.

RON
Hey, Mr. Smith. Do I get a part?

MANFRED
Yeah.

Ron goes into the principal's office.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ron comes out the door. As he passes Mr. Smith, he winks at him.

RON
See you at practice.

David motions for Manfred who goes into the inner sanctum.

DAVID
Ron corroborated your story.

MANFRED
He did? ... That's because it's
true.

DAVID
Still, Mrs. Long is pissed. You'll
be on thin ice.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Manfred walks into the hallway only to find Tessa waiting for
him.

TESSA
I'm going to tell my mom.

MANFRED
That's a very adult way to handle
the situation.

Tessa throws the three playbooks at Manfred's feet.

TESSA
They're stupid.

MANFRED
I can scratch you off the list?

TESSA
It's just a lame high school play.
I'm going to try out for the one at
the college.

MANFRED
I'm sure they'll have a bit part
for you.

Tessa storms away.

Manfred walks to his room, and when he turns the corner in
his hallway, he spies Ron, stops, and sighs.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I guess I owe you.

RON
I'm getting a chance I've never
gotten before. I promise you I'll
be solid ...

He smiles.

RON (CONT'D)
You won't be bored. Get it? Board?

INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Manfred sits opposite Lizzy.

LIZZY
How are you feeling?

MANFRED
Depressed. I didn't know how much I
would miss Kally once she was gone.
And seeing her every day ...

LIZZY
Maybe it isn't so much that you
miss her as it is that you miss
having someone.

MANFRED
It got so bad I thought about
trying to reconcile with her.

LIZZY
Don't do that.

She puts her hand over Manfred's.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
That would be a mistake.

MANFRED
I know.

LIZZY
What about the other girl?

MANFRED
I don't want to talk about her.

LIZZY
How about your drinking?

MANFRED
I don't want to talk about that.

LIZZY

How about another session at my place...you can sort through some of the ... issues that are holding you back. Saturday evening?

MANFRED

I have play practice.

LIZZY

Sunday?

MANFRED

I'll try.

LIZZY

You should do more than try. You aren't the only one affected here ... How's play practice going?

MANFRED

Two more weeks until opening night.

INT. RUN-DOWN BAR - NIGHT

Manfred sits alone on a bar stool. The bar is kind of a dive. Music from a juke box, old rock and country. Dim lights.

A few shady-looking extras lurk about. A couple of women sit on bar stools.

One sits by Manfred and smiles at him. He ignores her.

The barkeep, VENICE, close to Manfred's age, a tattoo on her right arm -- a quill poised over an inkwell, red ink dripping from the quill to the inkwell, and underneath: Words Matter;

She's a little flirtacious, but at first, Manfred doesn't notice. She taps the bar in front of him to get his attention.

VENICE

You've never been in here before.

MANFRED

I'm keeping a low profile.

She mixes him a drink and sets it in front of him. He takes a swig.

VENICE

I guess I shouldn't ask you your name, then.

MANFRED

Huh?

VENICE

If you're keeping a low profile.

Manfred CHUCKLES.

MANFRED

I'm ... Manfred ... Manny.

VENICE

And I'm Venice. Rhymes with Denise
but spelled like the city.

Manfred looks puzzled as he takes another big drink.

VENICE (CONT'D)

My mom and dad went to Italy on
their honeymoon. When I came along
... that's how I got my name. So,
what do you do, Manny?

MANFRED

I warp the minds of today's youth.

He finishes his drink.

VENICE

You get paid for that?

MANFRED

I'm an educator. And a play
director I guess. Could I have
another? I just suffered through an
atrocious practice.

VENICE

Teaching is better than this gig. I
know a teacher who does pretty well
for herself.

Venice glances off into space.

VENICE (CONT'D)

But we do have one thing in common.

MANFRED

Really.

VENICE

Trouble with men.

MANFRED

I don't have trouble with men.

VENICE

My friend ... not you.

She laughs and hands him another drink.

MANFRED

I also do a little freelance writing.

VENICE

I write poetry.

MANFRED

Maybe I could read your work sometime.

She smiles.

VENICE

I get off at 2.

