

TEACHER'S LOUNGE

A Play written by

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TITLE: TEACHER'S LOUNGE

ACT ONE

Lights up. Late Afternoon.

SCENE ONE

SETTING: A teacher's lounge. It's six minutes until 4:00 p.m. according to the clock on the wall on Friday afternoon. The teacher's lounge itself is pretty dull with only a few chairs, a long table, a coffee pot filled with eight hour old coffee resting on a smaller table equipped with styrofoam cups. A weathered plant is pushed against its will into one of the corners of the room and a door leading to a small bathroom completed with a toilet seat and sink. There is a closed window to the left.

BOBBY WYATT enters, excited thrusting his fists in the air. He is in his late-30s, a discharged Army veteran, an American history teacher whose more about voicing his opinion than keeping silent, bold, politically incorrect. Has wild sense of humor while dealing with his troubled life choices: women especially. He is followed in by **HAP MOSLEY** an Algebra teacher mid- 40s, a failed businessman with only three years in the profession is already doubting why he enter into a life of education. His only explanation is that he comes from a long line of educators and sort of fell into the family business when his mother a well-known educator referred him to the county he now works in.

BOBBY

It was a mighty punch.

HAP

You got to be kidding?

BOBBY

Shot out like a comet. And you only see one of those every seventy-five years.

HAP

Did you see it?

BOBBY

I'd give my last dollar if I did. I heard about it. The whole school was talking about. The teachers. The students. The crossing guards even. Soon the news. They're already outside.

Hap sits at the table.

HAP

It's tragic.

BOBBY

Don't say you feel sorry for the kid. He had it coming.

HAP

That's your opinion, Bobby.

BOBBY

That's not my opinion. It's a solid fact. You make a man's move you deserve a man's outcome. Bam! K-O! It was a fight made for cable television. Brave teacher knocks out disruptive pupil with no apology.

HAP

It wasn't a knockout. I don't think we can call it a fight.

BOBBY

Then what do you suggest we call it, an altercation? Everybody today couldn't believe what was happening. Outside, a reporter came up to me with a microphone as I was coming in from my car for a comment on today's events.

HAP

I hope you didn't say anything. You know we are bound to keep silent on anything that happens on school grounds.

BOBBY

I'm well aware of the contract I signed and I didn't tell the reporter a thing.

HAP

Good because you know you like to say what's on your mind.

BOBBY

It's a right everyone should have. First Amendment. But in this case I had my job to think about so I told the reporter no comment.

HAP

They pressured you, didn't they?

BOBBY

Who?

HAP

The reporters.

BOBBY

You bet your life, they did. One I bet would've offered me money and promise to keep my name out of it for my opinion.

HAP

Would you have done it?

BOBBY

No. I have my job and a mortgage to think about it. Although I would love to have been the referee in that room. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the main event. In this corner weighing approximately one hundred eighty-eight pounds with a right that would put Foreman on his grill our computer tech whiz Charlie Baker. And in this corner weighing at two hundred and fifteen pounds of pure mush and will be held back another year if the board doesn't insist he should be retained Robby Benjamin. Ding! And they're off. Charlie keeping his mitts up blocks Robby's jabs. Left, left, left Robby japs, not getting a hit. Right, left, right, left, left, still no hits. Charlie circles to left then to the right waits for it, Robby charges with a right, Charlie blocks and comes in with a hard right. Pow! Robby goes down. One, two, three, ten, it's over! The crowd of teachers from all over the world stand up and cheer, making a huge spectacle and even dedicating this day Charlie Baker day!

HAP

And the North wins the war.

Bobby sits at the table.

BOBBY

You think I'm having too much fun with this?

HAP

My opinion doesn't matter.

BOBBY

Even if it did, I wouldn't be the least afraid to tell you he got what he deserved. Everybody who's ever had Robby in their classroom has said the same thing. He's a nuisance, disruptive, argumentative, a trouble maker, doesn't get along with classmates, always late to class. If his write-ups were felonies, he'd get three consecutive life sentences.

HAP

I have had trouble with him. Written him up even.

BOBBY

And he still came back.

HAP

The principal suspended him twice this year.

BOBBY

Didn't do any good. Robby is still here and causing more trouble than ever. He was sent to a detention center and only allowed to come back only if he promised not to get into any more fights. I guess he won't be back and so won't Charlie.

HAP

Poor Charlie.

BOBBY

Yeah. He is officially terminated. His life as an educator is over. He might as well have put Robby in a coma that'll at least justify him losing his career. Career gone, pension gone all over some punk and one punch.

HAP

Was it one punch? I heard he just shoved him against the wall and he held him there until a teacher pulled him off.

BOBBY

I heard it was a punch to face. Oh, we'll get the facts when the principal gets in here. If that even happens any time soon. Hap. What do you think of him?

HAP

Who? The principal? He's driven, idealistic, it comes with the territory of being a young principal.

BOBBY

I call it soft.

HAP

Soft?

BOBBY

S-O-F-T. He lets too many things slip by him. He's too friendly and a lot of students feed on his kindness. When being a principal after elementary, you have to conduct yourself as a tyrant, strong-willed, a general with no mercy or things will fall apart. In the service we had a code of conduct. A respect of rank. A chain of command. If there wasn't one, there would be confusion and disorder. People would do whatever they wanted to do and nothing would get done. Nothing gets done like your write up, the next day Robby was in your classroom scurrying up more trouble and laughing at the fact that he can get away with it.

HAP

He tries. Principal Williams does put in effort.

BOBBY

Trying and effort doesn't mean a thing as a man. Either you do or you don't. He's just a privileged suburbanite who only got the job over having a better hand than the other guy.

HAP

You think so?

BOBBY

His grandfather was mayor of this city fifty years ago and his father own businesses all over this state. Do you think they would let their boy be a janitor? Work at Wal-Mart as a greeter? In two years, Williams might be on the school board itself then be voted chairman. In very hush hush kind of way.

HAP

You think he didn't become principal on the up and up?

BOBBY

Him? Hell no. I don't think he's ever been inside a classroom more than five minutes. You don't have to go into a bathroom to know it stinks.

HAP

It helps.

