

BYOP

By Jerold London

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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