

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Samuel French Acting Edition

Seminar

by Theresa Rebeck

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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SEMINAR premiered on Broadway on November 20, 2011 at the John Golden Theatre in New York City, presented by Jeffrey Finn, Jill Furman, John N. Hart Jr. and Patrick Milling Smith, Roy Furman, David Ian, David Mirvish, Amy Nauiokas, and James Spry, with associated producers Matthew Schneider, Wake UP Marconi, Jamie Kaye-Phillips, and Charles Stone/Ben Limberg; with scenic and costume design by David Zinn, lighting design by Ben Stanton, original music and sound design by John Gromada, casting by MelCap Casting, production management by Peter Fulbright, and production stage management by Charles Means. The executive producer/general manager was 1010 Productions, LTD. The director was Sam Gold. The cast was as follows:

IZZY Hettienne Park
MARTIN Hamish Linklater
KATE Lily Rabe
DOUGLAS Jerry O'Connell
LEONARD Alan Rickman

CHARACTERS

IZZY

MARTIN

KATE

DOUGLAS

LEONARD

Scene One

(*An apartment. IZZY, MARTIN, KATE, and DOUGLAS.*)

DOUGLAS. I mean the place is amazing, the grounds are completely, like it's this astonishingly sculpted landscape, where everything seems to be sculpted out of trees and water so that interiority and exteriority meet, you know, what you are surrounded by is this exquisite, idealized just completely perfect environment –

(*MARTIN, behind him, can't stand all this.*)

– and the buildings almost hover over the grass, like on a hot summer day when the air is so warm that it's tangible, the manor seems to hover and there's so much, the trees are so present that you can feel them growing, I'm not kidding! You start to realize that medieval conceptions of magic frankly must have just been completely based in a kind of reality, that things were so green and growing that all the time, it must have seemed a sort of magic, at least that's what it feels like because it was just such a creative environment. Everything so perfectly balanced. The interiority and the exteriority. you know that thing that Indigo Jones was always trying for, there there's such a perfect harmony between the interior and the exterior world that –

MARTIN. (*overlapping*) Inigo.

(*then*)

Inigo.

(*then*)

INIGO. You said Indigo. It's Inigo.

DOUGLAS. I said Inigo.

MARTIN. No, you said Indigo.

DOUGLAS. I said Inigo.

KATE. It doesn't matter.

MARTIN. Not if you don't care about accuracy in language.

KATE. Come on.

MARTIN. But if you do care about accuracy –

DOUGLAS. I said Inigo.

MARTIN. Then it might matter, a little.

DOUGLAS. Anyway it is an awesome place to write. I mean, MacDowell is good too, it's serious at least, they don't let just anybody in, which is so necessary. I won't go to anyplace except Yaddo or MacDowell anymore. Pretty much everywhere else? Let me tell you, the flavor of the desperation is really not to be believed

IZZY. What are you working on?

DOUGLAS. A couple of stories, the one that *The New Yorker* asked to see, I did another draft of that, and my agent had some thoughts about the novel that I took a look at. He's going out with it next week, so we both thought that I should just take one last pass at it, make sure it was as tight as it could be. I just spewed so much of that thing so there's always hopefully going to be a kind of *On The Road* chaos to the sound. Not *On The Road*, hopefully what I achieved is a little more I don't know, intellectually rigorous than what Kerouac was going for.

MARTIN. Yeah I hope that too. Because *On the Road* was such a minor achievement.

DOUGLAS. Well, it's not exactly a world masterpiece.

MARTIN. What did you say?

KATE. Could we not talk about Kerouac? He was a complete psychotic pig. Guys love talking about him and girls are bored to death.

DOUGLAS. Well, he didn't exactly have a feminist agenda.

IZZY. Thank god for that.

KATE. What? I'm sorry what did you –

IZZY. I just hate all these women who are so hung up about sex.

KATE. So women who don't like Kerouac are "hung up about sex?"

IZZY. You can't deny there's an associative correlation.

KATE. I can absolutely deny there's an associative correlation. Kerouac was a misogynistic hack. What's that got to do with women who like sex?