BOBBY

Like when Amos. You remember fat man Amos. He drunk that chocolate milk and ate that egg sandwich then went into that bathroom, funkyed it up so bad the water refused to come out the faucet for a week.

HAP

And you never let him forget it up until the day he retired.

BOBBY

Oh no. It was his fault. No one was able to wash their hands afterwards for a week. God knows who touched who that week. You see him around?

HAP

Not since his retirement party.

BOBBY

I got a long way until that time. Feels like a century will have to past for me to retire.

HAP

You're going to remain a teacher?

BOBBY

I made in this far. It makes no sense to change paths now.

HAP

You're too close to retirement.

BOBBY

I wouldn't say that.

HAP

How long were you in the service?

BOBBY

A little over five years. Then I was discharged. Honorably. Luck I call it.

HAP

Why do you say that?

BOBBY

Let's just say the serge and I didn't see eye to eye. He more saw my fist than my eye.

HAP

You hit your superior officer?

BOBBY

The serge attacked me and I defend myself. We was at a bar still in uniform and we got into it over a disagreement. Serge was court-marital and suspended. I was discharged. I could've serve some time or received a punitive discharge. But I got mercy for once in my life where luckily another high-ranking officer sided with my story. When is this meeting going to start? It's close to two minutes after four.

Bobby gets up and walks around the room.

HAP

Message sent said to meet in here at four.

BOBBY

I got plans tonight and after today's events, I'm going need a soft body and a couple of shots of tequila.

HAP

Got plans for the weekend?

BOBBY

Oh yeah. Going out with this woman I met earlier this week. Twenty-four years old, a hundred-thirty-three pounds, great hair.

HAP

Young girl.

BOBBY

Younger women have shorter stories or no stories at all. And shorter attention spans so you don't have long to get them hot, do it fast and they're off.

HAP

So the divorce is final?

BOBBY

It's been final.

HAP

Since when?

BOBBY

Since she threw my stuff into the street. You know she stabbed me in the head with a nail file.

HAP

What?

BOBBY

Stuck me right in my head. Right there. I drove myself to the hospital with the nail file in my head, she's in the passenger seat raising hell, calling me a bastard and every other name in the book. Get to the hospital, police was there and wanted to take her to jail, but I told them it was an accident that the file fell off the top shelf and stuck me.

HAP

And I bet they didn't believe you.

BOBBY

I just had my daughter and my ex stayed home so it was either send her jail or pay a daycare center four hundred dollars a week. Either way I was going to lose money 'cause I would have bail her out.

HAP

You sure can pick them.

BOBBY

That wasn't the worst thing she did. That was just a Wednesday afternoon. We used to fight over little things like cereal. She'd throw everything at me, Hap. An iron, hangers, threw my football card collection I had since I was a kid in the middle of the street. Threw bibles at me after church to make sure I get the word.

HAP

Wow.

BOBBY

It was like that movie War of the Roses, man. Everyday. Every day, twenty-four seven. I'd come home and just sit in my car in the driveway, perfecting my chi so I wouldn't have to hit her. I came close a few times like when she wouldn't tell me where my daughter was.

HAP

Whoa.

BOBBY

You don't have children?

HAP

I haven't found the right one.

BOBBY

Find the right one, Hap, find the right one. The wrong one will cost you more than money. If there wasn't a thing called divorce, I'd commit suicide just to get away from her behind.

HAP

You could move away.

BOBBY

Naw. She'd find me. She works for the devil and Hell has a GPS. It's not funny. She is just evil. Just evil for no reason. The judge gave her custody naturally 'cause she's great at pretending to be stable minded. But I spend a lot of time with my daughter 'cause I don't want her to get the wrong impression on life like you have the right to be mad at everybody else when you in fact make wrong decisions, you know what I'm saying. I can't have her have that depressed, vicious mindset.

HAP

You're a good man, Bobby.

BOBBY

I try to be, Hap with all my craziness, I try to be.

Bobby looks down at his watch. 4:07. He is starting to grow a little agitated.

Bobby

Where is everybody at? I think someone is playing a trick on us, Hap.

HAP

If it is, it's not a funny one.

BOBBY

What do you have planned for the weekend?

HAP

Grade papers, maybe see a movie.

BOBBY

By yourself?

HAP

Yes.

BOBBY

Stop that talk Hap. You're a handsome man. A good chap. If I was a chick, I'd go a round with you.

HAP

Thanks, I guess-

A toilet flush is heard. Bobby and Hap look at each other then at the door, wondering how can someone be in the bathroom without them knowing it. Bobby's heart beats faster.

BOBBY

Who's in there?

Hap shrugs. BOBBY moves away from the door and looks out the closed window, pretending nothing was said and nothing went on. **JACKIE LYNCH** comes out the bathroom drying her hands with a paper towel. A teacher of physical science of six years, she is a recent divorcee with pale eyes for a once lively, beautiful woman brought on through a cheating husband, depression and in new found vice for vodka. She looks over and sees Bobby at the window. He looks back, relieved.

BOBBY

Jackie. I didn't know you were here.

JACKIE

I don't know what feels worst me: not being noticed or cramps.

HAP

Oh Lord.

JACKIE

Don't mention the one responsible for this. If God really wanted to punish women for eating the apple, he'd made us men. I guess we're early for this necessary quote unquote meeting.

BOBBY

I heard over the intercom meeting at four.

HAP

Me too.

JACKIE

Where is everybody? Who has to be here?

BOBBY

All Robby's teachers. There is me, you, Hap and two more. What's the new girl's name?

HAP

Erin I think.

BOBBY

She's pretty cute, not my type, but cute.

JACKIE

You mean safe. You know you like women with razor blades. Threatening to cut you or slit your tires like your wife did last Spring.

BOBBY

Oh I forgot about that. Slit my tires 'cause she thought I was cheating on her.

JACKIE

Were you?

BOBBY

No, I respect the sanctity of marriage. I had one fool at the house, I'd be dammed to get another one. The other one would probably slit the tires off my bicycle then I'd never get to work.

HAP

You got to leave those women alone.

BOBBY

I'll be dammed if I'm going to men then I could never get into my garage. Speaking going to men, was Sheldon here today or did he have to his beard colored in?

