

**BYOP**

**By Jerold London**

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# BYOP



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## TIME AND PLACE

2019. New York City. A banquet room (with numerous flashbacks).

## CHARACTERS

NAN WOODSTOCK, mid 30s, dark hair.

JACK PLATO, CEO of the Modern Master Word Foundation.

3 DIRECTORS of the Modern Master Word Foundation, age/gender unspecified.

WADE BENN, Nancy's first husband (married 2011).

"RUSTY" FLYNT, redhead. Nancy's second husband (married 2014).

MARY BENN, Wade Benn's sister, and a great admirer of Rusty Flynt's poetry.

A FEMALE POLICE OFFICER and a BARTENDER (non-speaking parts).

MOTHER'S VOICE (offstage).

## NOTES

Nan Woodstock has ridden hard work and success to success, along with an unyielding angst implanted in her from childhood by her wronged mother. She comes to the play, exhausted in her heart for what she's been doing, but wearing an appearance of calm, control, and exuberance.

In playing her, accept her cruel duplicity for the burden it is to her, and note the constant tension between her outward pretense of control and her inward self-doubts and anger.

In the Director's discretion, there can be various screens made visible to the audience, displaying what is on the screen at the 2019 Annual Dinner of the Modern Master Word Foundation.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

... // signals the starting point of interrupting (but **not** overlapping) text.

High up there she saw what  
survives in the violent sunlight.  
And felt no particular emotion.  
The sea below, stone.

– Linda Gregg, "Stuff" from *Things and Flesh*.

# BYOP

## SCENE 1 – Before the Banquet

**Stage left:** A rectangular “Board of Directors” table with a number of chairs around it. PLATO and three DIRECTORS enter. General greetings, shaking of hands, slaps on shoulders, etc., before they sit down – PLATO chairing the 2016 emergency Board meeting of the Modern Master Word Foundation.

### PLATO

Friends ... I know how busy you are. And I thank you. Especially this time of year. And especially on such short notice.

### A DIRECTOR

Piece of cake, Jack. Anything, for you.

### PLATO

[*strikes his gavel*] Consider this, the 2016 emergency meeting called to order. As we know, America is developing a serious truth and alibi problem. Too serious to ignore any longer. So serious, in fact, I fear it’s becoming life threatening.

### A DIRECTOR

[*skeptical*] *Life threatening?* Jack, please.... Be at least a little bit serious.

### PLATO

I *am* being serious. Brutally serious. Dissemination of Untruth inevitably will lead people to take fatal action. Misguided, fatal action. And in my view, the clowns who invent the lies are fifth degree murderers.

### A DIRECTOR

And there’s something *we* can do about it?

### PLATO

We are guardians of the English word in America. And we have it within our ability to curb the spread of verbal mendacity. How? By attacking the pathology of verbal mendacity at its source. Which is fear. And the hatred it spawns. Remember, friends, haters, everyone, are insecure people in search of a word. And that’s where we come in.

**A DIRECTOR**

Does it always have to be some language thing with you, Jack?

**PLATO**

It does.

It does for me.

And it does for us.

It's in our mission statement.

It's in the very charter of the Modern Master Word Foundation.

That we believe in the soul of speech. Its healing power. And its explosive power.

It's what we believe in. And that's what we are here to guard.

**A DIRECTOR**

No argument, Jack. No argument there. That's what the Foundation's all about.

**PLATO**

And we betray its whole meaning if we don't broadcast what we believe, bluntly.

**A DIRECTOR**

Trust me, Jack, I'm on all fours with you.

But, can things really be *all that bad*?

**PLATO**

The hatred's not fake, even if so much of the network news is.

The fear's not fake.

And we're the ones who have the responsibility to get things back on track.

To get Americans to believe again in being the verbally honest people we are....

If we don't do something, there could be another civil war on our hands.

**A DIRECTOR**

[*beat*] What are *we* supposed to do?

And who's going to let us?

**PLATO**

The question isn't, who's going to let us. The question is, who's going to stop us.

And I could present you a list of those who might try.

The fundamental rights of Americans are *our* inalienable rights.

They *must be protected*. And we're going to fight for them.

We're not going to let them be brainwashed away.

We're not going to let them be lost through demagoguery.

In the end, they represent the final answer to Lincoln's final question:

Can a nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, long endure?

**A DIRECTOR**

What are you proposing we do?

**PLATO**

I need a word with you. Actually, we need a word with one another.  
A word that will wake our country up.  
And a search for that word that will wake our country up.

**A DIRECTOR**

*A word?*

**PLATO**

I have no idea what the word is. Don't ask me. Or where we'll find it.  
But I have faith in the idea that a single word can be the ground breaker.

**A DIRECTOR**

That *one word* will produce a seismic shift in American culture? Dream on.

**A DIRECTOR**

There are basically two ways we can choose to live:  
One, as if nothing's a miracle. And the other, as if everything is.

**A DIRECTOR**

Who said that? Joan of Arc? Or Lincoln? Or Robert Frost?

**PLATO**

Throughout history there have been disciples, like us, who have taken first steps.  
Armed with nothing more than their vision and belief in miracles.  
I have the utmost confidence in the inventiveness resting in this room.  
I believe that just uttering that *one word*, when we find it, and we will, I promise.  
That it will start a domino of events that will bring true back into truth,  
and civil back into civilization.

**A DIRECTOR**

[*beat*] I can picture it now.  
In the beginning the word will be whispered, very softly about.  
Then, it will spread.... And finally: The word of a generation.

**A DIRECTOR**

Let it be clothed in garlands, and anointed with oil.  
Let it be carried in the pocket of Prince William to Buckingham Palace.  
Let it be remembered by the Pope to God.  
Let it be spoken in the face of ignorance and oppression everywhere.  
Let it do itself *proud*.

**A DIRECTOR**

Are we in touch with reality here?

**PLATO**

I promise you, this is no joke.

No more so than the Secret Committee of Lies and Liars.

**A DIRECTOR**

If I remember correctly,  
the concept of the atom bomb was cooked up by a select group of eggheads,  
in England,  
called together by Winston Himself Churchill, no less,  
without Albert Einstein.

**PLATO**

That's what I'm talking about.

A nuclear bomb of a *new word*.

Whatever it is.

That's the spirit!

We've got the resources.

And one million dollars prize to the creator, to back us up.

**PLATO stands, preparing to leave.**

**A DIRECTOR**

Is that it, then?

What you brought us all the way here to hear?

**PLATO**

[*walking out*] I'll send you a transcript.

We'll convene, electronically, as need be.

**PLATO exits.**

**A DIRECTOR**

What the Hell?

How does he think we can we possibly eat an elephant like this?

**A DIRECTOR**

Vodka, anyone?

**A DIRECTOR**

One bite at a time.



SCENE 2 – The Banquet Hall – the Beginning

**Center stage** and **stage left** are rearranged into the banquet hall for the October 12, 2019 Modern Master Word Foundation annual dinner (round tables and a rectangular “head” table). The three DIRECTORS and PLATO, all wearing academic robes, enter and sit at separate tables (PLATO at the head table). BENN and FLYNT likewise enter, separately, and sit at separate tables. All other guests are imaginary. They engage in illusory conversations. There is no indication that BENN or FLYNT pay any attention to one another. Ambient noise of the dinner is heard. At the head table, immediately next to the lectern situated in the middle of the table, PLATO is seated, with a laptop/tablet, reviewing some items which appear on a large screen, to the side of the head table. Then, on the screen:

2019 ANNUAL DINNER

MODERN MASTER WORD FOUNDATION

WOODSTOCK enters (with an armed female police officer), goes directly to PLATO, and touches him lightly on the shoulder. He hands her the laptop/tablet; and she steps up to the lectern, putting the tablet down in front of her. PLATO signals for quiet by striking his water glass with a spoon. The sounds of several others similarly striking their water glasses can be heard; and the ambient audience noise quiets down. The police officer stands off to the side in full view of everyone. Both FLYNT and BENN give momentary, but noticeable, signs of surprise when they first see WOODSTOCK.

**WOODSTOCK makes a slight bow of the head, hands pressed together.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Namaste.... My name is Nan Woodstock. Friends just call me “Nan.”

**DIRECTORS, FLYNT AND BENN**

[*cheerfully*] Hi, Nan.

**WOODSTOCK**

This may seem a bit unconventional ... or unconstitutional, even, but I specifically asked Jack not to have any formal introductions tonight.

**Touches him on the shoulder.**

You see, I’m your keynote speaker.

[*showing*] Entrusted with the esteemed, sealed, and secret envelope.

I’m the one who has the honor, this evening,

to bring your three long years of searching, and pioneering, to an end.

**WOODSTOCK touches the tablet, and on the screen:**

**OCTOBER 12, 2019, NAN  
WOODSTOCK REVEALS THE  
MYSTERY-PERFECT WORD.**

**Audience reaction.**

**WOODSTOCK**

If you were as keyed up as I am, someone surely would have hit the floor by now, where I probably belong....

You'll get to know me well enough, and soon enough I expect.

Well enough to begin to like me all the less, I should say.

Considering how I feel about myself tonight.

But if you discover you dislike me, perhaps, keep it to yourself?

And please don't kill the messenger.

A few of you may already know me. Or may think you do.

But being a stranger to most, let me do the quick and dirty:

I'm an artist who's paid her union dues.

I've painted insides, cawing like crows.

My poetic pièce de résistance is:

"Rescue me from the great fires of love."

I've dined on pavements, stooped with hungry eyes.

I've walked down streets invisible.

Cut detours to avoid the pain of others' glances.

Felt thankfulness for the young man with a knapsack,  
moving off, to the curb, to let me pass.

I've traveled far in this soft, pierced, and thoughtful body.

My medium is chalk, charcoal, words, and figures.

I've been married.

Oh, yes. I'm a woman who married a man, pregnant with another man's child.

**WOODSTOCK touches the tablet again;  
and there appears, with sound → [Click here](#)**

I love you, too, Mishka.

But tonight we're headed toward a somewhat more complex word.

A mystery-perfect word, hidden in the depths of antiquity.

It's been like excavating King Tut's tomb with Cinderella's glass slipper.

**WOODSTOCK again touches the tablet  
and brings up Heider and Simmel's 1944  
geometric animation → [Click here](#)**

### **WOODSTOCK**

That's it. The search. In a nutshell.  
Not *proteus*. Not *Namaste*, *inculcate*, *impenitent*, or *ineluctable modality*.  
Not *nettlesome*, or *impatience*, or *apocalypse*.  
Not *maverick*, or *social justice*, or even *Reinhold Niebuhr*.  
Even though those are *all* vintage words, valuable, venerable words,  
esteemed for their pith and viability.  
Yet, sadly, none of them is the right one for tonight. None of them.  
Not *polymath*, *polymers*, *polytheism*, or *polyandrist*.  
But we might be getting closer, striking a match for the sly foxes here among us.  
In a way, it's more like a pilgrimage, rather than a destination.  
It's what's led up to this moment, rather than the confession to come.  
It's the champagne at the wedding, before the bride and groom depart.  
Because tonight, in a sense, is a wedding night.  
As intentional and as lasting.  
When he was a schoolboy, they asked John Lennon what he wanted to be,  
when he grew up, in a word.  
And Lennon said, "Happy."  
"But you don't understand the question," he was told.  
"No," he answered calmly, "you don't understand life...."  
[beat] Mother used to tell me, many a time, as I remember it,  
"Nan, now don't go wishing your life away, like I did mine."  
As if I had any idea what "wishing your life away" meant, at that age.  
Wanting to be older, I guess. Putting on makeup, and chasing after boys.  
Getting married, etcetera.  
Or did she mean, wishing you could be young again?  
And do it all over again?  
Mother understood: It's the diapers to cherish, *before* the diploma....  
I miss her a lot, I guess, sometimes....  
[beat] Of course, she wasn't actually my *mother*.  
More, an adoptive mother.  
For my father. But that's another story.  
And as Shakespeare once said: It's a wise child who knows her own father.  
Or as John Lennon once said: Imagine there's no countries. It isn't hard to do.  
Nothing to kill or die for. And no religion too.