MARTIN. (*overlap*) No no no no no no

IZZY. That's a little reductive.

KATE. You said anyone who doesn't like Kerouac is hung up about sex and *I'm* the one who's reductive?

MARTIN. Don't listen to her. She loves him. She reads him in the bathtub. She lights candles and swoons in the bubble bath. "Jack, Jack – Jaaaaccck –"

(*She is laughing. She shoves him. They tussle.*)

IZZY. So you guys like, knew each other before this, right?

KATE. High school.

MARTIN. (*chiming in*) High school.

IZZY. And you still have a crush on him?

KATE. What? No!

MARTIN. No!

KATE. No!

IZZY. Just checking.

KATE. So Douglas, your agent thinks that your novel is ready to go out?

DOUGLAS. Yeah, he's really optimistic. I mean, you want to be cautious. But a lot of people saw the story in *Tin House* so there's just a lot of interest.

IZZY. That story was amazing.

DOUGLAS. Thanks.

IZZY. Really really elegant.

DOUGLAS. Thanks. I was pleased with how it came out. I mean I was so worried about it, because it was risky, you know, to go that experimental with the language, people aren't trained anymore to be able to hear it, postmodernism has really fallen on hard times although it's not so much postmodern, really as magical realism. That's more tonally where I finally ended up, and I think that, at least, people are still open to. But god! The novel has fallen on hard times, and I'm not talking about eBooks. EBooks, don't get me started. And on top of it, all anyone wants anymore are memoirs. And I'm not saying, I think it's an interesting form, I'm as curious about the inside of my own brain as anyone but please! Where's the bathroom, Kate, I need to take a piss.

KATE. Oh, it's through the door and down the hall.

DOUGLAS. You have doors on the hallways, I love it. No seriously it's fabulous. Your family owns this place?

KATE. We have the lease. As long as one of us, is like you know a direct whatever.

DOUGLAS. Oh god yeah.

MARTIN. As long as one of you is what?

KATE. It's, you know. It's rent controlled, or stabilized, whatever you call it.

MARTIN. No come on, how much.

KATE. It's very affordable.

MARTIN. You're so old New York.

DOUGLAS. Seriously how much?

KATE. I thought you had to pee Douglas.

DOUGLAS. I do I'm desperate to pee but I'm more desperate to find out how much you pay for this palace.

KATE. It's been in our family a long time.

MARTIN. You don't know?

KATE. Of course I know.

MARTIN. Well then, what is it?

KATE. *(beat)* Eight hundred...dollars.

MARTIN. (*stunned*) Eight hundred dollars? What do you mean, eight hundred a day?

KATE. Eight hundred a month.

MARTIN. You never told me that.

KATE. It's not that big a deal.

MARTIN. That you have a free apartment on the Upper West Side? How is that not a "big deal?" I can't believe you never told me this. How have I never heard this?

KATE. It's lucky.

MARTIN. Lucky is a seat on the subway. You have sixteen rooms and a view of the river!

KATE. We have nine rooms! And you can only see the river from two of them.

IZZY. The living room, the dining room and that bedroom –

KATE. Okay three, three rooms have the view.

DOUGLAS. Eight hundred a month. That – is fabulous.

MARTIN. It's socialism for the rich!

KATE. I didn't ask for it!

MARTIN. The rich never do, isn't that funny? People just keep giving them things that they don't ever even ask for!

KATE. Being middle class doesn't make you morally superior, Martin!

MARTIN. I'm not middle class. I'm a nobody with a shitty, expensive apartment in Queens. And I didn't say it made me 'morally superior.'

KATE. It doesn't make you a better writer, either.

DOUGLAS. No, totally, eight hundred a month, it's like having a grant without having to actually get one. Although grants aren't just about money. You have to be careful, flying too under the radar, people don't like that.

(*He goes. They all look at each other.*)

MARTIN. "People don't like that?" What people?

KATE. You have to stop being so mean to him, Martin! He's important!

MARTIN. Holy shit. Indigo Jones. The flavor of the desperation.

KATE. (*laughing*) He knows lots of people!

MARTIN. I know lots of people too.