He chuckles under his breath.

HAP

I don't think he was here today. Let ask you this. Why are you always giving Sheldon a hard time?

BOBBY

I don't give him a hard time.

HAP

You're always mispronouncing his last name. Fussing with him. You two seem to always be in a battle.

BOBBY

He's the one whose, what'chu call it... snotty?

JACKIE

You mean snobby?

BOBBY

Yeah. He thinks he's better than me because he's older and the fact he came from teaching in prestigious private school up North to follow his true calling of teaching in a public school. He couldn't hold a candle to what I do and always trying to correct me when I talk to my students.

HAP

When?

BOBBY

Glad you asked. Perfect example. I'm talking to one of my students about his behavior in the hallway last Thursday, telling him he's needs to straighten up his act when Sheldon walks up. After I send the kid in the classroom, he tells me I shouldn't speak to him in that way. I ask him in what way should I speak to him. He tells me I shouldn't have done it in the hallway and I should've been more discrete. I told him to mind his business.

HAP

You told him that.

BOBBY

You bet your butt I did. I wanted to tell him where he could shove his discrete. Tells me how to talk to my students. That's one of the problems of this entire educational system. Cod-dling. It's okay, don't fail them, give them three more chances, pat them on the back, turn the other cheek after they slap you in the face. Please. This is high school and in the real world outside this building, the world doesn't care where you come from, your skin color, or where you wear your heart, either you sink or swim. I tell that to my students all the time. You can do anything if you're willing to work for it because no one is going to hold your hand to give it to you. Am I right?

HAP

You're right.

BOBBY

Am I right?

JACKIE

Right on.

BOBBY

Damn skippy. Sheldon Leaves.

HAP

Levees.

BOBBY

Whatever. He's just a spoiled private school-teacher coming off a white horse and tries to blind all of us with his upper-middle class textbook knowledge. Where he comes from if the kids don't learn, it's okay he won't get blamed 'cause mommy and daddy will pay for their kids to get into college or bail them of jail with a check.

JACKIE

I wish I had parents like that.

HAP

The man comes from a different demographic of teaching.

BOBBY

Yeah. Rich. Spoiled, rich white kids with their Master-cards and chauffeurs.

HAP

Okay. Maybe. Don't you think you could cut him some slack?

BOBBY

Are you two buddy buddy now?

HAP

No.

BOBBY

Then why do you care about how much slack I give him?

He awaits an answer, but one doesn't come.

BOBBY

I'd go find the principal, but I'm afraid if I go out there I won't come back. Jackie, would you check to see where the principal is?

HAP

I'll go. I left my bag in my classroom.

Hap leaves through the front door. Bobby follows him to make sure the door is closed. He turns and looks directly at Jackie.

BOBBY

Can you believe him asking me to cut Sheldon some slack?

JACKIE

To think the only reason he got a job because of who his mother is. I bet she reads over his assignments before he hands them out.

Bobby walks over to her. He puts his head on her shoulder.

BOBBY

Now that we're alone. Jackie, you tease, you voluptuous vixen.

JACKIE

Are you on the pipe?

BOBBY

I'm on the pipe of love... or lust, depending on the weekday.

Jackie moves away from him.

JACKIE

You know I could file a sexual harassment charge on you and you could lose your teaching certificate.

BOBBY

Will that change what we have?

JACKIE

What we had was a fling. You were just an object of instant gratification for me after my divorce. I used you like tissue-

BOBBY

And blew me-

JACKIE

And tossed you away. Don't be immature.

BOBBY

You used me. I feel so exposed.

JACKIE

That's because your zipper is undone.

BOBBY

You noticed. Okay. I'll back off. You know by now, I don't ever want to be committed to anyone ever again. Too much work. I'd gouge out my own eyes like Oedipus than have someone else do it. How are you feeling, how are you doing seriously?

JACKIE

Taking it day by day. I can't complain, wouldn't do any good if I did.

BOBBY

I hear you. How about the "thing"?

JACKIE

Do you mind not going there.

BOBBY

I'm just asking.

JACKIE

It's a ski trip. What do you think?

BOBBY

Take it in stride. It'll help. I know from experience. A former addict.

JACKIE

I'm not on coke, Bobby. Do you see me under my desk doing lines at break time?

BOBBY

No.

She steps closer to him.

JACKIE

Or coping behind the school dumpster with my eleventh grade dealer.

BOBBY

No. Jackie, please. Don't make yourself upset.

JACKIE

I'm not. What kind of addict were you?

BOBBY

Same as you. I went to the meetings too. Never said much, but I identified with others were going through.

JACKIE

How did you feel afterwards, you know going through it?

BOBBY

No different, just more normal.

JACKIE

What does that mean?

BOBBY

I didn't need a crutch to get up in the morning. I just got up. Brush my teeth, brush my hair, wash my face. I just did my routine just minus the crutch. The complicated question to question is not why you are indulging, but why you don't want to.

JACKIE

What was your answer?

BOBBY

My daughter. I wanted her to know me and that was more important than anything in the whole world. Being called daddy. Sweet words. She's only ten going on thirty. She can read, oh can she read. While I'm driving, she likes looking out the window and reading the signs. Take her to a book store, a Barnes and Noble. She goes straight into the child's section and grabs book after book after book and says buy them for me dad I want to read. Over a hundred and thirty-eight books she's read this year so far. I haven't read that many in my life. But she is why I won't go back and believe you me I still get the urge to teeter-totter every once in awhile. Today. Today would be a great day to fall flat on my face in a puddle of whiskey.

JACKIE

You can say that again. Today was a nightmare.

BOBBY

What's so scary about it? It's a Friday afternoon in the American school system. Fights like that are more common now. They are to be expected.

JACKIE

Bobby, you got to know what's going to happen when things like this happen. Investigations, phone calls, the repeated background checks, psychic evaluations, doesn't include that teachers we got enough problems to get these kids to learn when they are busy talking about what happened today. Our work load will triple and so will the distractions over the next quarter. It's like walking around with a tattoo on your forehead and pretending no one's watching.

BOBBY

If the kids want to learn, they will. We're only teaching to twenty percent of class who wants to know what's your teaching anyway. Others don't care or only want to pass. This incident doesn't faze me at all.