**WOODSTOCK again touches the tablet  
and brings up "Imagine" → [Click here](#)**

## WOODSTOCK

But I didn't find all that out until after they both were gone.  
As it turns out, I'd been left on the front doorstep,  
in the proverbial wicker basket.  
I'm a gypsy, you see.  
Daughter of an Irish gypsy.  
And her pregnancy out of wedlock conceived my pregnancy out of wedlock.  
Which is another story.

I freelance for a living, constantly on the go,  
flying here and there, like some vagabond wind.  
My field is magic; and my specialty is institutional magic.  
Accounting and corporate goodwill.  
You know what I mean.  
Undergrad at Colgate; post-grad at Stanford.  
A Master of Science, from Royal Holloway.  
Mathematics of Cryptography and Communications.  
The stuff of espionage.  
And a doctorate in computer sciences at the Sorbonne.  
All because I was the only one they could leave their property to, when they died.  
Not because they ever thought I could do all that....  
[beat] Some of you undoubtedly have noticed.  
[gesturing] I've brought a uniform with me.  
She's here to protect *you* ... *from me*, not vice versa.  
But more of that later....  
[beat] We spend a lifetime searching for truth in life, it seems.  
Dodging the lies and the liars.  
Digesting why we do the stupid things we do.

**WOODSTOCK takes a drink of  
imaginary water, and "spills" some.**

O God! This is stupid.... This is stupid.  
It's a complete mistake.  
I really shouldn't be here. Maybe none of us should really be here.

**WOODSTOCK touches the tablet again  
→ [Click here](#) while WOODSTOCK  
splashes some imaginary water on her  
face to steady herself.**

## WOODSTOCK

If dinosaurs weren't extirpated by the last great asteroid to smack the Earth,

we'd have no meal here tonight.  
Our kind simply wouldn't exist.  
The raptors, alone, would have finished us off.  
Gobbled up every last bite of our forefathers,  
before they ever made it to high ground.  
It was a lacuna in space-time, 65 million years ago,  
that allowed a colossal asteroid or two to clear the way for us.  
To hammer the Yucatan, like a billion atomic bombs.  
And, poof, no more dinosaurs.  
We're no more than a statistical anomaly.  
And like all other Earth species, statistically destined to strut and fret our hour  
upon the stage, and then be heard no more.... Nothing's made to last forever.  
Carpe diem.

The clever ones among you probably detected an ever-so-slight bump,  
in my ever-so-graceful glide across the floor, a bit ago.  
Yep, I'm a little bit preppers.  
It's supposed to be a surprise, so don't tell.  
What the Hell will he think? Me, travelling around the way I do?  
There was a pilot I met once.  
An absolute teddy bear, and flying was his life.  
When I asked him about his best day ever,  
I figured it must be something up in the air.  
But, no.  
It was bathing a heart-broken princess in champagne.  
Go figure!  
I can see him now, singing to her,  
"I'm gonna wash that man right outta your hair ...."

**WOODSTOCK again touches the tablet  
and brings up, from South Pacific →  
[Click here](#)**

### **WOODSTOCK**

There's a definite similarity between planes and woman.  
Both are independent, confident, fearless, and passionate.  
Both proclaim, loud and clear, this is my body. See it, and respect it.  
This is my life. My sky. My contrails. My enigmatic freedom.  
And then there's motherhood.  
Some planes are even made to *look* like pregnant women.  
They're called cargo planes.

But all kidding aside, there's a much bigger *difference* between planes and motherhood. Not as many emergency exits....

Mothers are, obviously, the single most important, initial contact we human beings have between life and death. *And* between truth and reality. Which is close to the knot of the problem that got this whole word thing started three years ago. So, what *is* the connection between mothers and truth? Or, stated in another way: A free mind is an invaluable asset in finding and speaking the truth. [*slowly*] A free mind is an invaluable asset in finding and speaking the truth. Freedom is freedom from denial; and truth is a Gordian Knot.

**WOODSTOCK again touches the tablet and brings up two Gordian Knots → [Click here](#)**

Without understanding my mother's truth, it's hopeless trying to fathom mine. I talk of her as my mother. But, in fact, she only became my mother through a basket and a note attached. The note said: "I don't know any other way to care for our child." Left at the front door of my father and the woman I call my mother. Who vowed she would raise me and never have sex with my father again. A gypsy's baby. Bitterness buries truth. The truth of what it means to be husband and wife. The truth what it means to be married. To my mother, marriage was a ball and chain. A prison cell for her soul. Her words poisoned me to the institution.... In its present form. I can hear them in my mind.

**MOTHER'S VOICE (Offstage)**

You know damn well whose child she is. It's yours. And I can see it in your face. Undoubtedly one of those gypsies you're always trying to help. Why did I marry you? Why is there marriage anyway? Stupid thing. Stupid me. Marriage to a man. Where's the freedom in that? Where's the independence? The confidence? The passion? The fearlessness? There must be a better way.

For a woman.

### WOODSTOCK

She'd shake me. Hard. To make her words and her anger stick.  
And poisoned me against one of the greatest experiences in life.  
To take the risk of sharing myself. Openly. My whole self.  
So, it's a supreme irony that I, her daughter, should be chosen to be the one to  
present the *one word* that will restore faith in truth in this country.

[*beat*] What a banquet tonight, right?!

Wisdom truly knows how to throw a party.

But is it wisdom that knows how to pick this generation's Mystery-Perfect Word?  
We'll see.

I bet you must be exhausted by now, waiting for it.

Three years relying upon an organization of thousands,  
most of whom don't even meet each other, I'm told,  
until your annual dinners,

to produce the fruit of human mindness, open mindedness, and deep thought,  
to cure one of the most insidious sins throughout history.

Lying.

In a word.

To paraphrase one of the great thinkers of history:

You have to *be* the word you seek.

In Helen Gurley Brown's day, it was to be part of the *feminine* sexual revolution.

For the Stonewall generation, it was being part of the *LGBTQ* sexual revolution.

For Me-Too, it's comprehending the scope and pervasiveness  
of satyrs in society. Their crime and punishment.

And for us, it's staring down what we've glanced away from for too long.

It's admitting our lies. To each other. To ourselves.

And how sorry we are for them.

And now, at last, we arrive at the big reveal.

The moment to consummate the chosen word.

**WOODSTOCK raises a sealed envelope  
in her hand.**

### WOODSTOCK

[*pause*] But before I open it, I have a personal confession to make, first.

It's imperative, or else I wouldn't bring it up.

It's a confession of *criminal disobedience*.

An authentic, authoritative confession, serious enough to be witnessed by a  
uniform. That's why she's here....

I'm a felon.  
A nonviolent one, but a felon nevertheless.  
One whose crime has affected too many lives.  
Too many lives of the people I should know better.  
I'm a criminal, coming out of the closet voluntarily.  
And I'll certainly face cold, hard time for it.  
But before you all rush up and save me, let me assure you ...

**PLATO, the three DIRECTORS, BENN,  
and FLYNT immediately jump to their  
feet, and, with the police officer and  
stagehands, move the tables and chairs  
off to the side. Then, all exit.**

SCENE 3 – Flynt's Phoenix Apartment

**Stage right:** June, 2011. Bedroom in Flynt's Phoenix apartment. WOODSTOCK enters and begins packing. FLYNT enters with papers in his hand.

**FLYNT**

What's going on, Nan?

**WOODSTOCK grabs some papers off the  
bed, and waves them at him.**

**WOODSTOCK**

It's the most grisly, filthy piece of crap I've ever read. About *me*.

**FLYNT**

What do you mean? It's from my heart.  
I didn't mean anything nasty by it.  
I would never write anything dirty about you.

**WOODSTOCK**

*[reading, with inflections]* Her egg-shell, vague, seductive breasts,  
Like dandelions, I yearn to blow?  
To secret places, angels fear to go?  
Wrapped in moist and honey nakedness.  
With spice, and scent, and cream?  
I yearn to sip, and taste, and drink the squeeze of you,  
Extreme to bare extreme?



**WOODSTOCK** throws the papers on the floor.

**WOODSTOCK**

Are you sick?  
*This* is sick.  
*I* am sick.

**FLYNT**

It's part of my love poem to you. Only just a part.  
How your light comes out of the mist,  
and lights up the world for me. How that's you. But it's only a part.

**WOODSTOCK**

If you knew me ... which obviously you don't ... obviously,  
you would know I can't stand smut like that.

**FLYNT**

Well, it's just something I wrote, for you....  
Let's let it go.... *Please*.  
I didn't mean anything by it.  
I love you; and I'll never write anything like that again.

**WOODSTOCK**

How can you say you love me?  
All you want me for is my body, and what you can lick out of it.  
I'm nothing to you but sex.  
If I had known your mind was filled with porn like that,  
and I was at the center if it,  
I would never have let it go this far.  
Goodbye, Rusty. And I mean it.  
The thread between us is broken.  
Don't try to follow me, or stalk me.  
I'm leaving Phoenix for good.

**FLYNT**

My mind's not filled that way. Look what I just wrote ... //

**WOODSTOCK**

Get away from me.

**FLYNT**

[reads] You're an orchid, shh, I say. I had forgot to tell you so ... //

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm no hothouse bloom. Never have been. Never will be. *Goodbye.*

**WOODSTOCK finishes packing, and closes her bags.**

**FLYNT**

Stop. Nan. Please, wait. I'll always love you.

**WOODSTOCK**

You came on to me much too quickly. I should have known better.

I can't think of you the same way anymore.

I have to get out of here.

Don't give me any more grief. Don't try to follow me.

It's gone. I'm gone.

**WOODSTOCK exits. FLYNT picks up the papers from the floor, covers his face with them, and then slowly starts beating the door (which may be purely imaginary, with sound effects).**

**Someone Like You (Adele) → [Click here](#)**

SCENE 4 – In New York City

**Center stage and stage right:** October 12, 2011. Streets of New York. WOODSTOCK and BENN are walking, side by side, **toward stage left**. They pass a newspaper (blowing) down the street.

**BENN**

Somebody's old Times.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*looks*] October 5, 2011. A week ago.... Old news, like me.

**BENN questions with a look and motion.**

**WOODSTOCK**

You see me pregnant, here, don't you?

And want to take me out to dinner?... on a Wednesday night?

**BENN**

Pregnant women are beautiful, to me, okay? Especially the one I'm with....  
[beat] Just dinner, and a bit of conversation. That's all, eh?

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm pregnant, and single, with no family, and vulnerable.  
Is that what you want to be talking about?

**BENN**

I don't know you, much, yet, Nan. You're right.  
It's been mostly from a distance.  
But I do know something, that's inside me.  
And it could care less, you being pregnant.

**They stop walking; and WOODSTOCK  
gives BENN a long, staring pause.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Okay. But a quick one; and then I'm home. Okay? It's a work night.

**BENN**

Fine.

**WOODSTOCK**

How's this place?

**BENN**

I don't know anything a-boat it.

**WOODSTOCK**

You don't know anything *a-boat it*? Where's that from?

**BENN**

What do you mean?

**WOODSTOCK**

[with her hands] A-boat?

**BENN**

Oh. I'm Canadian.

**They enter the "restaurant" (stage left)  
but inside is BENN's one-room New  
York City apartment, with a small dining  
area table, lit by candles, on which rest**

**an opened bottle of red wine, an opened bottle of sparkling pomegranate juice, and a pair of wine glasses. BENN seats WOODSTOCK at the table, pours her a glass of the pomegranate juice (himself, a glass of wine), starts some soft, background music, and sits.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Sparkling pomegranate. A pregnant Persephone's delight.... Thank you.  
[*raising her glass*] And a perfect accompaniment for a perfect evening.