INT. VENICE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The outside door opens and Manfred stumbles as he tries to step over the door stoop. Venice steadies him and GIGGLES.

VENICE

You maybe drank a little too much.

MANFRED

(slurring slightly)

I must disagree. You can never drink too much.

She leads him to the couch where he plops down heavily.

VENICE

I'm going to have to catch up to you.

She picks up a notebook, the kind students use in school, with perforated edges so the pages can be torn out easily. She offers it to Manfred.

VENICE (CONT'D)

People tell me they're pretty good.

She disappears off camera and Manfred opens to the first page. Then, he flips to a page in the middle.

VENICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
You want a beer?

MANFRED
Sure.

Manfred reading intently from her poetry notebook does not notice that Venice has come back into the living room wearing only a robe.

Manfred flips to the back of the book.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
These are good.

He finally notices her.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Venice, your words in here
(Indicating the book)
Are great, better than almost
anything else I've read, even my
own. ... But I don't think I could
ever use the right words to
describe you.

VENICE
Then, you'll have to find some
other way.

MANFRED
I've heard great things about
nonverbal communication.

INT. VENICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A light pops on. Manny sits up, THUMPING his feet angrily on the floor.

Venice puts a reassuring hand on his back.

VENICE
It can happen to anyone.

MANFRED
It's never happened to me.

VENICE
Maybe I did something wrong.

MANFRED
I'd say so.

She flashes into anger.

VENICE
Or maybe it was your drunk-ass
fault.

MANFRED
I --

VENICE
Go to hell.

She lies back down on the bed and turns her back to Manfred who grabs his clothes, and wearing nothing but a grimace and his underwear, stomps out of the room.

INT. VENICE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MANFRED
Bitch.

He starts for the door, but her poetry book catches his eye, and he opens it while furtively looking towards the bedroom.

He studies the poem, picks four of them, and carefully tears them out of the notebook at the perforations.

He folds them carefully and puts them in his shirt pocket. Only then does he leave.

INT. LIZZIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manfred, a disheveled mess, wearing the same clothes as he had on the night before, comes in through the front door.

Lizzy jumps to her feet and hurries to greet him. She pulls up just as she is about to hug him.

LIZZY
Have you had a bath lately?

MANFRED
I didn't have time.

LIZZY
Play practice didn't go well?

He sits in the chair.

Lizzy looks and sighs, then slowly sits on the couch.

MANFRED

I overslept and I didn't want to be late because I'm so stressed and you're the only one I can talk to, and do you know I might lose my job because that little bitch told her mother --

LIZZY

Stop right there.

MANFRED

She may look like a kid --

LIZZY

Stop.

Her voice is firm enough that he does.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Are you listening to yourself?

MANFRED

You wouldn't happen to have a beer, would you? Because I could really go for a nice cold --

LIZZY

You need treatment, not beer. You're manic.

MANFRED

Manic.

LIZZY

Our word maniac comes from it.

MANFRED

I'm not a maniac.

LIZZY

You're manic. Manic people do stupid things.

MANFRED

I don't do stupid things.

LIZZY

When did you go to bed last night?

MANFRED

I have insomnia. I try to sleep ...

He realizes he might be saying a little too much, so when he doesn't finish his sentence, Lizzy sighs and goes into the kitchen to get him a beer.

He fidgets the whole time she is gone. Tapping his feet on the floor and his fingers on his knees.

Lizzy comes back and notices some of his fidgeting.

LIZZY

You can't sleep because you're manic. I'm surprised you can do much of anything.

MANFRED

You don't know what I can do.

LIZZY

Then tell me.

MANFRED

I write poetry.

LIZZY

That's a good way to sort through your feelings, but --

MANFRED

My poetry is kick ass.

LIZZY

Maybe so.

MANFRED

What's that supposed to mean?

LIZZY

If you have bipolar, you might have delusions that everything you do is better than it actually is.

He reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out the poetry he stole from Venice.

MANFRED

I can show you.

He takes a swig of his beer and sets it down with a SLAM. He walks over to Lizzy and drops the poems he stole from Venice into her lap.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Read them.

She frowns but then unfolds them and starts to read as Manfred goes back to his chair.