KATE. The people you know are nobodies who majored in English at itty bitty liberal arts colleges on the East Coast.

MARTIN. You mean like you?

IZZY. Well, *he* went to Yaddo! And once you have an in there, you have pull, he could get you into Yaddo!

MARTIN. Where the interiority and the exteriority of the landscape have achieved such a supreme state of harmonic convergence that the whole place is about to lift off.

KATE. You're jealous.

MARTIN. Jealous? Of that?

KATE. You've been rejected by Yaddo three times.

MARTIN. Thank you.

KATE. And McDowell – how many –

MARTIN. Yes, thank you. Thank you! I needed to be reminded. Thank you.

IZZY. Well, he's been a bunch of times. Plus I'm telling you he's really hooked up. His uncle is like a world famous what was he.

KATE. He was one of the weathermen, one of the terrorists.

IZZY. No. He was a playwright.

KATE. He was a terrorist!

IZZY. He was a famous playwright who went to Harvard.

MARTIN. So what?

IZZY. People care about that stuff Martin you have to stop being such a snob.

MARTIN. I'm a snob?

IZZY. You are a complete snob. Making fun of the way he talks.

MARTIN. He talks like an idiot; his language is subhuman. It would be more interesting if it were subhuman then we could try and interpret what all the grunts and hand gestures mean, we could pretend he was a very clever chimpanzee who was teaching us how language actually worked but he doesn't do anything as interesting as that. He just says things, idiotic, meaningless, self important observations about nothing, his words have nothing behind them. There's no music there's no joy there's no curiosity there's nothing. And I'm not talking about a flat terrifying banality of evil nihilistic nothing, I'm talking about nothing.

IZZY. See that's what I mean. All this talk about language makes it sound like you don't like him.

KATE. You guys you have to stop talking about him.

IZZY. That's what I'm saying! Stop making such a big deal about "language."

MARTIN. I'm a writer we're all writers if we don't care about language what should we care about?

IZZY. Sex.

(She leans in, suddenly lifts her shirt, and shows him her tits. MARTIN reacts, startled but not uninterested.)

KATE. Izzy!

MARTIN. Oh. Sex. Oh.

(Laughing. IZZY does a little dance and falls back on the couch, throws her arms up in a pose.)

IZZY. I'm going to write one of those drug menace books. You know all those old mass market paperbacks that have the girls with their shirts off on the covers, all about smoking opium and ruining the lives of men. And then I'm going to pose for the cover and I'm going to be in *New York Magazine*.

KATE. There's a career goal. Show your tits to *New York Magazine*.

IZZY. It's ironic and witty. I'm going to be famous.

(She smiles at MARTIN, clearly flirtatious. DOUGLAS reenters, oblivious. IZZY pulls her shirt down.)

DOUGLAS. This place is great.

(He sits.)

What'd I miss?

(blackout)

Scene Two

(Lights up on LEONARD, fifty, fierce and brilliant.)

LEONARD. You got to understand that this is a totally irrelevant dream state you're hibernating in up here. It's irrelevant. I mean I was just in Moldova, doing research for this, thing, and I ate cabbage with a Chechnyan psychopath. Then I'm in Dubai with a bunch of Shiites and Sunnis, people wanting to kill each other. I almost got into a fist fight with this Russian prostitute who was of a totally indeterminate gender, don't get me started on that story, anyway the fact is I was stoned out of my mind. It was fucked up, all of it, but it was relevant. The world we live in? It no longer exists! Last year I was in Rwanda. I was hanging out with this guy, he's a genocide survivor, his arms are gone, chopped off, he can't do anything anymore except beg for whatever pittance, half a bowl of rice some fucking U.N. peacekeeper throws him every other day, the rest of the time he just lies in the mud unless someone like me comes along and helps him get drunk. So I spend like three hours with this guy, listening to him tell his fucking story and finally he gets really quiet and he says, you know, he says, listen man. I got H.I.V. I'm going to die. And I'm like forget it, I'm overwhelmed I go, why are you telling me all this? Why am I the receptacle of this incredible fucking story, man? And he says: because you are a writer. You must write this. It must be told.