**BENN**

I've been dreaming of this moment....  
[*beat*] You *must know* by now, Nan, I'm falling in love with you.

**WOODSTOCK**

You're a fool, if you're telling the truth.

**BENN**

[*raising his glass*] Here's to all fools that dream.  
And to everyone else in between.  
Here's to the codes to break,  
and all the madness to make....  
[*beat*] Can you tell me, now, Nan? what happened? [*looking*]

**WOODSTOCK**

Foolishness. In Phoenix. My mother's foolishness in me.  
I didn't think it would go that far. And I got out.

**BENN**

He seduced you?

**WOODSTOCK**

He ravished me with love poetry that I couldn't put down.  
I'd never heard words used like that, until he wrote them for me.  
Sorry, but they made me wet.  
And I got scared. And I got out.

**BENN**

[*beat*] So? That's the end of it?  
You'll never fall in love again?

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm not going to play games with you, Wade.  
Love is somebody else's history, not mine.  
You're an extremely attractive man. Absolutely. And great to be with.  
And from where I sit,  
I can see spending many sweet years in your company.  
But if you're asking for love, I won't be coy.  
I'll sleep with you. And I'll make it real.  
And I'll promise you this:  
If you let me, I'll be with you as long as you'll have me.

**BENN**

I couldn't ask for more.

**WOODSTOCK**

But I need to be free, in my own time.  
You'll see. I may go; but I'll always return. You'll see that, too. It's my way.

**BENN**

What can I say?  
I want you so much, how can I ask for more?

**WOODSTOCK**

One thing more:  
I imagine I'll be a disappointment in bed.  
It's not you. It's me.

**BENN**

We'll see a-boat that.

**Lights dim. BENN rises. WOODSTOCK does, too. He takes her, by the hand, over to his bed. They undress, part way, get into the bed, kiss, touch, and ...**

**WOODSTOCK**

Gently, Wade. Oh, please, ever so gently.

**They make love; and the music comes to an end.**

**BENN**

I love you, Nan.

**WOODSTOCK**

Shhh.... Tomorrow.

**BENN**

I'll be like a father to him.... Or her.  
Will you marry me?

**WOODSTOCK**

[*pause*] Wade, I will stay with you, for the rest of our lives.  
Or until you can't love me any longer.  
And I'll give you a child of your own, some day. I promise you that.

**BENN**

And I will marry you. I promise *you* that.

SCENE 5 – Benn's NYC Apartment

**Stage left:** Evening, early September, 2013. Benn's New York City apartment.  
BENN and WOODSTOCK are at home, together. BENN is sitting while  
WOODSTOCK lays Little Rusty down in her crib.

**BENN**

What are we supposed to do? Nan?  
How can we manage a year with you gone?  
And Little Rusty, twenty months old.  
What are we going to do? Without you?

**WOODSTOCK comes over to BENN, sits  
down in his lap, and gives him a warm  
hug and kiss with her arms around his  
neck.**

**WOODSTOCK**

It's just a year, and then I'll be back, smarter, and *cozier* than ever.

**BENN**

I don't want you smarter. I want you with me. That's all I ever wanted.

**WOODSTOCK**

It's all paid for. It's my chance of a lifetime.

**BENN**

It's not the money.

**WOODSTOCK**

I know that.

**BENN**

If I had the money, I wouldn't have to let you go.

**WOODSTOCK**

If we had the money, and we will someday, you and Little Rusty and I would be in London, together, right? But I told you, up front, this day would come. Didn't I?

**BENN**

Yes. But ... //

**WOODSTOCK**

Shh. Just listen. See this ring?  
I never want anything more. Ever.  
Just this. Just this simple gold.  
I mean that. It's important.  
Don't forget it. It will help keep us together.

**BENN**

[beat] Do you remember what you promised me?  
When we got married?

**WOODSTOCK**

To live with you until you couldn't have me any longer.  
And give you a child of your own, someday.  
And I will, Wade, just like I promised.

**BENN**

Are you lying to me, Nan?

**WOODSTOCK**

Someday you'll understand.  
That all this is never a lie.... But ....

**BENN**

Here it comes.

**WOODSTOCK**

There are some things I am; and some things I'm not.  
And I can't see, right now, all the love in the world changing that for me.  
I not kidding myself. And I'm not going to kid you, either.  
You might think I'd get over it.

But every night I remember how my mother drilled it into me. Stand on your own feet, Nan. Married or not, make yourself safe, whole, and educated.

**BENN**

Is it a trust thing? I don't understand it. I really don't.

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm a me, in two pieces. Afraid of losing everything.  
Don't you think this hurts me, too? I'm scared shitless.

**BENN**

If you were really like that, you wouldn't leave.

**WOODSTOCK**

Oh yes I would.  
I must.  
And when I come home to you, you'll say:  
There's a woman who keeps her promises and won't let her lamp burn out.

**BENN**

I don't understand how you can be this way.

**WOODSTOCK**

Who does?

**BENN**

Somebody must.

**WOODSTOCK**

Who?

**BENN**

Well I guess a psychiatrist would.

**WOODSTOCK**

Some say things can be talked away.  
I say: Action. And I am a woman of action.  
You'll see. Someday.

**BENN**

You're leaving then? no matter what I say?

**WOODSTOCK**

Someday you'll understand me better.  
And someday you may have to leave me when you do.



And I'll understand.

**BENN**

I don't have a clue *what* you're talking a-boat.

**WOODSTOCK**

No, I guess you don't.

I have something to live out; and Royal Holloway's the beginning for me.

All I can ask is that you trust me when I say I'll return. And I will.

I won't let you down on this, Wade. I promise.

**BENN**

Just what are we going to do with you gone?

**WOODSTOCK**

Julie's coming. She knows what she's doing.

She'll take good care of you. Both of you.

And we always have Skype.

**BENN**

That's not the same.

**WOODSTOCK**

I understand.

**BENN**

No, I don't think you do.

**WOODSTOCK**

I think I do. In my way, at least.

**BENN**

God, I wish this year were gone.

**WOODSTOCK**

Don't wish your life away.

**BENN**

It's going to be one lonely year. I can wish lonely years away, can't I?

**WOODSTOCK**

With Little Rusty growing up? I don't think so. And I'll be missing that.

But, if that's what's worrying you, let's pack some sugar away. What do you say?

**WOODSTOCK gets off Benn's lap, and  
leads him by the hand to their bed.**

**BENN**

Could there ever be anything better than you?

**WOODSTOCK**

You'll find out. I dare say.

**They undress.**

SCENE 6 – The Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

**Center stage:** Christmastime, 2013. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Holiday music can be heard throughout the scene. FLYNT enters, looking around. WOODSTOCK (pregnant and wearing scarlet) rushes up to him, and then pulls away in mid-hug to stare.

**FLYNT**

Don't you recognize me?

**WOODSTOCK**

Rusty, have I gone mad?  
Is it really you? In front of me? and in my arms?  
My eyes must be lying, they're so wet.

**FLYNT**

I'm the same, with a couple of years, wear and tear and loneliness on me.

**WOODSTOCK**

I don't deserve you, you know.

**FLYNT**

It's Christmastime. Who doesn't deserve anything?

**FLYNT takes WOODSTOCK into his arms for a hug which lasts until Scene 7 begins.**

**WOODSTOCK**

[*pause*] Why?

**FLYNT**

I've never stopped loving you, that's why.

**WOODSTOCK**

Is love the food for all goodness in this world?...

Well, anyway, you're still the fool for love, aren't you?

**FLYNT**

Guess so.

**WOODSTOCK**

But, Rusty, don't forgive me. I don't deserve it, for what I did.

**FLYNT**

Consider it done.

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm so selfish. And you're so blind to it. And what I said about your poetry?  
It was me. Always only me; not you, or anything you wrote....  
[beat] But I've already told you that, haven't I?

**FLYNT**

That, and asked me something, too.

**WOODSTOCK**

Yes, I did. I did ask you something.

**FLYNT**

Remember what I said, when you left?

**WOODSTOCK**

Lots of things, I'm sure. What? What thing are you talking about?

**FLYNT**

I told you, I love you. And would do anything for you.  
And I'd wait.

**WOODSTOCK**

Made you pay, didn't I?  
I feel like a scarlet woman.

**FLYNT**

You're an orchid, shh, I say.  
I had forgot to tell you so.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*fingers on his lips*] You're a beautiful poet, *I* should say.

**FLYNT**

And you're a beautiful Scarlett O'Hara, *I* should say.

**WOODSTOCK**

O, Rusty, if I could only tell you....

**FLYNT**

You can tell me anything.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*pause*] I was with him, Rusty, and I'm not with him now.

**FLYNT**

You don't have to tell me a thing....  
Until you're ready.

**WOODSTOCK**

If we can make a pact on that,  
I swear the time will come when you'll know everything.

**FLYNT**

And all we wrote about? It still stands?

**WOODSTOCK**

Everything.

**FLYNT**

All of it?  
[*counting on his fingers*] One. A simple wedding?

**WOODSTOCK**

[*holding up two fingers*] With two simple gold bands *I've* found for us.

**FLYNT**

Three. When the baby comes, I will be like a father to it?

**WOODSTOCK**

Yes. All of it. Like we wrote and promised.

**FLYNT**

And four. When you do all the work you need to do now, in and out of London,  
and in Paris, when that time comes, you'll always come back to me?

**WOODSTOCK**

It makes no sense, but if you'll have me, I'll come back to you.  
Half a wife and half a traveler. But always your half will be coming back to you.

**FLYNT**

And I'll be here, always.

**WOODSTOCK**

That really makes no sense.

**FLYNT**

I wrote it. You *are* an orchid, and I will always be in love with you.

**WOODSTOCK**

Why are you so good? Men aren't like that.  
Why are you so good to me?

**FLYNT**

Because you're worth it. And, it's what I am.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*holding up five fingers*] And five. Someday I'll carry an ever-so-slight bump for you, in my ever-so-graceful glide across the floor.

**FLYNT**

When the time comes.

**WOODSTOCK**

When the time comes, you may hate me someday.

**FLYNT**

I'll take my chances.

**WOODSTOCK**

And so will I, Rusty. So will I.

**They kiss.**

#### SCENE 7 – Another Christmas

**Center stage:** Christmastime, 2014. A small, studio apartment in Paris. WOODSTOCK (pregnant) enters and sits in front of her laptop, Skyping. BENN (and later FLYNT) appear on the screen.

**WOODSTOCK**

Happy Christmas, Wade.

**BENN**

Merry Christmas to you, Nan; and all our love, from here to Paris and back.

**WOODSTOCK**

And you, Little Rusty, my sugar. I love you.... And you, too, Julie.  
How's everything going?

**BENN**

Five inches of snow last night.  
New York white, for Christmas, for us.  
And a trembling heart, Sweetheart, you being away so long.

**WOODSTOCK**

It's only three weeks till my final proposal's due.

**BENN**

How's the tummy?

**WOODSTOCK**

Itchy....  
[beat] Is Julie still taking good care of you two?

**BENN**

She's just gone into the kitchen, with Rusty.  
She's such a great help, and cares so much for all of us.

**WOODSTOCK**

Okay. If I can't be there with you, Wade, here's the sweetest kiss I can offer.

**Sudden electrical interference.**

**BENN**

Losing you. I'll Skype later.  
Can you hear me?

**Screen goes blank.**

**WOODSTOCK turns off her laptop,  
opens a book, and in a few moments  
turns her laptop back on and Skypes  
FLYNT.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Joyeau Noël! My Rusty.