As he guzzles his beer, Lizzy reads. Finally she looks back up.

LIZZY

When did you write these?

MANFRED

I ... uh ... they came to me last night ... when I couldn't sleep.

LIZZY

I think these are publishable.

She frowns, studies him closely.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

It's almost like someone else --

MANFRED

They're mine!

LIZZY

You're so tense.

Lizzy pats the couch.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Come over here and sit. I'll get you another beer.

Manfred sets the poems down on a coffee table and then he sits on the opposite end of the couch.

When Lizzy comes back with his beer, she pauses briefly and then sits right beside him.

He starts as if he's going to get up, but she grabs his elbow. Lizzy LAUGHS.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Close your eyes.

Lizzy begins to massage his neck. He first GRUNTS in surprise and pain, but within seconds, he begins to relax.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I dated a masseuse, but he got a little too handsy.

She digs in harder.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
I like it rough.

He winces.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Your shoulders and your neck are in
knots.

She works his back and side, and then she stands.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Lie down on the floor.

He does as she asks him to.

Lizzy straddles him and sits on him -- butt to butt. This doesn't seem to affect Maynard as she begins to massage his shoulders.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
We can't communicate if you can't
relax.

Manfred CHUCKLES.

MANFRED
Is this some devious scheme to get
me to tell you all my deep secrets.

She kneads his lower back. She puts pressure on an especially tense spot, and Manfred jumps a little.

Her looks linger on his back and butt.

LIZZY
Hard as board. Wooden almost.

Her hands move just to the top of his buttocks, and she slides back and sits on his legs.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
For a long time, my masseuse friend
made me believe that naked massages
were the only ones that worked.

She's now kneading the top part of his butt cheeks.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
Why haven't you talked to that
woman you like?

MANFRED
How do you know I haven't?

LIZZY

Have you?

He doesn't answer as she works on his butt.

MANFRED

Don't you think you might be getting too personal there?

LIZZY

The ass is just another muscle.

MANFRED

I'm afraid to talk to her.

Lizzy massages his upper thighs.

LIZZY

She's probably dying to talk to you.

MANFRED

Why doesn't she then?

LIZZY

Men usually make the first move.

She moves her hands close to his testicles.

He rolls over, and she tumbles onto the floor.

She rises to her knees, crouches like an animal about to pounce and that's what she does.

She barrels into his chest and knocks him to the ground. She kisses him, but he pushes her away.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

If you're not going to talk to me,
I'm going to --

He scrambles out from under her.

MANFRED

I have to go.

He bolts toward the door leaving her sitting on the floor and the poems sitting on the coffee table.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Eric and Manfred sit at one end of the table.

Kally comes in, starts to leave, but then sits at the other end of the table, roughly six chairs away from Eric and Manfred.

ERIC

I heard the play went great last night.

MANFRED

Ron and Haley were spectacular.

ERIC

I also heard that Tess and Mrs. Long were there.

MANFRED

Looking for some reason to fire me.

ERIC

No doubt.

MANFRED

You coming tonight?

ERIC

Yeah.

They eat a few bites in silence.

Kally stares at them. Eric notices but not Manfred.

Eric returns Kally's glare.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(to Manfred)

How are you and Lizzy doing?

Kally flinches.

MANFRED

We're not doing anything.

ERIC

She likes you.

MANFRED

She's not my type.

Kally gets up to leave as Lizzy comes in.

KALLY

You have no type.

She pauses at the door.

LIZZY
I'm coming to the play tonight,
Manny.

MANFRED
Okay.

He's not paying much attention to Lizzy, just watching Kally
as she stands in the doorway and listens.

LIZZY
And I, uh, wanted to apologize.

MANFRED
No problem.

LIZZY
I also wanted to tell you that you
need to send those poems off to a
publisher. They're in my office.
You left them at the house when ...
well, you know.

KALLY
You wrote some publishable poetry?

MANFRED
I told you I was a good poet.

KALLY
So how many good poems did you
write? One? Two?

MANFRED
Everything I write is good.

KALLY
How many poems does *Lizzy* think are
actually publishable?

MANFRED
Four.

KALLY
You wrote four poems.