(a beat)

How did I get off on this. What were we talking about?

MARTIN. Um, Kate had a story...

LEONARD. Right! Kate's story. Where is it?

MARTIN. It's in your hand.

(LEONARD finds it in his hand.)

LEONARD. Yeah. Right. So what were we talking about?

KATE. The first sentence.

LEONARD. (*reading*) Oh yeah, Christ, I remember now. Oh, Christ. "When truth is acknowledged universally it is also universally disdained." I mean what the fuck, I can't even –

KATE. That's not the whole sentence.

LEONARD. (*abrupt*) Yeah I see that I see the semi-colon, I understand that that means there's only a partial stop and that more is coming but I'm not sure I want to continue. Okay? I'm not even making it through your first sentence. So why don't you tell me what you're doing because it's not exactly drawing me in here.

KATE. What am I –

LEONARD. What are you, yes, what are you doing?

KATE. (*stumbling*) I'm it's a referencing of Jane Austen the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, it's kind of a sardonic commentary

LEONARD. What's so fucking sardonic about it?

KATE. It's the narrator she's –

LEONARD. I don't give a shit about the narrator. If I can't get past the first five words how the fuck am I supposed to find out enough about the narrator to care about him?

KATE. It's not a him, it's a her.

LEONARD. Well, see that would be my point. If I can't even tell what gender your narrator is, then you haven't really done your job have you?

KATE. (*defending herself*) How if you don't go past the first five words how can you tell?

LEONARD. Listen to me. Don't defend yourself. If you're defending yourself you're not listening. I do know who your narrator is. She's an over-educated completely inexperienced sexually inadequate girl who has rich parents who give her everything and who has nothing to say, so she sits around and thinks about Jane Austen all the time. I don't give a shit about that person. This is what I'm saying. I don't have to go past the first five words because I already know enough and I don't give a shit.

IZZY. I liked it.

LEONARD. No you didn't.

IZZY. I did, I thought she was sort of doing this thing with sexual irony. Like the lack of sex was sort of like a come on.

DOUGLAS. I like it too. I think it's intelligent and thoughtful. Well done.

MARTIN. I like it too.

LEONARD. Guys! This is very sweet you're all adorable. But don't kid yourselves. You're all going to be nice to her now because her story tanked. But you're not in this together. And trust me, you wouldn't think the story was so great if it really were any good. If it were really good? You'd fucking hate it. Writers in their natural state are about as civilized as feral cats. All this "well done" bullshit means you're not being honest and if you're not honest who gives a shit what you're writing. Who's up next.

(He tosses KATE's story to the floor and looks around. There is a big old pause.)

See you next week. Cowards.

(He goes. They all sit there, silent for a moment.)

IZZY. Oh god I can't believe how late it is! I have to go! My mom is in the hospital.

DOUGLAS. Wow, that's a drag.

IZZY. You need a ride?

MARTIN. You drove to the Upper West Side?

DOUGLAS. No, I meant on the subway.

MARTIN. You're going to give her a ride on the subway?

DOUGLAS. I just thought she maybe needed company. Her mom is in the hospital, Martin.

IZZY. It's not serious. I mean she's not dying or anything.

DOUGLAS. So you want to have a drink? Like on the way?

IZZY. Sure, great.

(They go.)

(MARTIN looks at KATE.)

MARTIN. You okay?

KATE. What do you think, Martin? Am I okay? AM I OKAY?

MARTIN. Sorry.

KATE. What an asshole. What a jerk.

MARTIN. Yeah.

KATE. People think he's a genius what is so fucking genius about that?

MARTIN. That is what I've been saying! "Let me give you a ride home." The guy's a moron.

KATE. Not Douglas, Martin! I'm talking about Leonard. Leonard is an idiot!

MARTIN. Oh, I thought you were talking about Douglas.

KATE. Did you think that was smart? Did you think him standing there and telling us all that we're fucking losers if we don't go to Egypt and smoke water pipes, we're we're completely irrelevant as human beings if we read *The New York Times*, does that seem SMART to you?

MARTIN. That's not really what he said.