**FLYNT**

Thank God for Skype.  
I'm going crazy, thinking I won't be seeing you again for months. It's crazy.

**WOODSTOCK**

I miss you, too, Rusty.  
I'm in two, O so different worlds.  
And I really do miss you, and my little muffin.  
How *is* Bennie? I hardly got any time to hold her.  
It makes me horribly homesick.

**FLYNT**

She's fine. Three teeth now.  
Tomorrow, four, I'll bet.  
[beat] I'm keeping count of the days. Are you on schedule?

**WOODSTOCK**

Research. Who knows?  
Some days, everything just runs with me.  
And then other days, it's like climbing Flat Iron in stilettos.

**FLYNT**

Still September?

**WOODSTOCK**

Looks like it.  
My presentation's set for the second week in September.  
And then it'll be over.... All over, at last.

**FLYNT**

A tough year, for us, here in Phoenix, and Bennie.

**WOODSTOCK**

She won't know me.

**FLYNT**

Elena says Merry ... I mean, Feliz Navidad.

**WOODSTOCK**

She's all right?

**FLYNT**

Everything, and more. You chose well.

**WOODSTOCK**

You're a good man, Rusty.  
Better than I deserve.

**FLYNT**

You brought me Bennie, Darling.... And Elena.  
So stop talking like that.

**WOODSTOCK**

You know, I'm going to Hell for this, right?

**FLYNT**

For doing what? What you're meant to be doing with your life?  
I'm not planning on going to Hell for writing.

**WOODSTOCK**

It's insane, being away from you, and our little Bennie, at Christmastime....  
Is she there?

**FLYNT**

Sound asleep.  
I guess you forgot how early it is here.

**WOODSTOCK**

Oh my gosh, I guess I did.  
I'll Skype back again, in a couple of hours.  
I want to give her a kiss.

**FLYNT**

We'll be ready, munchkin seat in front of the screen.

**WOODSTOCK**

Thank God for Skype.

**FLYNT**

See you then.... Love you.

**WOODSTOCK**

See you then.

### SCENE 8 – Brandy's Birth

**Stage left:** April 15, 2015. A hospital room in New York City (behind a scrim), where WOODSTOCK is giving birth to her third child (first son), Brandy. BENN is with her; and she is grasping onto his arm fervently with one hand, pressing down on the bed with her other. In the background, Mozart's Little Night Music  
→ [Click here](#)



**WOODSTOCK**

*[amidst the moans and cries of labor]* Wade, why did you do this to me?  
I hate you....  
No I don't.

**BENN**

Shhh. Keep breathing.  
Just keep pushing.  
I love you, too.  
It's all going to be all right.

*[Pause.]*

**WOODSTOCK**

**Wade! Wade! Can you hear Mozart?**

*[Pause.]*

**Brandy is born. His first cry is heard.  
WOODSTOCK raises her two arms as  
high in the air as she can.**

**WOODSTOCK**

*Yes! Yes!  
Set the world on fire!  
[turning to BENN]* See what we've done?!

**BENN**

It's a boy, Nan.  
A little boy. On April 15, twenty 15. A little boy!

**WOODSTOCK**

*Our* boy. Brandy.

SCENE 9 – At Home in Benn's New Apartment

**Stage left:** Late morning, July, 2015. BENN and WOODSTOCK enter the living room of a new, and larger, New York City apartment. Both are barefoot.

**WOODSTOCK begins to undress.**

**BENN**

What are you doing?

**WOODSTOCK**

Celebrating. Our new digs. What would *you* like to do?

**BENN**

We don't have time, Nan. They'll be back any time.

**WOODSTOCK**

We have fifteen minutes.  
I told Julie.

**Partially undressed, WOODSTOCK comes over, removes Benn's shirt, and tosses her hair in his face.**

**BENN**

I love it. I love it. I love it when you do that.

**WOODSTOCK**

Want some more of it?

**WOODSTOCK turns around, takes Benn's hands, pulls them over her breasts, and pushes her backside into him. They tumble onto the couch.**

**BENN**

You're an animal this morning. What did you have for breakfast?

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm having you....  
[beat] We only have a few days left, Wade. And then back to Paris.

**BENN**

Okay. Okay.  
But in the bedroom, eh?  
I don't want any nude surprise, in someone's unprotected eyes.

**WOODSTOCK**

[standing] Sokay. Let's go.

**BENN stands, and they exit, leaving their removed clothing lying on the floor –**

**WOODSTOCK (offstage)**

I call top.

**Uptown Funk (movie montage edition)**  
→ [Click here](#)

SCENE 10 – At Home in Flynt’s New House

**Stage right:** October, 2015. Bedroom of Flynt’s and Woodstock’s new home in Phoenix. A simple mattress is on the floor – nothing else, yet. (Bennie is sleeping in her crib in the next room – not visible to audience.) WOODSTOCK and FLYNT enter, holding hands and looking around. Music in the background for the first 4 minutes or so (ideally, something played by classical guitarist, Christopher Schoelen, for example → [Click here](#))

**WOODSTOCK**

Nothing sexier, naked walls, naked floors, naked guilt, and classical guitar.

**FLYNT**

I can think of something even guiltier.

**WOODSTOCK**

The chance to transform open space.  
A home. A real, live home.  
It’s so seductive. I’m beginning to fall in love with it.  
My life.  
Hell! I can’t believe it! What’s happening to me?

**FLYNT**

I’m glad we can afford it, Nan. I mean, I’m glad *you* can.  
I certainly can’t. Not on my poet’s profits.  
Not in October, 2015, that’s for sure.

**WOODSTOCK**

Rusty, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

**FLYNT**

What did you do? All of a sudden?  
Are you a felon, or something?

**WOODSTOCK**

What do you mean?

**FLYNT**

How did you do it? The money, and all? Rob a bank?  
I know how hard you work, all the time.

But ... where did this all come from?

**WOODSTOCK**

A girl has to have a few secrets, doesn't she?

**FLYNT**

But so many? Separate bank accounts? Tax returns? Insurance?

**WOODSTOCK**

Oh? It's *my money*, turns you on?

**FLYNT**

No, of course not. You know that.

**WOODSTOCK**

Just making sure.

**FLYNT**

But why all this covert action?

**WOODSTOCK**

Just for a while longer.

I long to be able to tell you, but not yet.

You see, I'm going through a sort of change of life.

Life's beginning to mean something different to me,  
than it did when I was growing up.

I think I've made some mistakes. *Maybe* some criminal mistakes.

But not bad criminal. Crimes of the heart.

I started in reverse ... in revenge ... and yours and Bennie's love has turned me  
around. You've given me more than everything my mother lost in her marriage.

But I need a while longer. Just a little while.

And then I'll make everything crystal clear. I promise.

**FLYNT**

Why?...

No. Forget that. Forget I asked that.

I love you. And that's enough. And I trust you.

**FLYNT takes WOODSTOCK into his  
arms, and kisses her.**

**WOODSTOCK**

When someday comes along, you'll know everything, and too much.

And there won't be any going back.

So, like my Mom used to say: Don't wish your life away.

**FLYNT**

Okay.

**WOODSTOCK**

Carpe diem.

**FLYNT**

Okay.

**WOODSTOCK**

Now I have something to ask *you*.

**FLYNT**

What?

**WOODSTOCK**

A favor, Mr. Cowboy Poet.

**FLYNT**

Ask it.

**WOODSTOCK**

Can you help me with something?

**FLYNT**

[*looking around*] If it has anything to do with decorating, I'm afraid not. I'm a total failure in that department. Sorry.

**WOODSTOCK**

No, not that. Not anything like that.  
It's a special project they've asked me to work on....  
About the Old West. And politics.

**FLYNT**

The Old West? And politics?

**WOODSTOCK**

About Big Love.  
Do you know anything about that?

**FLYNT**

No.

**WOODSTOCK**

In the 1840s, a man named Brigham Young brought people out to Utah.

**FLYNT**

The Mormons, of course. I know *that*.

**WOODSTOCK**

They had to move West, because of one of their religious tenets.

**FLYNT**

Polygamy.

**WOODSTOCK**

Polygamy. Exactly.

And what does that word entail, in your understanding?

**FLYNT**

A man occupied with two marriages at the same time, and going out of his mind.

**WOODSTOCK**

What if a woman has two husbands?

**FLYNT**

What do you mean?

**WOODSTOCK**

What do you call it, if a woman has two husbands?

**FLYNT**

Dementia. Or two Hey Babies, I'm your handy man.

**WOODSTOCK**

No, seriously. A real word.

**FLYNT**

What is it?

**WOODSTOCK**

With a woman, the word is "polyandry." She's a "polyandrist."

**FLYNT**

Wouldn't work with the guys I know.

**WOODSTOCK**

Utah wanted to become a state. Washington wouldn't let them.  
So they renounced polygamy.

**FLYNT**

God told them to?

**WOODSTOCK**

For the time being.

**FLYNT**

What do you mean, *for the time being*?

**WOODSTOCK**

As long as polygamy is illegal in the U.S., God prohibits its practice in Utah.

**FLYNT**

How do you *practice* polygamy?

I mean, are there schools that teach it?

**WOODSTOCK**

Please, I'm trying to be serious here.

**FLYNT**

And polyandry as well? Am I saying that right?

**WOODSTOCK**

Polyandry has never been allowed.

**FLYNT**

That seems a bit sexist.

**WOODSTOCK**

It was that kind of sexism that nearly drove my mother up the proverbial wall.  
That, and ....

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] That, and what?...

*She* wanted to have two husbands, and go to jail?

**WOODSTOCK**

She certainly didn't want two.

Wasn't all that crazy about the one she had.

Especially after his stroke.

Her personal war was with manmade law.

She wanted *women* to make the laws that women have to live by. Not men.

**FLYNT**

You don't think the law on that *could change*, do you?

Like it has on same-sex marriage?

**WOODSTOCK**

Some people think it could, if a woman gets elected President.

**FLYNT**

Polygamy *and* polyandry? How can that possibly be?

**WOODSTOCK**

That's where I come in.

To look in my crystal ball, and see what the writing is, on the wall.

**FLYNT**

[*looking at, and touching the bare bedroom walls*] Not on these walls.

**WOODSTOCK**

Think about it a second.

A second wife could be a great help, around this house.

**FLYNT**

You're handful enough, thank you.

**WOODSTOCK**

But if something happened to me?...

**FLYNT**

Like what?

**WOODSTOCK**

Like I got hit by an airplane, let's say, or went to jail.

**FLYNT**

Don't be preposterous.

**WOODSTOCK**

Just saying. With two mothers Bennie would be safer if anything happened to me.

**FLYNT**

Nothing's going to happen to you.

**WOODSTOCK**

What I'm getting at is,  
if polygamy, *and* polyandry both favor widows and orphans, why not?

**FLYNT**

Because it's sure to piss people off. A lot. And cause domestic violence.



**WOODSTOCK**

Like there's not already domestic violence in the United States?

**FLYNT**

Legalizing adultery would make it worse.... Like marijuana.

**WOODSTOCK**

Legalizing marijuana would make what worse?

**FLYNT**

Smoking and driving, for one thing.

**WOODSTOCK**

So polygamists shouldn't be allowed to drive?

**FLYNT**

Polygamists shouldn't be allowed to take their pants off, Darling.

**WOODSTOCK**

Okay, Sweetheart.

What are the main reasons against polygamy?

**FLYNT**

If you're asking me .... Well, because Muslims do it. That's a big one.

**WOODSTOCK**

And ...?

**FLYNT**

And Washington knows what that does to Arab women.

**WOODSTOCK**

It helps American women to know that Washington men know what's best for women?

**FLYNT**

What are you getting at? That it should be a choice thing for women?