LIZZY
In one night.

Kally suddenly leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Manfred steps into the hallway, just as the Intercom goes off.

INTERCOM

Mr. Smith, come to the office.

MANFRED

Shit. He heard about "hell" in act two.

He starts up the hallway and spies Bev coming toward him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Are you going to the play tonight?

BEV

I've heard it's good. And to think you wrote it.

She walks past him.

INTERCOM

Mr. Smith, please come to the office.

MANFRED

(to himself)

Now's the time.

He takes a deep breath.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Bev. Wait.

Bev points to the intercom.

BEV

The office.

MANFRED

Would you like to go out ... for dinner sometime.

BEV

No. Ask Lizzy; she's dying to go out with you.

INTERCOM

Mr. Smith, come to the office now.

Manfred turns to the Intercom.

MANFRED

Would you shut the hell up!

Students stop in the hallway and look at him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Go to class.

He hurries toward the office. When he goes through the office door he sees Mr. Milburn first, then ... Venice.

As their eyes lock, Lizzy comes from her office with the poems in her hands.

LIZZY

Oh, there you are.

VENICE

That's the bastard. He left me in bed and stole my poems.

Manfred freezes.

Lizzy stomps forward and slams the poetry on the office counter.

She whirls around and goes back toward her office. Mr. Milburn picks the poems up.

He hands them over to Venice who glances at them.

VENICE (CONT'D)

Thank God.

MANFRED

I can explain.

DAVID

If Mrs. Long recommend it, your contract will be terminated.

FLASH:

Manfred falling through the ice into the lake. The duck quacks.

INT. AUDITORIUM/MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manfred stands stage right just by some steps that lead up to the stage floor. He is blindfolded, his hands tied behind his back.

Mr. Milburn has him by the left arm and Tessa by the right.

Sitting in the front row of the auditorium are Lizzy, Bev, Eric, Kally, Ron, and Haley.

Milburn and Tessa half pull and half push Manfred up the stairs where a scaffold awaits.

Sitting stage left is a long table.

Name tags sit before five people.

The first tag sits before a middle-aged woman who wears a white wig and a judge's robe. This placard says, "Long."

Four men sit around the table also. Their placards have the word "board" on them. They're dressed the same as Mrs. Long.

Milburn and Tessa led Manfred to the stairs of the scaffold.

MANFRED

Where am I going?

TESSA

(dramatically)

Nowhere.

A DRUM ROLL begins in the background. When the three of them get to the scaffold's top, Milburn puts a noose around Manfred's neck.

MANFRED

(slurs)

What's that?

TESSA

A nice tie for your play.

DAVID

Ever. Board?

Mrs. Long hits the table with her gavel.

MRS. LONG

Guilty!

Board members chant.

BOARD MEMBERS

Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

Tessa pulls the lever and ... Manfred jerks on his couch in the living room of his home.

His eyes, staring into space, blink, and he comes to himself. He notices that he has a beer can in his hand, so he finishes it off, crumples it and tosses it toward a trash can.

The can misses and falls to the floor CLANKING against several other cans lying there.

Manfred looks at his clock and stands, his clothes ruffled and his tie askew. He makes his way toward the door.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Manfred half walks and half staggers into the auditorium. Several kids mill about, some getting makeup, some adjusting scenery on the stage.

Ron comes out to meet Manfred. He stops when he gets a few feet away from him.

MANFRED

Do the damn play.

Ron sadly shakes his head. He turns around and YELLS at the other kids.

Manfred staggers toward the seats.

RON

45 minutes until curtain. Off the stage and into the dressing rooms.

The kids file offstage leaving only Ron and Haley.

HALEY

I didn't think he'd do something like this to us.

RON

We're going to have to do this *for* him. You keep the girls in line and I'll take the boys.

They both walk offstage. Manfred sits in the last chair in the front row, stage right. He closes his eyes.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A spotlight is on Ron.

RON

A lot goes on in a school. Some good stuff. Some bad.

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)

I hope you have all enjoyed this behind the walls look at our school -- or should I say -- "Through the walls." I gotta go now. I'm due for a polish.

The lights fade out and the curtain closes.

