

SCENE FROM
Life On My Knees
 (2W)

DR. HELEN HAND (A newly minted English PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. She has \$84,000 in student debt and is desperate for a job. An agnostic who is gluten intolerant.)

PEARL FANKHOUSER (An innocently sexy college student with an un-popped hymen and a Popsicle fetish. Her parents might've been Pat Boone and Snow White. She looks a little like a Barbie doll.)

LOCATION: Helen's office at Grace Bible College Kansas

(PEARL enters HELEN'S office.)

PEARL

Knock knock!

HELEN

Oh, Pearl. Hi.

PEARL

Got a minute?

HELEN

Now is not a--.

PEARL

It's a girl thing.

HELEN

...Oh. Sure. Come in.

PEARL
(Indicating the door)

May I...?

HELEN

Of course. Have a seat.

(PEARL closes the door and sits – She's a little troubled.)

PEARL

It's kinda personal. Don't know if I can talk about it.

(PEARL wiggles in her seat - She needs to scratch her private area but is too much of a lady to do so.)

HELEN

Everything okay?

PEARL

Sure. Why wouldn't it be?

HELEN

Pearl... ah... Can I tell you a story - A true story.

PEARL

About something that happened to you?

HELEN

...Ah, no, this story happened to a... (*Lying*) a friend. She was working on her PhD in English when the head of her dissertation committee began calling her in to his office for private meetings.

PEARL

Like Mr. Dewey does with me.

HELEN

Yeah, now that you mention it, just like Mr. Dewey does with you. And, well, things, over time, kind of progressed to little get-togethers at this coffee house near campus and then a glass of wine after class, and before she knew it she was in a relationship. She was twenty-eight, he fifty-seven.

PEARL

What do you mean by "relationship?"

HELEN

They were... intimate.

PEARL

Didn't know you were going to tell me a story about a slut.

HELEN

I wouldn't call her a slut. I mean it takes a concerted effort to reach that level of distinction. She, on the other hand, was very much in love.

PEARL

Where they married?

HELEN

No.

PEARL

Then she was a slut.

HELEN

Ah, so, this PhD--.

PEARL

The slut.

HELEN

She thought that maybe someday it would lead to marriage.

PEARL

What's the word for the male version of a slut?

HELEN

I believe that would be called the Chair of the Department of English at Berkeley.

PEARL

Did the slut find the Lord?

HELEN

Not right away. Because at first it was great. Every evening they'd read Keats and e.e. cummings to each other.

PEARL

Not the Bible?

HELEN

Not so much. They even talked about someday co-writing a novel. (*Bitter*) Which in hindsight is a total laugh. What she didn't realize was that he, being older and the head of her dissertation committee, would always be a father figure and she, having lost her father at a young age--.

PEARL

Combine accident?

HELEN

No, he ran off with his dental hygienist.

PEARL

Wow, that's original.

HELEN

Maybe here in Kansas, but it's quite common in California. (*She clears her throat*) What I'm trying to say is that, my friend--.

PEARL

The slut.

HELEN

Was unconsciously looking for a surrogate father. But after going to therapy three times a week for over a year, she began to realize that spending your life deconstructing great works of literature makes one into an oversensitive, highly strung, psychologically isolated jerk who - when he discovers that you're having an affair with your therapist--.

PEARL

She slept with her therapist too? Wow, she's like a super slut!

HELEN

Not only does he break up with you but also turns the entire English Department against you so that no one will write you a letter of recommendation, screwing you out of any chance of getting a teaching job, and forcing you to work at a Denny's.

PEARL

My parents warned me to avoid the humanities.

HELEN

And they are wise to do so.

PEARL
So what did the super slut do?

HELEN
She began seeing herself as a character in an epic novel about a younger woman who falls for an older man, which has got to be one of the most overused themes in the history of English lit. Have you read “Jane Eyre” by Charlotte Brontë?

PEARL
No.

HELEN
“Lolita” by Vladimir Nabokov?

PEARL
Can’t say that I have.

HELEN
“Shopgirl” by Steve Martin?

PEARL
Huh uh.

HELEN
What I’m trying to say, besides-that-you-should-read-more, is don’t be like my friend.

PEARL
The slut.

HELEN
Fall in love with someone your own age.

PEARL
Okay. Will do.

HELEN
...All right. That was easy. What did you want to talk to me about?

PEARL
Well. It has to do with the one thing we’re not allowed to talk about.

HELEN
Below the navel, above the knees?

PEARL
Yeah. I think I might be in trouble.

HELEN
Oh geez. I knew it. Ah. It’s not the end of the world. Fortunately I’ve heard there’s still a clinic three hundred miles away in Kansas City.