**WOODSTOCK**

If a woman wants to live with a man and another woman, why shouldn't she? Is it for the government to say what makes her feel safe and happy and fulfilled?

**FLYNT**

It is, if she doesn't know what she's doing.

**WOODSTOCK**

If she's old enough to get married ... //

**FLYNT**

Oh? You think a person's mature just because they're old enough to get married?

**WOODSTOCK**

Best not to use those two "M" words in the same sentence.

**FLYNT**

[*pause*] Dammit, Nan, I *do see* your point.

If we believe in the freedom of religion in this country,  
and if Mormons believe in polygamy, which was already in the Bible,  
provided young girls aren't involved, and don't get hurt by it ...

I draw the line there, with young girls ...

I guess for grown-up women, it's not for me to say.

I certainly have no business telling gays and lesbians how to live their lives.

**WOODSTOCK**

But it's okay for government to say?

**FLYNT**

When you put it that way ... no, I guess.

**WOODSTOCK**

Polygamy no more mandates the sexual exploitation of women,  
than marriage mandates the financial exploitation of men.

**FLYNT**

But the Bible says .... Jesus....

**WOODSTOCK**

What? What does the Bible say? What does Jesus say?

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Right?

**WOODSTOCK**

Something like that.

**FLYNT**

So ...?

What do the Romans say a woman's supposed to do,  
when she's unhappy in her marriage?

Get a new husband? Like a new pair of shoes?

**WOODSTOCK**

It's not that easy to divorce an old pair of comfortable shoes, is it?  
Once they've been broken in so nicely. Right? Dear?  
You just substitute one set of problems for another.

**FLYNT**

Why are you asking me?  
I'm still deer-in-the-headlights, in the honeymoon phase.

**WOODSTOCK**

I guess I'm asking myself why.  
You see, thinking today about sex is far too binary.  
In Western thought, if you don't like a relationship so much anymore, chuck it.  
Go online. Trade it in for another. Like a used car.

**FLYNT**

Christ! I hope you're not talking about us.

**WOODSTOCK**

Definitely not.  
No way I'm trading this husband in. Even for a Lamborghini.

**FLYNT**

Whew! You had me scared for a second.

**WOODSTOCK**

You must have learned by now:  
You can't change another person if you can't change yourself.  
You can't change a country if you can't change yourself.

**FLYNT**

If you could, what would you have me do?  
How would you have me change?

**WOODSTOCK**

[*pause*] Something I've never had the nerve to ask you.

**FLYNT**

What?

**WOODSTOCK**

Listen....

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] I don't hear anything.  
Bennie's asleep ... in her crib. That's all.

**WOODSTOCK**

Ever since I was a kid I've had moments when I feel all numb. All over.  
Like a patch of land, completely covered in plastic,  
that doesn't let a drop of rain or sunlight touch my skin.  
Or a sheet pulled over me, sucking out my oxygen.  
Or my vagina suddenly going novocaine on me, and I can't sense a thing.  
Or worse ... claustrophobic.  
And depression surges through me like a forgotten memory.

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] Do you need some help, Nan? Something professional?

**WOODSTOCK**

I've said too much. Sorry. I'm fine now.  
Strange sounds can do that to me.

**FLYNT**

What can I do?

**WOODSTOCK**

I get this horrible urge, sometimes, to just escape. Crazy.  
Just understand. It's not you. It's *me*. Forgive me.

**FLYNT**

Do you want another husband? Is that what you're trying to tell me?

**WOODSTOCK**

When I left, four years ago, I was determined that I would live life my way.  
Actually, if truth be told, more my mother's way.  
Marriage, when it came, would be on *my terms*. Sex. And children.  
But no locks or latches of love. No cross of faith or paragon of virtue.  
*My* education and career would always be first.  
Naked of fundamental commitment.  
And it worked.... For awhile.

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] What?

**Theme from Love Story, cello cover by  
Vesislova → [Click here](#) until end of  
scene.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Hold me.  
Hold me like my life depends on it.

**FLYNT hugs her (like her life depends  
on it).**

**WOODSTOCK**

I wish you and I and the world could find a way, when love comes,  
to make it stay. Night and day.  
All the time.  
All the time that I'm away.  
Something new.  
Something that locks my insides in....  
[beat] I'm so very sorry, Rusty. I never understood.

**FLYNT**

Shhhh.

**WOODSTOCK**

You feel wonderful.  
Don't stop.  
I don't want my life to stop.  
Not now.  
Not when I'm first waking up.  
Hold me till these blues go away.  
Please....  
And *then* we'll make love.

**At last WOODSTOCK gently pushes  
FLYNT. He steps back; and she starts  
undressing.**

**WOODSTOCK**

How much do you love me?

**FLYNT**

To the nines and back. To the immortal Muses.

**WOODSTOCK**

Then show me.

**Not quite naked, kissing and embracing,  
a child's voice is heard from the next  
room. Music stops.**

SCENE 11 – 2015 Christmas in New York

**Stage left:** December, 2015. Living room of Benn's and Woodstock's New York City apartment. BENN is sitting on the couch, holding and rocking baby Brandy. Little Rusty is sound asleep in her bedroom offstage. Love theme suite from Love Actually plays into Scene 12 (ads not included). → [Click here](#)

**WOODSTOCK enters, carrying  
Christmas presents, and putting them  
under the tree.**

**BENN**

Hello! Ms. Claus. Any success?

**WOODSTOCK**

**Taking off her gloves, scarf, and coat.**

Reindeer still need carrots....  
But, my God, it's luscious out there!

**BENN**

How's that?

**WOODSTOCK**

The cold is heavenly. It warms my blood all over.  
I love New York streets at Christmastime.  
God! What I missed when I was a kid!

**WOODSTOCK gives BENN a warm kiss –  
her cold hands on his cheeks.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Sorry a-boat the cold hands.

**BENN**

No problem. I love it. Do it again. It reminds me of skating, on a frozen pond.

**She does.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Whatcha doin?

**BENN**

A bit fussy tonight.  
But Little Rusty ... sound asleep in her room....

**WOODSTOCK**

[*beat*] And?...

**BENN**

Just thinking....

**WOODSTOCK**

About?...

**BENN**

A-boat you.  
And a-boat our marriage.

**WOODSTOCK**

**Sitting beside him.**

Any problems?

**BENN**

No. None at all.

**WOODSTOCK**

Then tell me.

**BENN**

Nothing to tell, actually.

**WOODSTOCK**

Come on. Spill it.

**BENN**

It's just Mary.

**WOODSTOCK**

Your sister?

**BENN**

She called tonight.

**WOODSTOCK**

Problems?

**BENN**

She's crazy.

**WOODSTOCK**

Still?

**BENN**

[*matter-of-fact*] Her love life.

**WOODSTOCK**

Isn't it always?

What is it this time?

**BENN**

She's got the hots for a poet she's been reading.

**WOODSTOCK**

Oh?

**BENN**

He lives in Arizona, of all places.

**WOODSTOCK**

That can happen.

Poets do live in Arizona. Occasionally.

What's she doing out there?

**BENN**

That's just it.

She's never been to Arizona. She's never met the guy.

She's fallen in love with a word. His words.

They've changed her life. She says. Just words.

Just reads his poetry. At night. Alone. And cries.

**WOODSTOCK**

And what's that got to do with us?

**BENN**

[*beat*] Have you ever cried, at night, when we're apart, thinking a-boat me?



**WOODSTOCK**

O yes. Not all that long ago.  
And many a time.  
But not just about you.  
About what the three of you mean to me.  
And what's been done to our lives.  
By me.

**BENN**

Do you want to talk a-boat it?

**WOODSTOCK**

Not now, Wade.  
Please.

**BENN**

Well, that's part of it, you see. It's always out there.  
The supreme mystery that is Nan Woodstock. My wife.  
Even Mary says so.

**WOODSTOCK**

She's a marriage counselor now?

**BENN**

Don't dump on her. It's not her fault.

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm sorry. You're right.  
I *do* think marriages should be equal, both ways, mysteries included.

**BENN**

Then why ...//

**WOODSTOCK**

People should be treated with equal respect.  
But that doesn't make people physically and emotionally equal to one another.  
The only equal, for those fortunate enough to find it, is love.  
In the end, love triumphs.  
I'm sure of it. I believe in it. If we only let it.  
But some people have some needs; and some have others.  
And marriage is no guarantee.

**BENN**

And your need is secrecy.

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm a Scorpio.

**BENN**

*That's a reason?*

**WOODSTOCK**

I've tried to give you the support you've given me.  
Haven't I, Wade?

**BENN**

I'm not complaining a-boat that. I'm not talking a-boat that.  
It's what we don't talk a-boat.

**WOODSTOCK**

Give me time. I've always promised you that someday you'll know everything.  
Just be patient, okay?  
You'll understand why, when the end comes.  
And why I always say, don't wish your life away.

**BENN**

*The end?*

**WOODSTOCK**

The end of the mystery.

**BENN**

It's like you have two separate lives.

**WOODSTOCK**

I do.  
I work my ass off. Half off.  
And I give the other half of it to you and the kids.

**BENN**

No complaints there.

**WOODSTOCK**

You're not getting enough lovin'?

**BENN**

It's not a-boat sex. It's what Mary said.

**WOODSTOCK**

What is it that Mary said?

**BENN**

That with all your traveling, all the time,  
well, you could just as well have another family, and we'd never know it.

**WOODSTOCK**

And how's that even possible?

**BENN**

That's what I told her.  
How could a person manage two families? eh? even if they wanted to.  
It's logistically impossible nowadays.  
What with Social Security; and health insurance; and voting;  
and 1040s; and driver's licenses; and the internet.

**WOODSTOCK**

Forget all the technical stuff. Let's say you could have two wives and two families.

**BENN**

And you'd understand? Sure. Me? having sex with two woman?

**WOODSTOCK**

If that's what you want, you have my unqualified permission.  
I mean it. And I wouldn't walk out on you. Or think the less of you.  
I told you: I'll only leave you when you want me to.  
That's Nan Woodstock. A Nan Woodstock commitment.

**Little Rusty calls out "Mommy" from her  
bedroom; and after a brief hesitation,  
WOODSTOCK gets up, gives BENN a  
long, knowing look, and leaves the  
room. BENN continues rocking Brandy.**

**WOODSTOCK (from offstage)**

O, my Rusty,  
my Little, Little Rusty.  
O, my Rusty,  
my Little, Little Rusty.  
Give Mommy kisses, and a big, bad hug.  
She loves her little lady like a big lady bug.  
And then,  
nighty, night, sugar pie.

SCENE 12 – Book Signing

**Center stage:** Spring, 2016. A book store in Phoenix, where FLYNT is seated at a table, signing copies of his first published book of poetry – *Well or Poorly Begun* – and drinking a cup of coffee. He signs his way through an imaginary line of fans, while MARY BENN unobtrusively observes from afar. When the imaginary line comes to an end, FLYNT stands, and MARY approaches him.

**MARY**

It's written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

**FLYNT**

[*beat*] But I say unto you, resist not evil.  
If a person compels you to walk a mile with them, walk two.

**MARY**

I already have ... waiting for you to finish signing your book.  
Waiting to witness your pure genius face to face.

**FLYNT**

Beg pardon.

**MARY**

You ... and your poetry....  
Pure genius

**FLYNT**

[*a little taken aback*] Thank you. I think.

**MARY**

Who dares say it the way you do?

**Opens the book she is holding in her hand.**

[*reads*] Suspicious Tongues and Broken Crowns.  
To love a woman, angel, or God,  
You give their mortal flaws no heed.  
Reject the lips of malicious fraud.  
Protect and keep her honor freed.  
Rely on what you surely know:  
Her soul's a paradox of grace.  
Is naught but mystery below.  
The naked all that you embrace.

[*beat*] Jesus Christ! It takes my breath away.