Applause fills the auditorium.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Most of the people have left the auditorium. Manfred sits in his seat and stares at the stage.

From behind him ...

ERIC

I think I would have handled it better.

Manfred slowly stands and looks at him. He sees that Eric is holding Bev's hands.

He lunges forward and knocks Eric to the ground. He punches him, and Bev screams. A few men, including Milburn, rush forward and pull him off Eric.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Two policemen stand in Milburn's office, one on each side of Manfred who can't even look at David.

DAVID

Be thankful that Eric is not pressing charges. Officers, please escort him to his car.

INT. MANFRED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Manfred sits on his couch. He opens a bottle of pills, puts a handful in his mouth and washes them down with a drink of beer.

He gags a little and coughs but takes another drink. He pours out another handful of pills and repeats the process. This time they go down smoothly.

Someone knocks on his door, but he doesn't hear it. He empties the bottle into his hand, puts the pills in his mouth, and drinks another swig of beer.

He chugs the rest of the beer and crumples it up. He tosses it in the general direction of the trash can, misses, and it bounces off another pile of empties. He lies down.

Glass SHATTERS.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Manfred lies on the hospital bed. His eyes blink; he groans.

A nurse, IONA, leans over his bed.

Slowly, Manfred opens his eyes and looks around a little.

MANFRED

Where am I?

IONA

St. Mark's Hospital.

MANFRED

Shit.

His voice trails off.

He closes his eyes and drifts away.

Lizzy enters the room.

IONA

He woke up long enough to say shit.

Lizzy LAUGHS briefly and then stops.

Manfred opens his eyes again.

LIZZY

What's going to happen next?

IONA

The doctor will give him all the options -- one of which will not be Xanax -- including therapy.

LIZZY

He's bipolar.

IONA

We can give him only the help he'll take.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. FRANKLIN SHORT, sits by Manfred whose hospital bed is raised enough that he sits up.

FRANKLIN
You have bipolar II.

MANFRED
What are my treatment options?

He chuckles.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Besides psychotropic drugs.

FRANKLIN
You tried to kill yourself. If you hadn't been found, you would have succeeded.

Manfred loses his laugh.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
If you don't get treatment, sooner or later, you'll succeed.

MANFRED
Could you give me some pills?

FRANKLIN
You need an aggressive treatment, something that will stabilize you immediately. Then, we can treat you with Depakote or Lithium long term.

MANFRED
I don't have much to live for, but I'm not sure I want to die.

FRANKLIN
You need to go to a rehabilitation center.

MANFRED
You want to take away my beer?

He CHUCKLES.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Just kill me now.

Franklin is not amused.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I'll do whatever it takes.

FRANKLIN
Have you ever heard of ECT?

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Manfred is in his hospital gown lying on a gurney. Franklin stands next to him.

FRANKLIN
Do you feel up to a visitor before
your first treatment?

MANFRED
I didn't think I had any friends
left.

FRANKLIN
Just one.

MANFRED
Why? I might not even remember him
later.

FRANKLIN
Her.

MANFRED
Send her in.

He leaves the room and Lizzy enters.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Lizzy?

LIZZY
I don't hate you. What you've done
doesn't really surprise me.

She sits in a chair next to his bed.

MANFRED
I'm scared.

LIZZY
ECT is a very safe procedure these
days.

MANFRED
The doctor tells me I might forget
things, events ... people.

LIZZY

Most of what you forget are the events right before you have ECT.

He smiles.

MANFRED

That might not be such a bad idea.

He reaches out to take her hand.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

I won't forget you.

Franklin and Iona, plus a couple of others, come back into the room.

Lizzy leans over the bed and kisses his cheek.

The nurses wheel him away and leave Lizzy standing in the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Manfred opens his eyes. Franklin stands beside him.

MANFRED

I have a splitting headache.

He looks around.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Where am I?

FRANKLIN

How do you feel?

MANFRED

Fuzzy. Blank. And I'm sore all over.

FRANKLIN

These are all common side effects from your treatment -- do you remember why you're here?

Manfred thinks for a minute.

MANFRED

Bipolar. Suicidal ideations. I got that treatment. You know the one --

FRANKLIN
ECT.