KATE. It is absolutely what he said! I'm irrelevant because I live in a nice apartment I love that. How about I'm irrelevant because I'm an overeducated girl –

MARTIN. That's not what he said.

KATE. He said I was sexually inadequate!

MARTIN. He said the story was sexually inadequate.

KATE. How would he know, he didn't read more than six words!

MARTIN. He's not talking about you, he's talking about the story.

KATE. A story he hasn't read.

MARTIN. He read the first page. I mean, we all sat here right, and watched him read the first page.

KATE. Big fucking deal! What is your point, Martin?

MARTIN. I don't have a point! I just mean that's all we get right? Everybody says it. If you don't get them on the first page, that's all you get.

KATE. So it's my fault?! That I stood here and got completely humiliated by that asshole?

(She disappears into the apartment, yelling back.)

MARTIN *waits.*)

(off) Everybody acted like, they all said he's ROUGH but he's A GREAT TEACHER BUT I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT JUST BEING ABUSED. THAT'S NOT TEACHING THAT'S JUST BEING A SHITHEAD. IF I WANT SOMEONE TO TELL ME I'M WASTING MY TIME I CAN JUST TALK TO MY MOTHER. EVERYONE THINKS IT'S SO COOL AND FUN TO BE MEAN TO ARTISTS BUT IF WE WEREN'T HERE THERE WOULD BE NOTHING BUT ANARCHY AND IMMORALITY AND CHAOS. WE ARE THE SOUL OF THE CULTURE AND PEOPLE CAN JUST FUCKING BE NICE TO US ONCE IN A WHILE.

(She reappears, carrying bags of chips and diet soda and ice cream. She sits down and starts to eat.)

MARTIN. What are you doing?

KATE. I'm depressed and I'm trying to make myself feel better is that all right with you?

MARTIN. Don't be depressed.

KATE. My story got creamed. I'm depressed. I'm a depressed feral cat.

MARTIN. If you think he's stupid what do you care if he didn't like your story?

KATE. I didn't think he was stupid until he was stupid to me today.

MARTIN. So if he liked your story that would make him not stupid?

KATE. Yes! If he liked my story that would make him smart. Okay? Okay? Okay?

MARTIN. Just wanted to be sure.

KATE. Why are you still here? Douglas is out there having drinks with the love of your life, why are you hanging out with the loser?

MARTIN. She's not the love of my life are you kidding?

KATE. Give me a break.

MARTIN. She's a twit!

KATE. Yeah, guys hate that. It sucks that she's gorgeous, too.

MARTIN. Look. She's all right. No, I mean, okay, she's attractive, no one is going to say she's not attractive.

(He starts to eat, obsessively, everything in sight.)

KATE. Oh my god you should hear yourself. 'Attractive.' Why don't you just put a gun to your own head, you're so completely in love with her. Do you think it's not utterly obvious to absolutely everyone who sees you in the same room with her?

MARTIN. I am not 'in love' with her. She's clearly got something going with Douglas. How she can even stand to talk to him for more than fifteen seconds at a go, is a mystery. The guy is an unmitigated embarrassment to the human race. Seriously. 'Can I give you a ride?' Give her a ride! It's so Darien. Maybe he could 'give her a ride' to Yaddo, where the interiority and the exteriority of the landscape is so stunningly in sync with the diasporic essentiality of the mimetic dialogue between self and culture. Maybe that's what he should do.

KATE. Don't kid yourself she would love a ride to Yaddo. Don't eat all the chips I want those.

MARTIN. Fuck me. Fuck her. Fuck him.

KATE. No fuck me! I'm the one who got creamed. This sucks. That story is fantastic. I have been working on that fucking story for six years, people love that story! You love that story.

MARTIN. Well.

KATE. What? What?

MARTIN. Nothing.

KATE. You don't love that story.

MARTIN. It's okay. You've been working on it for six years.

KATE. That's right I've been working on it for six years because people like it, people – Frank Conroy read it, before he died, he was the writer in residence up at Bennington for one month and he read that story and you know what he said to me? He said it was 'much better than most.' Not better than most. "Much" better than most.