JACKIE

So you're not worried?

BOBBY

About what? I didn't hit Robby, but I don't blame Charlie for what he did. He deserved it. Charlie Baker is going to be martyr. A spokesman for teachers everywhere. Maybe if the press out there will tell the truth maybe we could get to the heart of this issue and do something about it.

JACKIE

The press is out there? They're blocking the exit.

BOBBY

We're trapped like rats in a maze. Let's cuddle.

Jackie gives him a look stopping him in his tracks.

BOBBY

Just joking. Ha ha. Look, where is everybody? This is really starting to irk me. I got better things to do with my time.

JACKIE

I got to get home and feed me cat.

BOBBY

Cat? Cats are for old people. Dogs, that's a pet. They're a man's best friend.

JACKIE

I don't want anything associated with a man or what's considered his best friend.

BOBBY

Have you given up on men period? There are other options.

JACKIE

You would like that, wouldn't you? Keeps you awake at night.

BOBBY

See, you're making this into some exotic fantasy whereas I'm asking a direct question.

JACKIE

Let's say I'm on hiatus from the male species. I have more on my mind than the company of four minute erection.

BOBBY

I was tired. I'm sorry.

JACKIE

Four minutes. Two runs of commercials. That's pretty pathetic even for you.

Jackie becomes uneasy. She holds her stomach. She looks as though she's about to vomit.

BOBBY

Jackie, are you all right?

JACKIE

Um, excuse me.

Jackie leaves in the bathroom and shuts the door.

BOBBY

You must've been the lunch. Can't trust the food around here. Get a stomach virus.

Bobby goes to the door and puts his ear against it. He hears her puking into the toilet and moves away.

BOBBY

You sure you're all right?

JACKIE
(In the bathroom)
I'll be out in a minute.

Hap comes in with his bag and sets it on the floor next to his chair.

HAP
Bobby, you're not going to believe this.

BOBBY
What?

HAP
I ran into Mrs. Wendell on the way to my classroom and she told me the meeting is actually suppose to start at 4:30, not four.

BOBBY
How does she know that?

HAP
Principal Williams told her and Erin without notifying the rest of us.

BOBBY
Jesus Christ, are you serious?

HAP
Yes. They're on their way here now. Where's Jackie?

BOBBY
In there. So the meeting is later and nobody said anything. Just great. Was the principal with them?

HAP
He wasn't there when I spoke to her.

BOBBY
It's Friday, it's pay day and I want to get out of here to enjoy what's left of my weekend.

HAP
Amen. We all earned our checks today.

BOBBY
Especially me. Not to take away from you, but I was in the middle of giving a test when this whole thing happened. You can imagine the curve I'm have to give from all the distraction.

HAP
I was going over homework which a majority of my class didn't finish or didn't do.

BOBBY

Don't you hate assigning homework? You know half of them aren't gonna do it. That's why in my classes I don't assign written homework.

HAP

Why?

BOBBY

To be honest with you I don't feel like grading it. When I leave this school at four o'clock, I want to go home, have my evening brew, watch some t.v, check in with my daughter and go to sleep.

HAP

Amen.

BOBBY

Praises be to the highest. I can't believe the three of us weren't told. It wouldn't make a difference, we'd still be here, but it's the principle of the thing.

HAP

I agree.

BOBBY

So both of them are on their way. I'll bet you the principal won't be with them. We'll be here an hour before this meeting gets started. Oh, how did your interview go?

HAP

What interview? Oh, the interview. I forgot. Yes. Um, it went well. It went very well.

BOBBY

You didn't get the job.

HAP

No, not this life time.

BOBBY

You get another shot somewhere else. Something better.

HAP

I like teaching. I do, but I loved being my own boss. Having my own business. Operate within my own hours. No kids to deal with.

BOBBY

You owned your own trucking business, right?

HAP

Sure did, for five years. It was going well, but insurance went up and clientele went down. Tried to mortgage my house, liquidate what I could, but it wasn't enough. I could barely eat off what I was making.

BOBBY

Are you going to try it again?

HAP

Own my own business? I would like to. Give it another shot. Maybe go into the restaurant business.

BOBBY

Oh, that's a risky investment. Had a friend try to open a diner on the beach, went bankrupt within a year. Fifty percent of lawyers would vote against going with that venture.

HAP

So is being an educator, but here we are.

BOBBY

You're right about that, Hap. Being a teacher is just as stressful as being a heart surgeon just that we don't make six figures and wear rubber gloves. Though we should. That I mean wear rubber gloves.

HAP

Here's something else. I hope you know that next year the board is enforcing their budget cuts.

BOBBY

Oh, goodie. Now, I can forget about that jet I was about to buy. Are they cutting our sports teams budget?

HAP

No, I think they're keeping their budgets the same. Maybe getting a little more because they are trying to recruit that quarterback from the other district to play for our school.

BOBBY

Our priorities are so intact. See Hap, I could sit here bitch and complain, but what would be the point? It's all going down hill like me in my car going down the hill, making a left turn out of here.

HAP

If only you could.

BOBBY

I'm bold enough to do it, but I'm far from stupid. Hap, when is the last time you were with a woman?

HAP

None of your business.

BOBBY

None of my... It's been that long. I'm surprised you're not going blind. You can't sit here and tell me none of my business when I know it's been a long time.

HAP

What part of none of your business didn't you understand?

BOBBY

So when's the last time you were with a woman?

HAP

If you must know...well, where do I start since you won't quit bringing it up, it's been over a year. I'm busy rethinking my professional and personal life so there leaves no time for a relationship.

BOBBY

I'm not talking about a "relationship", Hap. I'm talking about sex. You don't have to like the person or be in a relationship to have sex. In some cases, you don't have to know their last name.

HAP

Bobby-

BOBBY

Or even know their first name.

HAP

Do you think its wise for us to have this conversation in the teacher's lounge? What if the principal came in and hear what you said?

BOBBY

The kid might learn something. A pro. I'll get you a pro. You'll come out with me, hang with the guys tonight, meet my girl...

HAP

I don't want to meet her.

BOBBY

Fine. We'll change the subject. Who do you think will make it to the Super-bowl this year?