PEARL
Clinic?

HELEN

Don't worry. It's very safe and no one'll know. (*This is difficult*) I don't know how to tell you this, but... I know... ah... From personal experience. But sometimes it's the right thing to do. Especially when you're twenty-eight and he's fifty-seven.

PEARL

What are you saying?

HELEN

You need to see a... A doctor.

PEARL

Do I? Darn.

HELEN

It's best. Doing it yourself can be... ah... Unsafe and... ah... messy.

PEARL

Are we talking about the same thing?

HELEN

Yes.

PEARL

Cause I think I got what's called a yeast infection.

HELEN

(*Without a beat*)

That's exactly what I'm talking about.

PEARL

Oh good. Cause, I'm getting a rather fishy smell down there.

HELEN

Right. We're talking about the *exact* same thing.

PEARL

(*Worried*)

What have I done to cause this?

HELEN

Nothing. Lots of things can cause it. For example have you been on antibiotics?

PEARL

As a matter of fact, I have.

HELEN

Antibiotics can kill the antifungal bacteria that normally live in... your private areas, which can lead to a yeast infection.

PEARL

So, it's not cause the Lord is punishing me?

HELEN

No. It's a totally normal occurrence. I have 'em, like, twice a year.

PEARL

And I'll make a bet that slut in your story gets them like every week.

HELEN

(Defensive)

No, she's *never* had one. Not ever.

PEARL

I tried to pray but it didn't help.

HELEN

No, prayer is ineffective with yeast infections.

PEARL

Really? Where did you read that?

HELEN

Ah. It's in... *(Pulling it out of her ass)* Leviticus.

PEARL

Leviticus?

HELEN

I can't quote chapter and verse but I'm sure it's in there.

PEARL

Darn that Eve. Her transgressions probably caused us girls to suffer this too.

HELEN

You need to get some Monistat.

PEARL

Monistat?

HELEN

It's a cream you put on your... The itching and irritation will be gone in a day.

PEARL

Where do I get this Monistat?

HELEN

I found some at the drugstore over in Philipsburg in the feminine hygiene section.

PEARL

Philipsburg. Monistat. Feminine hygiene section. Got it.

HELEN

Didn't your mother teach you this?

PEARL
My mother would never allow me to talk about my monkey.

HELEN
...Monkey?

PEARL
That's what she calls it.

HELEN
Okay. Well, ah, you need to get some Monistat for your monkey.

PEARL
Thank you, Miss Hand.

HELEN
Doctor.

PEARL
I'll borrow my roommate's truck and head over to Philipsburg right away. And I'll pray for your friend, the humanities slut.

(PEARL opens the door and exits, HELEN sees her out.
In the hall she stops.)

PEARL
Oh! That's right. I forgot to tell you. We've been assigned to the same team!

HELEN
Team?

PEARL
Yes, next month when we all go out witnessing.

HELEN
Witnessing?

PEARL
Yes, every October, just before the Hell House, we cancel classes for a week and drive around the state witnessing.

HELEN
(She can't believe it)
You mean, like, knocking on strangers doors and interrupting their dinner--.

PEARL
And telling them about our deep personal relationship with the Lord.

HELEN
Well, I don't know, October's pretty busy--.

PEARL

It's required. Fifty reprimands and a five hundred dollar fine if we don't. You, me, Mr. Dewey and thirty other students have been assigned northwest Kansas.

HELEN

(Thinking "oh shit")

Oh joy.

PEARL

I knew that'd make you happy. Oh, now that we're friends, perhaps someday this week I could stop by and show you my script.

HELEN

Script?

PEARL

I'm writing a zombie movie.

HELEN

Of course you are.

PEARL

Bye.

HELEN

Remember, my door is always open.

PEARL

I know - no locks.

HELEN

No, I mean. If you ever want to talk about anything. Like Monistat. Or Monkeys. Or if you want to talk about love or... *(She makes sure no one is around and attempts to be off the cuff)* Sex.

PEARL

(Confused)

Okay. But I'd never have sex, Miss Hand.

HELEN

Never?

PEARL

Not till I'm married.

HELEN

Pearl, we need to be honest with each other.

PEARL

I don't want to burn in hell forever like your friend the humanities slut. *(In confidence)* Although I do have one question you might be able to answer.

HELEN

Sure.

PEARL

(Quietly, matter-of-factly)

Some of the girls in my dorm claim that anal sex isn't *real* sex.

(HELEN stands there totally stunned.)

PEARL

Someday, when you have the time, I'd love to get your thoughts on the subject.

(Upbeat, PEARL exits.)