MARTIN. 'Much better than most,' that is so lame, Kate.

KATE. Yes, it would be lame, coming from you but it didn't come from you, it came from Frank Conroy. You know who else likes that story? Tobias Wolf. He read it when I took that summer writing class and he said it had some nice things in it.

MARTIN. Kate do you even hear yourself? You know how long you've been working on that story? Six years –

KATE. That's right, SIX YEARS.

MARTIN. Why have you been writing the same story for six years?

KATE. Because it's a good story! It's a really good story. When I was at Bennington –

MARTIN. Jesus, was there ever a time when you weren't at Bennington? You exist in an alternate universe called 'Bennington.'

KATE. I learned a lot there, Martin.

MARTIN. What you learned was how to write one lousy story in six years.

(a silence)

MARTIN. That's not, I didn't mean the story was lousy.

KATE. Fuck you you did too.

MARTIN. Well why are you writing the same story for six years?

KATE. Because people kept telling me it was good but that it needed more work!

MARTIN. Well then Leonard just did you a big favor, didn't he?

(a beat)

KATE. Meaning?

MARTIN. Now you can write something else.

(a beat)

KATE. You know, this is my apartment, so I can't walk out.
Could you walk out please?

MARTIN. No no, don't do that. Come on, don't do that.

KATE. *(overlap)* I want to do that. Get out of my apartment.
Get out. Go. Go. Get out.

MARTIN. No no no

KATE. I mean it, Martin – Martin –

MARTIN. Come on, listen to me. Listen.

(He takes her hands. She looks away.)

I have to tell you something.

(She looks up at him. He holds her hand.)

KATE. What?

MARTIN. I'm getting kicked out of my apartment because I'm a little late on the rent. Can I stay here? I mean, you got like nine extra bedrooms. And it's free! Who knew it was free? I can stay, right?

(She looks at him. Blackout.)

Scene Three

(LEONARD is taking off his jacket and scarf, looking at the others, who are sitting dutifully around him.)

LEONARD. So who's got something, who are we starting with today?

(There is silence. No one moves. LEONARD laughs.)

Come on children we don't have all night. What are we here for? Am I a fucking writer, or am I a fucking piece of shit coward? Am I trying to construct a living breathing cosmos with language or am I just scratching on the wall of a cave? Am I feral cat or am I a useless goldfish in a bowl that would be better off someone flushed it down the toilet? Which is what's going to happen to it anyway.

(IZZY twitches, nervous.)

IZZY. (blurting) I have something. I have a story. I didn't know if Douglas and Martin had something, I was thinking maybe they would want to go, or maybe Kate has something else –

KATE. No.

IZZY. Okay, well, I do have something.

(handing it over)

I haven't been working on it very long. I just started it. About a week a few days ago.

LEONARD. Yeah I can tell.

(He holds it up; it's only two pages.)

IZZY. Oh. Well but. Okay.

(He starts to read as he talks.)

LEONARD. No it's good, if you have something on the page you should let people see it for Christ's sake. All this rewriting people do, it squeezes the guts out of everything. I read this story last week, couple weeks ago, it was so fucking lifeless, this person had clearly been

rewriting this stupid thing for maybe ten years, there was just nothing left to it except a sort of desiccated corpse, it was ludicrous. If you're going to write, be a fucking man about it. Kerouac wrote *On the Road* in like a week or something.

KATE. Okay, I'm sorry but what did you say? Did you say you want us to "be a fucking man" about writing, and that that we should write like Kerouac?

LEONARD. You should write like yourself.

KATE. Yes. Yes. I agree with that but if my "self" is a woman, I don't see why I then should write like a man.

LEONARD. If you're going to be some fucking feminist about it, that would be up to you, but I can't help you with that.

KATE. Feminist, I didn't say feminist, I said woman. Woman. What is wrong with being a woman and being a writer.

LEONARD. You would have to answer that for yourself.

KATE. But you said it. You said, "be a man," be Jack Kerouac who was a total pig to women –

LEONARD. Look, you want to argue about feminist politics, I'm not here to argue with you about that. I'm here to talk about writing.