HAP

I'm not into sports. *(Pause)* What?

Hap looks directly at Bobby.

BOBBY

Then how do you relax?

HAP

I look at my life. I look in the mirror at the fact I'm in a profession I don't want to be in, but I'm forced to make a living. Everything I've done within the past ten years has failed.

BOBBY

That doesn't sound very relaxing. This job will stress you out. You have get out and have some fun, man.

HAP

I don't have a reason to go out.

BOBBY

Don't tell me you're feeling sorry for yourself.

HAP

Yeah, a little. I'm here only because of my mother.

BOBBY

I hear violins playing.

HAP

Oh, that's funny. I'm past thirty-five and I needed my mother for a professional reference. Everybody knows that's why I'm here.

BOBBY

So. You have nothing to feel sorry about. You're a damn good teacher. What were you saying on Wednesday about your star pupil Maria Vasquez getting a math scholarship to go school in Indiana. Yeah and she thanked you for all those afternoons of tutoring her.

HAP

That's one exception. Maria Vasquez worked hard. She deserves that scholarship and the honor.

BOBBY

And she got the scholarship because of you.

HAP

She couldn't speak English well, but numbers were her second language.

BOBBY

And you helped her. See those are the moments we strive for. Even if it is just one.

RUBY WENDELL and **MARY ERIN HILL** enter. Ruby in her late 50s has over twenty-nine years of teaching experience and has a soft spot for her students often believing what they tell her. Her love for her students can sometimes overshadow her better judgement and make her colleagues question whether or not it's time for her to retire. She wears a small cross around her neck. Mary is twenty-three years old, first year American Literature teacher, busty and secretly voted by the boys of the school the most likely teacher they'd sleep with. Her outfit to work is questioned to be too revealing, standing in her V-neck shirt and pants suit.

RUBY

Mr. Wyatt. I see you and Mr. Mosley are eager to get this meeting started. Seeing both of you are the first ones here.

BOBBY

Jackie is here just puking in the bathroom.

HAP

Did you have to tell them that?

BOBBY

What? It's not state secret. They can hear it.

RUBY

Poor thing. It must have been something she ate.

MARY

That's a reason I bring my food from home. You can't be too careful with school lunches these days.

BOBBY

School lunches have always sucked. You should know better than us Mary. You just graduated high school.

MARY

And then I went off to college, graduated magna cum laude and got my teaching certificate. What did you graduate?

RUBY

Magna cum laude meet oh lordy.

Laughter. Bobby pretends to smile. Ruby sits down next to Hap.

BOBBY

Ha ha ha. Where's the principal?

RUBY

On his way over here I hope. I don't know about anyone else, but this whole day got me begging for my bed.

MARY

I second that motion.

RUBY

In all my years in the school system this has never happened in a school I've worked in. To think of a teacher putting their hands on a child-

BOBBY

A child? Robby is seventeen.

RUBY

Seventeen is still not an adult.

BOBBY

You can leave school at sixteen and join the military at seventeen. Those are adult decisions.

RUBY

But you can't drink until you're twenty-one or get married until you're eighteen without parental consent.

MARY

In some states you don't need parental consent.

RUBY

Whose side are you on?

MARY

I'm just saying. It's true.

BOBBY

So you think it was wrong for Charlie to defend himself?

RUBY

I think we are the adults and we should set the example for the children. We cannot sink down to their level. They don't know any better.

BOBBY

Don't know any better. Give me a break. These so-called children are having children and skipping school to do it. Some are selling drugs and cheating on tests we give them. And there are those don't have the respect you give a dog. Robby made a adult decision and he should accept the adult repercussions for his actions. To the face.

RUBY

Violence leads to more violence.

BOBBY

Okay Dr. King, what should he have done?

RUBY

Mr. Baker shouldn't have engaged his behavior and called security. We have them here for a reason.

BOBBY

Our security stinks. My car was broken into twice this year.

HAP

Wasn't the first time your ex?

BOBBY

This has nothing to do with Danielle. She's crazy. Security should've tased her.

Laughter.

RUBY

The ex-wife is still getting under your skin?

BOBBY

Under the skin, over skin and if she could, she get in the skin and lead poison me.

Laughter.

BOBBY

Mary, I'm not trying to get into you personal life...are you in a relationship?

MARY

Uh, no.

BOBBY

But you have been in one. What's the longest you've been in a relationship?

HAP

Don't worry. He's not trying to get into your personal life.

Mary smiles.

BOBBY

You don't have to answer if you don't wanna.

MARY

A little over a year.

BOBBY

Okay, you're young, but there is going to come a time when you want to get married. I say don't get married until to see the other get mad. I'm talking mad, not mad to enough kill you, but mad enough you can see them put bullets in the chamber.

HAP

A relationship counselor Bobby is.

RUBY

Relationship counselor or not, Mr. Baker had no right to put his hands on that child.

BOBBY

So Charlie should've let Robby beat on him? Have you seen the size of that kid? He's like the size of two linebackers.

RUBY

The world's got enough immaturity to go around. We have to stand up and represent what it means to be teacher. To be an example for the community and the children we teach.

BOBBY

Mrs. Wendell, did you just recite our school motto?

Bobby amuses himself with the dull joke.

RUBY

Believe me or not, Mr. Baker was in the wrong and he deserves what's coming to him.

Scene ends.

SCENE TWO

Ten minutes have passed. Jackie hasn't come out of the bathroom and the principal hasn't shown up. Bobby is looking out the window trying to get a glimpse of the police and reporters outside. Everyone else is seated, looking exhausted.

HAP

Well, Bobby if this was a bet you would've won.

BOBBY

It would be a sucker's bet if anyone betted against me. They are still out there. I know the fight was at last period the end of the day, but isn't there a time limit for them to be out there. You'd think a murder happened at this school.

HAP

It did. Killing of a man's career.

BOBBY

You got that right brother. Charlie might as well commit suicide.

RUBY

What are you-

BOBBY

Put a gun to his head and pull the trigger.

He has a seat.

RUBY

What are you saying? He could teach again after some re-training.

BOBBY

After this? He'd be lucky to get a job at UPS. There isn't a county or a state that will allow him back in a classroom.