**FLYNT**

Thank you.

**MARY**

I feel you in bed, next to me, at night.

**FLYNT**

Careful. I'm married.

**MARY**

If you didn't write it for me, who did you write it for?

**FLYNT**

For my soul mate. My wife.

**MARY**

What's her name? as if I didn't already know.  
It's Nancy Woodstock, isn't it?

**FLYNT**

Yes.

**MARY**

That's what I thought.  
Who is she? I can't find her anywhere. On Facebook. On the internet.

**FLYNT**

So?

**MARY**

Just strange, that's all.

**FLYNT**

But that's none of your business, is it?

**MARY**

Just saying.... I'm not like you, Rusty Flynt. I'm not so trusting.

**FLYNT**

I don't expect anyone to be like me. I don't want anyone to be like me.

**MARY**

Because, I can't trust, what I can't see.

**FLYNT**

What is it you want?

**MARY**

Would you sign my copy, please?

**FLYNT takes the book from MARY, lays it on the table, opens it to the title page, and bends over to write.**

**MARY**

My name's Mary. Mary Benn. With two N's.

**FLYNT**

"For Mary Benn, who feels my poetry inside her."  
Okay?

**MARY**

Perfect. Perfect. Thank you....  
Don't you know ...?

**FLYNT**

[*writing*] What?

**MARY**

How dangerous it is, to put a woman, side by side, in comparison with God?  
I guess you're not very superstitious.

**FLYNT**

I'm sorry. I don't get your point.

**MARY**

Well ... Arachne was turned into a spider, for claiming she wove like a goddess.

**FLYNT**

You think I've tempted Nan's fate?

**MARY**

[*nodding*] Frankly, yes I do.

**FLYNT**

Well, if I have, it only makes her stronger.

**MARY**

Who deserves to be fancied like that?

**FLYNT**

Nan doesn't hurt anybody. She's the fire of my life.  
And this discussion is *over*.

**FLYNT hands her the book back and turns to walk away. MARY catches hold of his arm.**

**MARY**

Is she really that good?

**FLYNT**

I'm the luckiest man in the world.

**MARY**

You're not the least bit conceited, are you?

**FLYNT**

What makes you say that?

**MARY**

Your poetry. And the title of your book ... "Well or Poorly Begun."

**FLYNT**

I write how I feel.  
And writing is what makes me feel life is alive.  
It doesn't matter to me what people think.  
Just Nan.

**MARY**

What others think of your poetry doesn't bother you?

**FLYNT**

There are three core pillars I trust exist inside me.  
And what other people think of my poetry is not one of them.

**MARY**

What are they?

**FLYNT**

Goodness.... And a God.  
Evil, and a Devil.  
And Passion. The most powerful and meaningful in me of the three.

**MARY**

I'm not certain I understand. What *is* passion to you, Rusty Flint? Sex?

**FLYNT**

Sex is only a mirror that reflects Passion and Love.

**MARY**

So ...?

**FLYNT**

I have a wonderful life, wife, and child.  
And beyond those blessings, that I judge most men don't have or appreciate,  
I am blessed with a passion to write.  
What people make of it ... or me, is their own business.  
If I spark a fire of any kind, that's enough.  
Whether it stays lit, or not, that's not up to me.

**MARY**

How can a man with so much passion be so Stoic?

**FLYNT**

Why not? Even great oaks, Shakespeare included, lose their acorns and leaves.

**MARY**

My passion .... Do you want to know what my passion is?

**Pause.**

My passion, truly, is sleeping.... At night. With you.

**FLYNT**

Goodbye, Miss Benn.

**FLYNT walks away from her, and she pursues.**

**MARY**

*[calling after him]* I'm a poet, too.  
And I know something a-boat being married you don't....  
I feel sorry for you, Rusty Flynt.

**FLYNT turns.**

**FLYNT**

Leave me alone. I'm just a man. Don't worry about me.

**MARY hands FLYNT a card.**

**MARY**

You say you're just a man.  
I thought I knew you. Now, maybe I don't.  
I better leave, before I say something I'll regret....  
*[beat]* If you ever have any questions, you can find me through this website.



**MARY walks past FLYNT and out the door. As she does, she passes WOODSTOCK, who is on her way in. WOODSTOCK pauses, momentarily, shocked to see MARY there; but MARY hurries past her without a word or second glance. FLYNT puts the card in his pocket.**

**WOODSTOCK comes happily up to him; and he swings her, for a moment, into his arms.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Hi, my bonnie Rabbie Burns. How did it go today?

**FLYNT**

Okay. Pretty good, maybe. Until the end.  
Nan?... Do you think my poetry's any good?

**WOODSTOCK**

Why? Because of what I said once, when I was literarily insane?

**FLYNT**

That strange woman, who just flew out of here ...//

**WOODSTOCK**

Don't take what strangers say seriously.

**Pause.**

What *did* she say to you?

**FLYNT**

More, what she implied.

**WOODSTOCK**

Like what?

**FLYNT**

Like I'm naïve ... being out here, in Arizona.

**WOODSTOCK**

How could you cut any deeper, under the skin of things, the way you do, someplace else? This is *your* country. *Your* world. Even kids know about "Stranger Danger."

**FLYNT**

[*laughs*] That's what I love about you, Nan.  
And your hair.  
You tie my poetry together.  
Thank you....  
Wait.... Wait.... Just a thought.

**Writes on a scrap of paper as he speaks his verse aloud.**

If this is awe it's in *my country*.  
How golden the light that threads and binds the love  
that threads and binds our lives.  
You are the soul of the soul of the soul of this land,  
the Arizona sun that braids the meaning of my life.

[*beat*] Why do I love you this much, Nan?

**Kisses her.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Perfect, Rusty ... except, I'm not a blond.  
Unless that's what you want.

**FLYNT wraps his arms around her.**

**WOODSTOCK**

I know what you want.

**FLYNT**

[*teasing*] What?

**WOODSTOCK**

Me. In the hospital.

**FLYNT**

*What?!*

**WOODSTOCK**

Having *our* little baby.

**FLYNT**

[*kissing her*] Bennie's enough. For now.  
But thank you.

SCENE 13 – Thanksgiving

**Stage left:** Late Thanksgiving Day, 2016. Living room of Woodstock and Benn’s NYC apartment. BENN and his sister, MARY, are sitting in an awkward silence. WOODSTOCK enters, and takes a seat. Bach. Aria from Goldberg Variations. → [Click here](#) and repeat.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*looks at them*] Little Rusty and Brandy are all tucked in....  
[*beat*] I think Brandy’s asleep already....  
[*pregnant pause*] Long days, Thanksgiving Days.... Everything okay?

**MARY**

[*beat*] I told you. I’ve got nothing to be thankful for.  
No children.  
No lovers.  
Next to Christmas, Thanksgiving’s the sickest day of the year for me.

**BENN**

I wish I could help, Sis....

**MARY**

You can’t.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*beat*] Can I?

**MARY**

I hate you, you know.

**BENN**

**Mary!!**

**MARY**

Well, I do.... But I love you, too.

**WOODSTOCK**

I love you, too, Mary.  
And I owe you. Big Time. And I won’t forget it.

**MARY**

[*pause*] I fell in love with a poet, in Phoenix. I guess you know.

**WOODSTOCK**

Wade said something about it.

**MARY**

But he's married. I guess you know that, too.

**BENN**

I didn't know he was *married*.

**MARY**

And I wanted to get even.  
I wanted to get really even.  
And I did. I did a really fucked-up thing....

**WOODSTOCK**

[*beat*] Would you like me to leave the room, Mary?...

**MARY**

[*pause*] I lost my baby.

**WOODSTOCK stands, shocked. Beat.**  
**Then she goes over to MARY, sits by her,**  
**and hugs her.**

**MARY**

**Sobs on Woodstock's shoulder.**

I'm not welcome here.

**WOODSTOCK**

You're always welcome here, Mary.  
You're always welcome in my life, wherever.

**BENN**

That's right, Sis, wherever we are. We all love you.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*beat*] What happened?

**MARY**

[*beat*] I wanted to ruin your life.  
And I came close.  
Did you know that?

**BENN**

What are you talking a-boat?

**MARY**

[*looking directly into Woodstock's eyes*] I was so jealous.

**WOODSTOCK**

I understand.

**BENN**

I don't.

**MARY**

And you never hated me?

**WOODSTOCK**

Glass houses don't throw stones.

**MARY**

Sounds like something he would write....

I can't understand you, Nan Woodstock.

But I'm starting to understand something....

**BENN**

What are you two talking a-boat? I'm lost.

**WOODSTOCK**

What are you starting to understand?

**MARY**

Why they love you, the way they do.

[to BENN] I fell in love with another woman's husband.

**WOODSTOCK**

[*surprised*] And *he* got you pregnant?!

**MARY**

You don't know how much I wish. But it wasn't him.

**WOODSTOCK goes back to her former seat. BENN stands.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Sit down, Wade.

It's going to be confession time.

Big time.

**BENN**

Somebody better start making some sense here.

**WOODSTOCK**

Sit down, please.

**BENN**

[sits] If you say so.

**MARY**

I'll tell you what happened.  
Because I have to. Because it's time to.  
But it's a-boat *me*. Just so you know.  
It's a-boat *me*.  
Not somebody else's husband.  
Not somebody else.  
Just me. Understand?

**WOODSTOCK**

Okay.... Okay.

**BENN**

Why are you two talking in code?

**MARY**

Let me talk, Wade. It's time I did....  
But I hardly know where to begin....  
I met Flynn ... let me call him that. It's not his name, exactly.  
I met him at a poetry book signing in Phoenix.  
That was the first, and only time. Because I tracked him down there.  
Because I'd fallen in love with his poetry. What I could find online.  
And I told him so ... I guess ... that I loved him.  
But he didn't know me from Adam's Eve.  
And, what's more, he's stuck on his wife. Completely faithful....  
But he doesn't know *her* from Eve. Not really.

**WOODSTOCK**

So ... what kept you from the big reveal?

**MARY**

I can punish myself ... plenty.  
But when you see faith like that, it makes you ask yourself:  
What right have I?  
To judge someone else. On whose rectitude scale? When children are happy.

**BENN**

What's such a big reveal in that?  
It's how we were raised. It's biblical.

**MARY**

Have you ever felt so lost you wandered around the internet, at night, aimlessly?

**WOODSTOCK**

[nods] Yes. Once or twice.

**MARY**

And find something truly unbelievable.  
Like God's hand was on the keyboard with you?  
Reaching out to you? Blindly out of the blue?

**WOODSTOCK**

I would have been there for you, Mary. Always.

**MARY**

I was supposed to know that?

**WOODSTOCK**

No, I guess not.

**MARY**

Like I was supposed to know that an unknown poet, in Arizona,  
was the hand of God, for me?  
Who happens to be married to a woman,  
whom he barely knows any better than the world knows his poetry ...  
except for me.

**BENN**

I never knew how you were feeling.  
And quite frankly, I'm still not getting something here....  
How did you get pregnant?

**MARY**

And I went to him.  
And his wife saw us.  
And I was going to tell him what a cheat I thought she was.  
But I didn't.

**BENN**

Why would you want to do that?

**MARY**

All of a sudden I didn't know why.  
And after a bit, I left.  
I asked him to get in touch with me, which he never did.

And then I went crazy, alone with myself, thinking, what a fool I am.  
Thinking a-boat it all, and started going out to bars at night ... and things....  
[beat] I went a whole month, every night, sleeping with a different man,  
every night, with no protection.

**WOODSTOCK**

Oh my God!!

**BENN**

*Mary!!*  
I don't believe it.

**MARY**

I was in the darkest period of my life. With no support.  
I wanted to die. Except ... I got pregnant.

**WOODSTOCK**

It must have been terrifying.