KATE. But we're not talking about writing –

LEONARD. Well, no because you've commandeered the conversation. Is it all right with you if we talk about the story your fellow writer has presented to the group?

KATE. Sure. Of course. Sure.

(There is a moment of silence while LEONARD reads. He laughs at something. IZZY smiles. As LEONARD keeps laughing, IZZY is more and more pleased.)

LEONARD. Well, this is...It's fresh. It's lively as hell. Do you have copies?

IZZY. *(happy)* Yes, yes I do.

LEONARD. Okay, pass them out because people should, we'll talk about this one. There is real energy here. A lightness, a touch, a sexual edge to the language which

is I got to say, it got me on board. Va voom. Like, this thing I read last week – I don't remember when I read it – it was like a lump of nothing, there was no forward motion, it just laid there, the words were like lumps of shit –

KATE. Hey. HEY. Could you, I mean, I just, that's – if you don't –

LEONARD. Look, what is your problem? I am trying to teach a class here!

KATE. You're not teaching, you're just insulting – me – you're just –

LEONARD. I'm not insulting anybody I'm telling your fellow writer – what's your name again?

IZZY. Izzy.

LEONARD. I'm telling Izzy about the experience of reading her story! Which you know you might want to participate in. But, if you can't support your fellow writer, that would be up to you.

KATE. Look, this is –

MARTIN. Maybe if we continued to talk about Izzy's story –

LEONARD. That's what I'm trying to do –

MARTIN. Without – I think what Kate is getting hung up on is that you keep insulting her work.

LEONARD. This isn't about her!

MARTIN. Yes. That's right. But it's hard, because you keep bringing up that story, from last week –

LEONARD. That's got nothing to do with her!

MARTIN. Well, it was her story, so –

LEONARD. That wasn't her story!

MARTIN. It wasn't?

KATE. It wasn't?

LEONARD. No, Christ! That was a totally different situation, that's what I'm saying! That was somebody else's story, this relentlessly talent-free story about some girl who had this obsession with Jane Austen, Christ what a soul-sucking waste of words that was.

MARTIN. That was Kate's story.

LEONARD. That was your story?

KATE. Yes, that was my story.

LEONARD. Oh. Oh! That was your story.

KATE. Yes.

LEONARD. Oh. Okay. Sorry. You know. Obviously I didn't think that story really worked. But this, you know... who wrote this?

IZZY. I did.

LEONARD. This has a great, you know, really great sexual feel to it.

IZZY. Thank you.

LEONARD. The tone of Asian exoticism, it's good. I was in Shanghai once, have you been to Shanghai?

IZZY. I have an uncle who lives there.

LEONARD. I bet you do.

DOUGLAS. Can we talk about the story? I just have some questions. Because I admire it, I really do Izzy, there's a terrific tone that's both sinister and wry, that I think is truly original but I'm actually a little unsure where, of course not that with two pages you'd have to have the whole thing planned out but I'm more or less curious –

LEONARD. Where? Who gives a shit where. Why would you ask that question at this point, don't ask where, when "where" is the point, am I right?

(He looks at IZZY, who has the good grace to be confused.)

IZZY. Well, it's just really new. I think "where" is a good question. That's why I wasn't sure I should even show it to you. Because "where" –

LEONARD. I'm not saying "where" is not a good question. But that's what I admire about the energy of the opening. It dares to ask that question and not know the answer. The writing itself is asking the question. See, this reminds me, when I was at Yale with Penn Warren, there was no getting past him, no point even trying.

He was ruthless and religious about sound. Everything else, intellect, idea, motion, character, all were secondary, if the sound wasn't there, there was no discussion even capable of continuing in a meaningful – I'm not saying this right. No. I am, actually. I am. This has a sound. It rings like a bell. It doesn't matter that there's no subject or story or idea or meaning. It's got power. It's got sex. Well done. Well done. What's your name?

IZZY. Izzy.

LEONARD. Well done, Izzy. What else have you got?

(He sits next to her on the couch. The intentions of his attention are clear. She looks at him, smiles.)