RUBY

There's always a chance at redemption.

BOBBY

Mrs. Wendell, have you been watching the news? Every week you turn on the t.v, a school teacher, a principal is losing their job for one reason or the next. One infraction your career in the classroom is over. Let's get it out and in the open. Nobody stands behind teachers any more. Our word means nothing.

RUBY

That's not true.

BOBBY

It isn't. How many parents came to your open house? How many parents?

RUBY

For all my classes?

BOBBY

Uh-huh.

RUBY

I can't come up with a number off the top of my head.

BOBBY

I would guess less than five.

RUBY

More than that.

BOBBY

Okay, six.

MARY

I had two from all my three classes.

BOBBY

I had about the same and one I remembered from last year.

HAP

Bobby, what point are you making?

BOBBY

Just like I said. No parental involvement. No one has an interest in their child's education. Look at our PTA. We barely have ten parents for the entire school.

RUBY

Are you involved with the PTA? I served as President for two years straight and I've never seen you at any of the meetings.

BOBBY

I've been busy.

RUBY

Funny. I get that excuse all the time.

BOBBY

So you agree with me?

RUBY

Not entirely. I will agree there is a lack of parental involved in the schools today and it has been declining over the years. I remember a time when we had to move the PTA meeting room to the cafeteria because capacity was so big.

Now you can hold a monthly meeting in a broom closet.

BOBBY

Why, why? Someone take a stab at it. Mary. Take a shot.

MARY

Well, I'm not a parent and this is my first year teaching. Mrs. Wendell has been inviting me to sit and listen to the PTA meeting the third week of every month and I have noticed only the front row is filled.

BOBBY

From what you've seen why do we have so little parent involvement?

HAP

We do have to take in account this is a high school, not an elementary school.

BOBBY

Fine. I give you that, but still why? The principal is still not here. It's eight minutes to five. This is ridiculous. Anybody got a deck of cards?

RUBY

I though we were having a discussion.

Bobby rubs his forehead.

BOBBY

It's giving me a headache.

MARY

I have some Tylenol in my bag.

BOBBY

Unless that Tylenol is ninety percent proof it's not going to help. What now? Do we wait some more, leave, what.

HAP

This is getting to be a pain-

BOBBY

Pain in the a-

RUBY

Anyone saw what happened?

MARY

Not me.

RUBY

Mr. Mosley.

HAP

No, ma'am.

MARY

What did you hear Mrs. Wendell?

RUBY

I heard many things, but I don't want to repeat any of it. It'll be like spreading rumors.

BOBBY

We're going go off of rumors because none of us saw it.

RUBY

What about Ms. Lynch?

BOBBY

She's in the bathroom. When she comes out, you can ask her. I will bet you a million dollars though she didn't see it either. Her classroom is on the other side of the building.

RUBY

Somebody had to have seen something. An adult at least.

HAP

If they did, they're not coming in here. They are at home watching us on t.v.

BOBBY

Would you blame them? Anymore people come in here, it'll feel like a bus stop. Man, oh, man I remembered I'm hungry.

HAP

You didn't eat lunch?

BOBBY

Nope. I'm glad I didn't or else I'd be in the bathroom like her. I'm going to the snack machine. Hap, lend a dollar.

HAP

Didn't you get paid today too?

BOBBY

Look Hap. We can bicker back and forth who got paid, who didn't get paid, but the fact remains I need a dollar for the vending machine.

Hap looks through his wallet.

HAP

All I have is a five.

MARY

Wait. I have one. Here.

Mary gives Bobby a dollar from her purse.

BOBBY

Thank you, Mary. I'll be back. Don't start the meeting without me.

Bobby leaves. Hap goes over to the window and looks out.

RUBY

I hope we get through this meeting soon. My grandson bless his heart got the mumps. My husband says he looks like Fat Albert.

MARY

How old is he?

RUBY

Eight.

MARY

Practically a man.

RUBY

More than his father to tell you the truth. My grandson will come home from school, do his homework, put up the dishes, fold the clothes, help with dinner. If I knew he could do all that, I'd had him first.

MARY

What about your son?

RUBY

Drugs. The streets. I took his son in and told him not to come back until he gets himself straight. I haven't seen him since his son registered in kindergarten.

MARY

That has to be rough.

RUBY

I still pray for him everyday. Mark, my husband planned on retiring next year, but decided to put it on hold until Deuce gets in middle school.

MARY

Deuce. Is that his real name?

RUBY

My son wanted him to play sports.

MARY

I like it.

RUBY

It's cute now, just wait until he applies for a job then it won't be as cute. Are they still out there, Mr. Mosley?

HAP

Yes, ma'am.

RUBY

I was meaning to ask you Mr. Mosley on how your mother is enjoying her retirement.

HAP

I couldn't tell you Mrs. Wendell, but if I had to take a guess, she is enjoying herself.

RUBY

His mother started teaching in this county three years before I did. Excellent teacher. She could've been a principal, but she didn't want to leave the classroom. Say she was born to teach.

MARY

I wish I could've met her.

RUBY

If you think I can teach, watch his mother. She could teach some of the stupidest children God ever placed on this Earth how to read and get them on the honor roll.

MARY

Sounds like a miracle.

RUBY

That it was. I remember one time she had trouble getting this student to focus. So what she did she placed a twenty dollar bill in a book she wanted him to read. She told him to read it. Two weeks later, he came back, gave her the book and said it was too hard. She gave it back to him and they sat there and read it together. When they came to a particular page, she told him to finish it. He did and there was the

twenty dollar bill taped to the middle of the page.

MARY

He wouldn't have got the money if he didn't read it.

RUBY

He wouldn't have got the money if he hadn't tried. All she wanted him to do is try. I teach with that message. Just try.

MARY

That's what your illustrated picture above your desk shows.

RUBY

Right above my desk. So when a student comes up to me, complaining about how hard an assignment is, I point to the picture behind me as a reminder to just try. How have those suggestions I gave you been helping?

MARY

Very well. I admit it took me awhile to grasp your techniques, but it's coming through. One of my classes is really showing improvement.

RUBY

It is not going to work for everyone, but it's a start. They really come after you during your first year. See if you can cut it. Excuse me.