**MARY**

That's exactly what it was....  
Hating myself ... tearing myself ... tearing at myself in any way I could.

**WOODSTOCK**

I need to talk to you.

**MARY**

I got pregnant. And no idea who did it....  
And I'm going to Hell for it.

**WOODSTOCK**

No you're not. And I need to talk to you.

**MARY**

I think of your beautiful children.  
And who am I to judge? Who am I to play God?  
Who is this miserable spinster to play God?

**WOODSTOCK**

[choking back her tears] Mary ... we love you so much.

**MARY**

I left Flynn that day, and walked and walked.  
There's a park there, rock and stone paths through gardens....  
Water running everywhere, even over the paths.



Your shoes get wet; and nobody minds...  
[*crying*] Three months later the blood came out ...  
and my baby was gone.

**WOODSTOCK, crying, stands, goes to MARY, and holds her. BENN stands, but doesn't know what to do.**

**MARY**

He was there ... right in front of me, close enough to touch,  
married to a woman he loves with all his heart,  
who's too lucky to be married like that...  
And me, alone.

**WOODSTOCK**

You'll see him again. I promise you that.

**They stand and exit.**

**BENN**

[*to himself*] Happy Thanksgiving.

#### SCENE 14 – Invitation to Flynt

**Stage right:** Late June, 2019. Evening. Living room of Flynt's and Woodstock's Phoenix home. WOODSTOCK and FLYNT enter alone, and turn on the lights.

**WOODSTOCK**

Would you stop it, Rusty?  
Bennie's five. She'll be just fine.  
It's about time for her first sleepover. Stop worrying.

**FLYNT**

I know; but this seems so ... so ....

**WOODSTOCK begins undressing. She is wearing black panties, a bra and red heels; and she picks up and puts on a white negligee left earlier on the sofa.**

**WOODSTOCK**

[teasing] Soooo ... Soooo ... what?

**Comes up and starts undressing FLYNT.**

Decadent?

**FLYNT**

Wanton.

**WOODSTOCK**

You'll be wantin' more of this, before I'm done with you.

**FLYNT**

What's gotten into you?

**WOODSTOCK presses him to the wall,  
and then turns out the lights.**

**WOODSTOCK**

You.

**FLYNT**

Let me shave first.

**WOODSTOCK**

Are you kidding?

You're crazy if you think you're getting away from me.

The time is nigh....

**FLYNT**

What are you talking about?

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm talking about time.

Time to make a baby brother, or sister, for Bennie.

**FLYNT**

It's so dark I can barely see.

**WOODSTOCK**

Fly by instrument then.

**In the dark they find their nudity, the  
sofa, and moments of wantonness  
expressed in the dark.**

**Long pause. They are lying in each other's arms when WOODSTOCK turns on a flashlight.**

**FLYNT**

What the Hell?

**FLYNT puts a hand up, in the way of the light in his face.**

**WOODSTOCK**

I want to see the tiger in the eyes of the beast who just devoured me.

**FLYNT**

Hey! Watch it! *I'm* the poet in this family.

**WOODSTOCK**

And what am I?

**FLYNT**

You're the mysterious business tycoon.

**WOODSTOCK turns the flashlight off into total darkness.**

**WOODSTOCK**

Rusty, would you do something for me?

**FLYNT**

Of course. Anything.

**WOODSTOCK**

It's a place. A place I need for you to go for me.

**FLYNT**

Anywhere.

**WOODSTOCK**

New York City, this October, all expenses paid.  
There's a group I've done work with,  
who are having their most important meeting in history.  
It's the Modern Master Word Foundation;  
and they've offered a million dollars for a word they hope to announce that night.  
A word they hope will change the face of American honesty.  
And I need you to go for me.

**FLYNT**

Why can't you go?

**WOODSTOCK**

I've got a speaking commitment that night I absolutely cannot get out of....  
[beat] Please? O pretty please?

**FLYNT**

In October? Sure. Why not? If it's that important to you.

**WOODSTOCK**

It is.

**FLYNT**

How important is it? To you?

**WOODSTOCK**

If you do this for me, I'll tell you everything.  
Everything you've been waiting to hear. You know ... *everything*.

**FLYNT**

Everything?

**WOODSTOCK**

Everything. Absolutely everything. Mystery rent in two.

**FLYNT**

Then it's a no-brainer.

**Scene ends in darkness.**

#### SCENE 15 – The Day of the Banquet

**Stage left:** Early afternoon, October 12, 2019. Living room of Woodstock and Benn's NYC apartment. WOODSTOCK, alone, is at the door, about to exit.

**WOODSTOCK**

[calling out] Bye Wade. Don't forget the Banquet tonight.  
I know you won't. Seven, sharp. Alger House.  
Down in the West Village.  
I'll be home by 11. Can't wait to hear all about it.  
And who wins the million dollars.

**WOODSTOCK exits.**

SCENE 16. The Banquet, Take Two

**Center stage** and **stage left**: The tables and chairs of Scene 2 are reassembled, together with the head table and screen. The three DIRECTORS and PLATO (in their academic robes) enter with BENN and FLYNT, and take their respective places. WOODSTOCK enters and stands at the lectern. The female police officer enters and stands to the side. On the screen:

2019 ANNUAL DINNER

MODERN MASTER WORD FOUNDATION

WOODSTOCK

**Raises the sealed envelope in her hand.**

But before I open it, I have a personal confession to make, first.

It's imperative, or else I wouldn't bring it up.

It's a confession of *criminal disobedience*.

An authentic, authoritative confession, serious enough to be witnessed by a uniform. That's why she's here....

I'm a felon.

A nonviolent one, but a felon nevertheless.

One whose crime has affected too many lives.

Too many lives of the people I should know better.

I'm a criminal, coming out of the closet voluntarily.

And I'll certainly face cold, hard time for it.

But before you all rush up and save me, let me assure you ...

prison time is *not* in the immediate offing.

Thankfully, this is one of the enlightened states,

where nonviolent female felons aren't incarcerated during pregnancy.

Or for eighteen months after delivery.

With, by the way, no loss of conjugal rights.

So ....

**Lights dim to partial darkness, during which time there is a persistent striking of piano note C above middle C from offstage.**

## WOODSTOCK

Nobody knows the terror inside me now.  
Nobody's walking with me.  
Nobody knows the raw Nan who's taking these breaths in my lungs.  
Nobody....  
I have been a hostage to my mother's lies.  
A lifetime gift from Mom to me, by way of her hatred for my father. She sketched  
out a blueprint, and I have grown into a life for which there's no model.  
I never intended for my life to become a movie script.  
But that's what it's done.  
I never intended my life to be a picture frame that couldn't fit me.  
And it's time to end the mystery.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul.  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

My father was raised in farmlands, with a shotgun in his hands,  
before he made his fortune, such as it was.  
He'd tell me how he'd ride a bull.  
It would stretch its head, way back, and bellow.  
And he would bellow, his head bent back the exact same way.

The moon was full, the first time I made love with my husband.  
I respect the moon, even though I know it's touched with insane jealousy.  
It's full tonight. Actually, tomorrow night. But it counts as full for me tonight.  
And the moon speaks to me: Be my companion tonight. Remind me:  
The thing I want most from my life is to leave something more than myself.  
To leave something more than my mother's middle finger at marriage.

Mom, I haven't loved the way I was born to love, because of you.  
There! Paid. In full.  
I've given myself to two men.  
Faithfully. The two most loving men in all the world.  
Now I want to give my whole heart and soul to them. And bury you.  
Heaven help me, I've done enough damage to innocent people I love....

**Darkness. Then full lights return.**

**WOODSTOCK**

I'm sorry. For what I've done to you.  
But "sorry" is not the Mystery-Perfect Word.

**WOODSTOCK opens the sealed envelope, and as she reads it, HIGAMOUS appears across the screen.**

**WOODSTOCK**

The word is "*Higamous*."

I'm a bigamist.  
Or, more correctly, a polyandrist.  
A wife with two husbands, two families, and one soul.

**Everyone is startled. BENN starts choking.**

**WOODSTOCK**

With homes in Phoenix and here, in New York City.

**A DIRECTOR**

[*standing*] Question.... How did you do it? How could a woman pull it off?

**A DIRECTOR**

[*standing*] What are you going to do now?

**A DIRECTOR**

[*standing*] What's "Higamous"?

**PLATO**

[*sitting*] "Hogamous, Higamous, man polygamous.  
Higamous, Hogamous, woman monogamous."  
Ogden Nash. 1942.

**BENN stumbles to his feet, still trying to clear his throat.**

**BENN**

What are you doing, Nan?  
Is this the truth? Keeping me in the dark, like this?

**WOODSTOCK**

I plead guilty, on both counts.

**FLYNT stands, glancing over at BENN,  
and pointing at WOODSTOCK.**

**FLYNT**

Whose is that? His? Or mine? Or some other man's?

**WOODSTOCK**

It's yours, Rusty.

Just like Little Rusty is.

The daughter Wade and I have at home with us is yours.

**FLYNT**

**My what?**

**WOODSTOCK**

When I left you, Rusty, in 2011, I was carrying *your* daughter.

In me. Though you never knew it.

She was born January 12, 2012.

And Wade married me anyway, knowing it wasn't his child.

I told him....

The same way I told you. About Bennie.

**FLYNT slams his fist on the table.**

**BENN moves forward, and the police  
officer takes a position between him and  
WOODSTOCK.**

**BENN**

I don't believe this.

**FLYNT**

[*looking at BENN*] I don't either....

That girl, you say. What? Little Rusty? What's her real name?

**WOODSTOCK**

Lillian.... She's got red hair, like you.

**FLYNT drops his hands to his side, and  
noticeably begins to calm down. The  
stage crew starts clearing tables and  
converting center stage into the Blue  
Ribbon Downing Street Bar. PLATO  
stands.**



**FLYNT**

And Bennie? Brittany. *Our* daughter? Who's her father?

**WOODSTOCK**

Guess.

**BENN**

I don't understand. I fucking don't understand.  
Where was *she* born?

**WOODSTOCK**

In Phoenix.

**BENN**

How?

**WOODSTOCK**

[*to* BENN] When you thought I was in Paris.  
When I left for Europe in 2013, I was carrying *your* daughter.  
She was born in Phoenix, May 14, 2014. *Your* child.  
But Rusty married me anyway, knowing it wasn't his.  
Like you did.

**BENN**

[*sputtering*] **Slut! Slut!**

**FLYNT**

[*to* BENN] What's your name?

**BENN**

[*to* FLYNT] Benn.... Wade Benn.

**FLYNT**

Benn? With two N's?  
And you have a sister, Mary?

**BENN**

And you're a poet?

**FLYNT**

How. In. This. Fucking world?

**WOODSTOCK**

[*looking at* FLYNT] And you love Bennie, don't you?  
[*looking at* BENN] And you love Little Rusty, don't you?

**FLYNT**

More than I'm loving you right now.

**BENN**

How is that even possible?

**WOODSTOCK**

When I went to Royal Holloway in London, and then Paris, and was gone a year, I married Rusty in Phoenix, and had Bennie.

**BENN**

You're telling me he's raising my daughter?

**WOODSTOCK**

And we're raising his.

**BENN**

You fucking liar. I trusted you.

**WOODSTOCK**

[to BENN] I have three children, and one on the way.

Two are yours. Two are his.

Two live with you. Two will live with him.

**FLYNT**

[beat] Do you love him?

**WOODSTOCK**

I love my children, with *all* my heart. But as I have confessed tonight, I don't think I truly know how to do married love, because of Mom. But I'm changing.

**A DIRECTOR**

[to PLATO] This is going to change our country, Jack? "Higamous"?

**A DIRECTOR**

I think the word should be "verbose."