MANFRED
Right. That.

FRANKLIN
You have a visitor.

He leaves Iona to tend to Manfred.

Lizzy comes into the room. She pauses at the entrance.

Manfred stares at her, looking confused.

MANFRED
Hi ... uh ... uh

LIZZY
(sighing, then)
Lizzy.

MANFRED
How do I know you?

LIZZY
We are ... friends.

MANFRED
I'm sorry. I ... you know ... the
ECT.

LIZZY
I know.

MANFRED
What's your last name, Lizzy?

LIZZY
Luchens.

MANFRED
I know that name.

She brightens up, a smile across her face.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
You're going to be my therapist.

She loses her smile.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
He recommended you. He said ...

He pauses and searches for words.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
You would be good for me as long as
you could keep your professional
objectivity.

LIZZY
(laughs)
I think I can work you in.

She looks longingly at Manfred.

LIZZY (CONT'D)
I guess I should go now. I'll
schedule an appointment for you.

She starts to leave.

MANFRED
Oh, Miss Luchens. Just one more
thing.

She turns back to him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
My muscles are really sore. Does
psychotherapy include a massage?

He smiles.

She hurries to him and hugs him.

LIZZY
You crazy S.O.B.

FADE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Manfred sits on the back row of an auditorium. Lizzy stands
behind him and rubs his neck.

The auditorium is full; house lights are dim.

On stage a group of actors bow, and the crowd APPLAUDS. The
closed curtain pops open and Haley and Tessa come onto stage
for even more thunderous APPLAUSE.

The two hold hands and bow. The curtain pops open once more
and Ron comes out and bows. Even greater APPLAUSE.

He and the two girls join hands, and then they join hands with the rest of the performers and all bow together. People CHEER and stand on their feet.

House lights come up.

An EMCEE comes through the curtains and walks toward a podium on the right hand side of the stage. He holds his hands up to silence the crowd.

The emcee is pale, with long, curly black hair, and he wears a black suit with a pale white tie.

He steps up to the microphone.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, in our audience tonight are Manfred Smith and his wife Lizzy.

The crowd whirls around to see. Lizzy prods Manfred to get up. He stands to great APPLAUSE.

EMCEE (CONT'D)

It's my pleasure to announce that

He pauses for dramatic effect.

EMCEE (CONT'D)

Manfred Smith has been nominated for a Tony Award.

Manfred sways and supports himself on the seats in front of him.

EMCEE (CONT'D)

Mr. Smith, the podium is yours!

Manfred makes his way toward the stage while Lizzy stands back.

The crowd APPLAUDS more loudly the closer he gets to the stage.

He finally reaches stage right and climbs the steps.

At the Podium, the Emcee takes a step back.

The applause fades away.

MANFRED

And to think I was going to be a poet.

The crowd LAUGHS. He looks into the audience.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Sorry, Venice.

He waves to her. Sitting in the front row, she waves back.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I honestly don't know what to say.

In the front row besides Venice are Dr. Short, Iona, Dave Milburn, Mrs. Long, Eric, and Beverly.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
I want to thank you all for
supporting my new play, *Massage*.

He waves to Lizzy in the back and she waves back at him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
So many people have made this
possible. Not Bev the bitch!

Another round of APPLAUSE.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Kally neither.

The crowd ERUPTS.

People throw flowers on the stage. One hits Manfred in the eye. He shields his face and closes both eyes for a second.

When he opens them back up, the house lights are dark, but the stage is lit.

The auditorium is empty.

He walks downstage center and peers out into the darkness, but spotlights blind him.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Hello.

The lights to his left dim into darkness. When he gazes there, the ones to his right begin to dim.

MANFRED (CONT'D)
Give me light.

The stage lights behind him dim also. Everything is black but one spotlight glaring down on Manfred.

He looks up to the crow's nest and sees one small light pop on up there.

Though the spotlight mostly blinds him, he can make out the fuzzy shape of a single person sitting there, the Goditor.

MANFRED (CONT'D)

Where'd everyone go?

GODITER

The play is over.

The lights in the booth pop off.

The spotlight on Manfred fades slowly to black.

THE END