Ruby gets up and knocks on the bathroom door.

RUBY

Ms. Lynch. Ms. Lynch. Are you alright in there?

JACKIE

(In the bathroom)

I'm fine.

RUBY

How long are you going to be? I would like to use the restroom, please.

JACKIE

(In the bathroom)

Give me a few minutes.

RUBY

I'll make a puddle in a few minutes. Ms. Hill, would you mind doing me a favor? Go inside the ladies restroom down the hall and check if they have any toilet tissue.

MARY

Not a problem.

She stands up. Hap does the same.

HAP

I'll go with you.

MARY

To the ladies bathroom?

HAP

With you... ha, ha, no. I'm going to the restroom myself.

They leave. Ruby walks to the door, checking if the coast is clear and locks down from the inside. She walks back over to the bathroom and knocks again.

JACKIE

(In the bathroom)

I said give me a few minutes.

RUBY

I heard you. Come on out here. I need to speak with you, please.

JACKIE

(In the bathroom)

About what? Can't you hear I'm sick?

RUBY

Well I'm sick, tired and my feet hurt. Come on out of there.

Pause. Jackie flushes. Ruby moves away from the door as Jackie comes out, wiping her hands with a napkin.

JACKIE

You can use the bathroom now. I flushed.

RUBY

I don't need to use the restroom. I need to have a moment with you.

JACKIE

Okay, mom. What was it now? Did I leave the house without cleaning my room again?

RUBY

Where did you go in such a hurry that you had to have me cover your last period class today?

JACKIE

I wasn't feeling well. So I went to the bathroom.

RUBY

You were nearly gone the entire class period.

JACKIE

I threw up. Sue me for regurgitating.

RUBY

Have you been getting a enough sleep? Your face looks a little flush. Have you seen a physician?

JACKIE

What makes you such an expert on looks? I'm sick. Point blank. I'll make an appointment to see the doctor this week.

Ruby goes into the bathroom while Jackie rummages through her pockets. She looks around and sees something poking out the toilet.

JACKIE

Hey! What are you doing? Hey... hey! Come out of there!

Ruby comes with something in some toilet tissue. It looks like a pregnancy test. It is one.

RUBY

What is this doing in the restroom?

JACKIE

How should I know? You were the last one in there. Just throw it back in the toilet.

Jackie sits down.

RUBY

Who said I found it in the toilet? Is this yours?

JACKIE

It could've been any girl's.

RUBY

Well, it sure as hell couldn't have been any boy's.

JACKIE

You made a joke.

Jackie pretends to laugh. Ruby is serious. She moves closer to her.

JACKIE

Get that thing away from me.

RUBY
Is this yours?

JACKIE
Yeah, so.

RUBY
It's positive.

JACKIE
Now we know what's making me sick. Another man,
just my luck.

Ruby dumps the pregnancy test in the trash can with the tissue. She washes her hands at the sink.

RUBY
Have you told anybody?

JACKIE
No, detective. You're the first to know.

RUBY
Ms. Lynch, the sarcasm is becoming old. Are you
going to tell the father?

JACKIE
Do you have a cigarette?

RUBY
No. Father?

JACKIE
Father what?

RUBY
Are you going to tell him you're with child?

JACKIE
There is no father. Not any more, he's too
young to care...I'm going out for a smoke.

Jackie tugs at the front door. She looks back at Ruby.

JACKIE
You lock the door. This is entire place is a
prison!

She unlocks the door and leaves. In her haste, she nearly knocks into Mary.

MARY
Excuse you. Where is she going off in a hurry?

RUBY
For a smoke, the poor girl.

MARY

Good news. The ladies room does have toilet tissue.

RUBY

What? Oh, thank you.

MARY

Are you okay?

RUBY

I'm fine. Excuse me a moment.

She leaves into the bathroom. Mary pulls her cellphone out her bag and begins to check her text messages. She sees a message on her phone which causes her to jump and close it quickly before Bobby walks in eating from a bag of chips.

BOBBY

I'll say they'll go up on the price of potato chips, but go down on the amount of chips they put in a bag. Don't tell the meeting ended without me?

MARY

The meeting didn't even start.

BOBBY

Shoot. I thought I'd get one wish granted today. Where'd everybody go then?

MARY

Ms. Wendell is in the bathroom, there. Ms. Lynch is outside for a cigarette and I'm guessing Mr...

BOBBY

Hap.

MARY

I'm guessing he went to the bathroom as well.

BOBBY

Do you like him?

MARY

Not my type.

Bobby sits close to her, shifting his eyes on her chest.

BOBBY

I don't think you're his type either. What is your type?

MARY

I don't think that's none of your business.

BOBBY

Let's not make it business. Let's make it personal.

He smiles. She eases herself in her seat.

MARY

Mr. Wyatt.

BOBBY

Please- work day is over. Call me Bobby.

MARY

I don't date men I work with. It causes problems and it's inappropriate.

BOBBY

Inappropriate like your shirt?

MARY

And what exactly wrong with this shirt?

BOBBY

Nothing my eyes can't handle.

MARY

Straddling the fence for a law suit on sexual misconduct.

BOBBY

Look, I overheard Ruby giving flack of your outfit earlier today after second period. As far as the Board of Education and the principal is concerned if they don't say anything to you, you're fine. Just a heads up.

MARY

Thanks.

BOBBY

My pleasure. It's been three months. How are you holding up with your classes?

MARY

Everything is going fine.

BOBBY

Tell me if I'm right but you had Robby removed from your classroom, right?

MARY

Yes. He just wouldn't cooperate so Mrs. Wendell was kind enough to have him transferred to her class.

BOBBY

What was he doing?

MARY

Probably the same thing he was doing in everybody else's classes.

BOBBY

Yeah? I'm glad he's gone. Aren't you? We shouldn't have to put up with that especially you. Makes one want to change careers.

MARY

I'm tough.

BOBBY

I wouldn't doubt it. But why teach? You're attractive, bright, you could easily work for a modeling company.

MARY

I love children.

BOBBY

These aren't children. More like walking hormones and cigarette butts.

MARY

This was the only position open I could fill without commuting to another county.