**FLYNT first, and then BENN and the three Directors exit. WOODSTOCK steps out from behind the lectern, stumbles, and PLATO catches her in his arms, as WOODSTOCK begins to break down. He helps her into a seat. Lights fade, with a spot on the two of them.**

**PLATO**

It looks like *I'm* the fool here. I didn't see this coming.  
Maybe I was getting a bit weary of the whole thing.  
But I have to admit: The main arguments against polygamy ...  
they fall flat on their face, don't they? when it's a *woman* doing the thing.

**Mrs. Robinson (instrumental version) →**  
**[Click here](#) The spot on PLATO and**  
**WOODSTOCK fades.**

SCENE 17 – At the Blue Ribbon

**Center stage:** Immediately following the break-up of the Scene 16 banquet, in the Blue Ribbon Downing Street Bar – a bar and restaurant roughly across the street from Alger House. In one corner a fire is burning. Sound of a crackling fire.  
→ [Click here](#)

**FLYNT enters, and goes up to the bar.**

**FLYNT**

[*to the BARTENDER*] Coors, please...  
And keep them coming.

**The BARTENDER serves FLYNT the beer and a glass. FLYNT pours and takes a drink. BENN enters, looks around, and chooses to sit at the bar, next to FLYNT. Silence. The BARTENDER comes over.**

**BENN**

Molson's Canadian, Buddy, if you would.... Dead bottle.

**The BARTENDER serves BENN. He takes a drink.**

**FLYNT**

[*turning to BENN*] I can't believe you have to sit here. Next to me....  
What am I supposed to do? Punch your face in, or what?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] I can't believe I have a wife who loves you.  
And a sister who loves you, too.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Can't blame ya for that....  
For a few moments there I thought you were choking to death.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] Whether to perform Heimlich on my ass, eh?  
Or let nature take its course.

**FLYNT**

Whether to save my wife's *second* husband, for *her* lyin' ass.

**BENN**

I was the first. *You* were the second.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] No. I was the first. I found her first, and I knocked her up first.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] She planned it out pretty well, didn't she?

**FLYNT**

That's a matter of opinion.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] I should be hating you, screwing my wife like you did.  
Out there in Arizona.

**FLYNT**

Back at ya, New York.

**BENN**

Canada.... But I can't. Not yet. Feel hating you.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Tell me about her.

**BENN**

A-boat Nan?!

**FLYNT**

No. Lillian....  
Little Rusty.

**BENN**

Here! I'll show you.

**BENN pulls out his cellphone, and shows pictures. FLYNT and BENN finish their beers.**

**BENN**

Lutle Rusty may not be mine, but I've always loved her like she was....  
[*pointing*] That's Brandy. He's four.

**The BARTENDER signals, asking if they want another round. They both signal they do. He serves them.**

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Busy lady.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] You have any? [*indicating*]

**FLYNT pulls out his handheld, and shows BENN pictures of Bennie.**

**FLYNT**

Bennie.... Brittany.

**BENN**

[*long drinking pause*] I could kill her, I loved her so much.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Me, too.

**BENN**

Should we?

**FLYNT**

What?

**BENN**

Kill her.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] You're kidding, of course.... Aren't you?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] Or have a duel.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] With what?... Pistols?

**BENN**

Hockey sticks.

[*drinking pause*] Yesterday she was everything to me.  
Now everything's changed.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Just a couple of hours ago, for me. I didn't expect a thing.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] What are we going to do?

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Get plastered.

**The BARTENDER signals again, asking if they want another round. They both signal they do. He serves them.**

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] So...? What *can* we do?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] Send her to jail?

**FLYNT**

And tell the kids, what?

It took her eight years, and God knows how many hundreds of thousands of dollars to get us into this mess.

And we're supposed to figure it out in half an hour?...Pissed?

**Drinks.**

**BENN**

[*long drinking pause*] Do you still want her?

**FLYNT**

Not if she's sleeping with you, I don't....

**Drinks.**

Part of me doesn't.

**BENN**

I feel the same way. Part of me, too, does.

Like Adam must have, with Eve, I guess.

**FLYNT**

Who's the snake?

**BENN**

*[drinking pause]* Nan, of course. We're just a couple of country apples.

**FLYNT**

*[drinking pause]* Did she ever tell you she loved you?

**BENN**

*[drinking pause; shaking his head]* No. Not really. Not in the word.

**FLYNT**

Not me, either....

*[drinking pause]* I used to wonder about that.

**BENN**

*[drinking pause]* She's sick.

**The BARTENDER signals again, asking if they want another round. They both signal they do. He serves them.**

**FLYNT**

*[drinking pause]* Her dead mother was sick.

**BENN**

*[long drinking pause]* I don't feel free anymore.

**FLYNT**

Considering ...

*[long drinking pause]* I was damned lucky to have had the time I did with her. I never wanted anybody else.

**BENN**

*[fingering his simple gold wedding band]* If you could do it again?

**FLYNT**

*[looking at his wedding band]* Would you?

**BENN**

*[drinking pause]* But that's different. Now that we know. How can it ever be the same again?

**FLYNT**

I wanted a wife I could trust.  
I wanted a wife I could understand.  
I wanted a wife to raise my family with....  
And I wanted to be heard.

**BENN**

Is your poetry any good?

**FLYNT**

Diff'rent.... [*drinking pause*] But not as diff'rent as it's going to be....  
What was she tryin' to get at?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] I guess, two husbands ... for protection.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Two husbands for her fucking father's infidelities.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] That makes no sense....  
Or, on the other hand, maybe it does. She strikes first, like a snake.

**FLYNT**

[*long drinking pause*] Were you faithful to her ... all the time?  
While she was away?

**BENN**

Why? Weren't you?

**FLYNT**

I never cheated on her. Never even thought of it.

**BENN**

Same.... [*long drinking pause*] Pretty stupid, eh?

**The BARTENDER signals again, asking if they want another round. They both signal they do. He serves them.**

**FLYNT**

Part of why she chose us, I guess. Life's like a balloon like that.

**BENN**

Eh?



**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] You fill it your way, and fly it....  
But when it bursts, whose fault is it?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] You *are* a poet, aren't you?

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Did she make you happy?

**BENN**

The first happiest moments of my life were with her.

**FLYNT**

*First* happiest?

**BENN**

The next happiest moments in my life were playing hockey,  
on the ice, with my mates....

[*drinking pause*] I grew up in Canada, you know.

**FLYNT**

How could I?... Know that?

**BENN**

Right. How could a writer know anything a-boat that? eh?...  
The clean crisp air on my face. Nothin' like it.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] What do you mean?

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] There was a meadow, with a pond in it, that used to freeze in  
winter. We kids would bring our blades, and sticks, and skate for hours. With  
make-shift goals.

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] That's what she must have meant,  
when she used to talk about how she loved cold, crisp air in her face.

**BENN**

Sometimes pucks would get lost.  
So everybody was sposed to bring an extra one.  
Just in case.

**FLYNT**

Bring your own puck, right?

**BENN**

You could say that.

**FLYNT**

B Y O P....

But, you're tellin' *my* story.

Ridin' out, into the blue, past sagebrush. Fires under endless stars....

That was *my* second happiest.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] I've lost my puck.

**FLYNT**

[*long drinking pause*] Maybe not, Wade.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] How do you mean?

**The BARTENDER signals again, asking if they want another round. They both signal they do. He serves them.**

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Maybe we could flip a coin for her. That's at least fifty/fifty.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] Maybe I could trade my sister for her.

**FLYNT**

[*laughs*] I just had a wild ass thought.

**BENN**

What?

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Maybe we could share her

**BENN**

Are you crazy?... No. You're drunk

**FLYNT**

Is there any woman you ever wanted more?

**BENN**

Than Nan?... [*drinking pause*] No. Not close.

**FLYNT**

It's been done before.

**BENN**

*What are you suggestin'?*

**FLYNT**

[*drinking pause*] Maybe I'm pissed.

**BENN**

[*drinking pause*] Maybe we both are.  
I don't usually drink like this.

**FLYNT**

Special occasion. A million dollars worth of a special occasion....  
[*drinking pause*] Who does she think she is, anyway? She's just a woman.

**BENN**

So?

**FLYNT**

So.... Where's her strength come from?

**BENN**

I don't know. Her mind? Her mother? Her money?

**FLYNT**

For a million dollars, would you let your wife sleep with her other husband?

**BENN**

It's not the money. And, no, I wouldn't.  
But ... shit Buddy, you're no skirt chaser.  
You're the father of one of the three people I love most in the world. Four people.  
You're ... dammit ... you're okay.

**FLYNT**

God! I fuckin' hate to admit it ... she's brilliant.

**BENN**

In her way.

**FLYNT**

She didn't drag us into any cave by the hair, did she?

**BENN**

Of course not. Women don't have to do that.  
They have their own special spells.

**FLYNT**

That's my point:  
They can't do it without us.

**BENN**

What does that mean?... In this context?

**FLYNT**

Nan isn't going to have a life worth her, without her families.  
Forget the million dollars. She's going to be another like her mother.

**BENN**

[*long drinking pause*] She needs us, is what I think you're sayin'.... Both of us.

**FLYNT**

She loses.  
We step in.  
We protect her. *And* our children.  
She wins.

**BENN**

We lose.

**FLYNT**

What? That we didn't already have?

**BENN**

She was the greatest treasure in the world.

**FLYNT**

[*finishes his Coors*] She wins. We win.  
Nan was the hunter. We were the ones chosen by the lion.

**BENN**

[*finishes his Molson's*] You all right?

**The BARTENDER signals again, asking if they want another round. FLYNT, first, and then BENN wave him off, signaling no.**

**FLYNT**

Goddamn pride. Is what we lose. To Goddamn love.

**BENN**

[*beat*] She's won, hasn't she?

**FLYNT**

I'd rather have Nan ...  
even with you ...  
than never have Nan again.

**BENN**

Fuck!

**FLYNT**

Double fuck, if you want the absolute truth.

**BENN**

[*beat*] Times, they are a-changin', eh?

**FLYNT**

We've survived this long, sharin' the loaf, haven't we?

**BENN**

It's .... It's the knowin'  
So ... so ... so emasculatin'.

**FLYNT**

That's a word.

**BENN**

Embarrassin', man.

**FLYNT**

Revolutionary.... Two strong men, sitting face to face ... //

**BENN**

Shitfaced.

**FLYNT**

Making a deal to share our wife like a hockey puck.

**BENN**

How, man, can we? Now that we know?

**FLYNT**

Send this broken puzzle out to the wisest person on Earth.  
And what comes back?

**BENN**

What?

**FLYNT**

What's to fix?  
It's perfect. In its own way  
As is.  
And jus' look at her....  
Would you jus' look at her?

**WOODSTOCK enters the Blue Ribbon.  
BENN and FLYNT stumble stand. She  
walks toward them; and they silently  
stare at each other and her.**

**WOODSTOCK**

[*long, staring pause*] In a couple hundred years that banquet hall's under water.  
Sharks swimming all around it.  
[*beat*] And we're under ground.

[*pause*] In the end I came to a single realization....  
I'm worth nothing without you.  
Either there's love and trust in the world.  
Or there isn't.  
And I want to choose a world with love and trust in it. And let there be it. Let life.  
I was a stranger; and you took me in.  
I was in pain, and you soothed my soul. Only you.  
I was naked; and you clothed me in your arms and your love.  
And gave me children.

**Slowly WOODSTOCK steps between  
them, and kisses each one, crying.**

**FLYNT, first, and then BENN, join in a  
threesome hug – BENN drying  
Woodstock's face.**

**On the screen –**

**#HIGAMOUS**

**UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT  
holds that the US Constitution protects  
the right of consenting adults each to  
have two legally married partners  
simultaneously, be they wives or  
husbands or both.**

**END**