(blackout)

Scene Four

(It is later the same night. MARTIN sits on the side of the couch, drinking a beer, watching KATE move in and out of the room with a bowl of cookie dough. She holds it and mixes it with a blender. The plug pulls out of the wall in the next room. She goes back and plugs it in, then reenters with the whirling mixer.)

KATE. Two pages. It wasn't even two pages. It was a page and a half!

MARTIN. It's more than a page and a half.

KATE. It's not two pages.

MARTIN. It's almost two pages.

KATE. What can you fucking tell from two fucking pages?

MARTIN. Two good pages?

KATE. They're not good! How can you say they're good!
You don't honestly think those two idiotic pages are good!

MARTIN. They're not bad, Kate –

KATE. They're horrible! Oh my god do you honestly think that shit is good?

MARTIN. I think –

KATE. You just want to sleep with her, you don't know what you think. I can't believe it.

(He watches her eat a big spoon of cookie dough.)

MARTIN. What are you doing?

KATE. I'm eating cookie dough.

MARTIN. I can't believe girls actually do that. Girls actually do that.

KATE. I can't believe that men think that because they maybe want to sleep with someone that means she's a good writer. That is what I can't believe.

(MARTIN starts to eat the cookie dough with her.)

MARTIN. She is a good writer.

KATE. I am a good writer, Martin! Just because none of you want to sleep with me, that doesn't mean I'm not any good! Let me tell you something, if this writing seminar were made up of exclusively lesbian writers, I'd be a fucking star.

MARTIN. Are you a lesbian?

KATE. Martin! You know I'm not a lesbian!

MARTIN. People change their minds.

KATE. Well, I have not changed my mind. I'm just a lonely bad writer who's getting fat.

MARTIN. Shit. This stuff is delicious.

(They fight over the bowl.)

Listen. You are totally hot. You don't need a bunch of lesbians to tell you that.

KATE. Izzy is hot.

MARTIN. You're hot too. I often go to bed thinking about you in the bath tub with Jack Kerouac. That turned out to be a very potent image for me. "Jack, Jack, Jack –"

KATE. Oh that's the thumping I've been hearing, down the hall.

MARTIN. "Jack, Jack, Jack –"

KATE. Give me that –

(Laughing, she climbs on top of him. There is a moment which gets just a shred too close. The door buzzes. The buzzer continues, insistent. The moment evaporates. She goes to the wall and hits it.)

MARTIN. What's that?

KATE. Chinese food.

MARTIN. You ordered Chinese food?

KATE. Yes I did. I'm a terrible writer and I am I am committed to getting fat. It's a commitment now.

MARTIN. Kate, I think your story was really good.

KATE. You do not. Leonard hated it so much that within one week it's become legendary in his imagination, how bad it was. And now I'm stuck here. I'm stuck here with that asshole in my apartment for TEN WEEKS. I suck. My life has no meaning.

MARTIN. Your life has meaning.

KATE. No it doesn't and yours doesn't either.

MARTIN. My life has meaning.

KATE. Please. It does not. On top of which you're afraid that the girl you're crushing on –

MARTIN. I'm not crushing on Izzy –

KATE. It doesn't matter if you are or not because she has other fish to fry, doesn't she, she's not afraid to show off her writing, and she's going to get it published too because Izzy is not afraid of doing whatever she has to and right now she is off having sex with our hideous and disgusting teacher.

MARTIN. Izzy is not-having sex with Leonard. That would be completely unethical.

KATE. Which is why of course it would never happen.

(He opens another bottle. There is a knock at the door.)

KATE answers it.)

Hi Douglas, what are you doing here?

(He barges in and sits. MARTIN stares at him.)

DOUGLAS. She's having sex with him! It's completely unethical. I mean, I wouldn't care, it's not like I'm a prude god knows.

MARTIN. Izzy's not having sex with Leonard.

DOUGLAS. They went home together!

MARTIN. You don't know that!

DOUGLAS. Martin. We left the apartment and went to that shitty bar across the street to have a drink. After three glasses of wine each, he looked her in the face and said, you want to come back to my place? And she said sure. And they left. Together.

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