BOBBY

So you plan on finishing out the year then transferring to an elementary school if there's an opening.

MARY

That would be the plan if it was plausible. This county has strict policies on changing schools. There's like a waiting list and a two-year wait.

BOBBY

Tell me something not to change the subject, but you're glad he's gone, right.

MARY

Robby?

BOBBY

Yeah, Robby.

MARY

Well, he was a difficult student and he often disrupted...

BOBBY

Yeah, yeah, yeah-blah, blah, blah. You're glad he's outta here. Poof. I wanted to know if I was the only one feeling that way, but you do too and that's great. Hap doesn't think I'm right for voicing my opinion. I think 'cause he's "sensitive". Ruby, Mrs. Wendell she thinks all kids are great and need a second chance. Save the whales kind of deal.

MARY

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, Mr. Wyatt.

BOBBY

Bobby.

Ruby comes out the bathroom. She shifts her focus from drying her hands to Bobby.

RUBY

Where did everybody go?

BOBBY

Bathroom and smoke break. It has been a long, grueling day.

RUBY

So what's this I hear Mr. Wyatt that I think all kids are great and it's some save the whales kind of deal.

BOBBY

No disrespect Mrs. Wendell, but you're idealistic nature about these so called kids is unrealistic. Most of them, thirty percent at least would only graduate if the state didn't insist they graduate. At this level our job is mainly to push as many as these scholars, masters of the grill at Mickey D's out into the world and let someone else try teach them what we've been trying to teach them.

RUBY

I know for a fact you don't believe that. As long as I've taught here, you've been voted Teacher of the Year and three of your students last year were awarded scholarships to Yale in the area of history.

BOBBY

(Smiling)

Well, I don't mean to brag.

RUBY

And you are going tell me what our main job is to get these kids out. Were you hoping Mr. Robby Benjamin would leave? Did you expect for him to go out and make nothing of his life that he'd wind up dead or in jail for life before his twentieth birthday?

BOBBY

Just look at him. He's one of them. Just look at his attitude. Look at the way he dresses.

RUBY

You're not dressed out of GQ magazine yourself.

BOBBY

Oh, oh. I'm wetting myself because you're so funny. But seriously Mrs. Wendell, he dresses and acts like a hoodlum. He has the uniform of a wannabe thug. Many of them do and the world doesn't expect but one thing from that outfit. I tell all my students that when you go to a job interview the first time you meet that employer he's going to notice your look. I don't care how smart you are, or what religion you believe in, what color you are, your appearance counts. I tell them you will represent that company if you do get hired and nobody in their right mind would put you in the public eye with your pants at your knees or tattoos all over your neck. See Mrs. Wendell I really care about my students. I just care enough to tell them the truth.

He looks out the window.

RUBY

But not Mr. Benjamin.

BOBBY

Ma'am.

RUBY

You don't really care about him, do you?

BOBBY

One bad apple spoils a bunch. Wouldn't you agree?

Scene Ends. End of **ACT ONE**.

ACT TWO

Lights Up.

It hasn't even been less than fifteen seconds since the last conversation. Everyone is still in the same spot as before. Ruby moves closer to Bobby.

RUBY
You couldn't possibly say Mr. Benjamin's life doesn't matter.

BOBBY
In the greater picture he doesn't.

RUBY
He's a child.

BOBBY
He's grown. He has the freedom to leave school whenever he wants and for our sake, we hope this was his last day.

RUBY
We don't know exactly what happened in that classroom. Who said what. I think we should hear the facts before we condemn one.

BOBBY
Mrs. Wendell with all due respect, you know what happened.

RUBY
Neither of us know what happened.

BOBBY
Can't you take a guess?

RUBY
No. All I know there was some form of a quarrel between Mr. Baker and Mr Benjamin which resulted both them being taken away in a police car.

BOBBY
Anything else?

Ruby shakes her head. Bobby stands up and looks at the clock. It's way past they need to be here.

BOBBY
I don't know what kind of game the principal is playing with the clock, but it's way past amusing.

RUBY

Ms. Hill, what book are you reading now in your classes?

MARY

Arthur Miller's The Crucible.

BOBBY

Isn't that the one where the girl commits adultery and has to walk through the town with a big A branded to her chest?

RUBY

That's The Scarlet Letter.

BOBBY

Oh. I liked that one. Unfair that one mistake is all the people judged her on instead of getting to know who she really was, you know what I mean.

RUBY

Like the way you quickly judged Mr. Benjamin off of a mistake.

BOBBY

We're back on him.

RUBY

You said it was unfair for Hester Prynne to be judged for her one misdeed and branded to be ridiculed in the streets.

BOBBY

One misdeed. One misdeed. Hester committed adultery resulted in having a child Pearl and ultimately being exiled to the woods. Robby has had many misdeeds and hasn't learned nor paid from any of them.

RUBY

He didn't come from humble beings.

BOBBY

So.

RUBY

So, his life hasn't been an easy picnic.

BOBBY

Oh yes it has. He thinks the world has everything laid out for him, he don't have to bring nothing and all he has to do is eat.

RUBY

Did you get to know him? Ask him about his life.

Hap comes in the front door, but either Ruby or Bobby notices. He sits down quietly.

BOBBY

I don't care-

RUBY

The poor boy is growing up without a father. His mother bless his heart is no good to him with her week long absenteeism and drinking. Did you know he was placed in a foster home for a year until his mother sobered up then went back on a binge six months later?

BOBBY

So the kid has a boozer for a mother and a loser for a father. It still doesn't give him no justifiable reason to act out and to treat all of us like crap.

RUBY

I'm not making excuses for Mr. Benjamin's behavior.

BOBBY

Then don't disrespect ma'am, my I.Q must be under seventy because it sure sounds like excuses to me.

RUBY

Mr. Benjamin is going through what many children are going through. Unstable home environment, social isolation, persecution for one's beliefs, peer pressure from the streets, education disparity, a shifting economy-

BOBBY

When you get to the letter Z let me know. Oh, how are you doing Hap?

RUBY

Mr. Mosley you know what I speaking of that our children are facing new challenges everyday far more than we did at their age.

HAP

Yes, ma'am. It's a whole new world now.

RUBY

And it's growing more complicated each day.