

Life On My Knees

A comedy?

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

DR. HELEN HAND (30ish) A newly minted English PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. She has \$100,000 in student debt and is desperate for a job. An agnostic.

DICK CHENEY (22) A tall, clean-cut, handsome farm boy and college quarterback. He would be fantastic in bed if he weren't a virgin.

LLOYD DEWEY (40ish) A geeky professor & youth pastor who has self-published two failed novels. His wife died of boredom three years ago.

PEARL FANKHOUSER (19) An innocently sexy college student. Her parents might've been Pat Boone and Snow White. A cheerleader for the Lord.

SETTINGS & TIME

The Present. Grace Baptist College, a small private fundamentalist Christian school isolated in the middle-of-nowhere Kansas - a drug and irony free zone.

Two offices stand side-by-side separated by a thin wall. Professor Dewey's is a messy nest - he's tenured. Dr. Helen Hand's is unlived in - she's new.

There is a air vent between the offices.

In front of the offices runs a hallway. To the side are bulletin boards filled with announcements, daily Bible verses, and a cutout of a long-haired, Caucasian, blue-eyed Jesus holding a Grace Baptist College football pennant. A dialogue bubble emanating from his holy lips reads, "Go Lions."

PLEASE NOTE

Some actors and directors who have never been to the Great Plains think Kansans are just a bunch of gun toting, Bible loving farmers with strange hillbilly accents. But in fact Kansans speak in clear Standard American when talking about their guns, Bibles and farming.

ALSO

Please feel free to change the name of the character of "Dick Cheney" to match the name of any popular, right wing, fundamentalist religious and/or political leader who is currently in the news.

(Act One)

(Standing in an isolated pool of light we find DR. HELEN HAND, early 30s, smart, attractive and a bit neurotic. She needs a drink and a cigarette.)

(A deep Godly voice comes from the darkness.)

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Are you ready to take the pledge?

HELEN
(Unsure)

Sure.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Raise your right hand.

(Helen does.)

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Do you swear that you have never consumed alcoholic beverages, used illegal substances or tobacco products?

HELEN
(A smoker's cough)

I do.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

And that you renounce all perversions including premarital sex.

HELEN
(Lying)

I am a virgin.

(She can't but laugh a little after that one.)

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

And that you will never watch pornography, including "R" or "NC-17" movies. The exception being, Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."

HELEN

Okay.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

And that your teaching will guide our students toward a deeper and unquestioning love of Christ. Do you so swear?

HELEN

(Apprehensive)

Sure.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

And that you will do everything in your power to make American great again?

HELEN

Okay.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Congratulations, Dr. Helen Hand, you're now a professor at Grace Bible College. Proud to be the most conservative and religious college in America. Welcome to great state of Kansas.

(The lights shift to the first day of school. HELEN is in the hall outside her office.)

(DICK and PEARL cross the stage in opposite directions with their books. They are perfect wholesome Christian college kids. They look like Ken and Barbie.)

PEARL

(Flirting)

Welcome back, bless you.

DICK

Bless you more.

PEARL

See you in Creation Science class today?

Wouldn't miss it.

DICK

(DICK and PEARL exit.)

(The lights change and she speaks to us.)

HELEN

(Desperate, to the audience)

The first thing you need to know is that I was a newly minted Ph.D. - Worse, a Ph.D. in English - Who in their right mind does that anymore? After being rejected from two-dozen university jobs, I was teetering on default with one hundred thousand in student loans and reduced to waitressing at a Denny's. Then Grace Bible College called. Having spent my entire life in San Francisco I'd heard stories about these flyover states but it'd never occurred to me that people actually live there. *(Beat.)* I was desperate, drunk, and a little high. What the hell was I thinking?

(Feel free to replace the word "hell" in that last line with "fuck.")

(Light change. LLOYD DEWEY, 40s, a geeky Bible professor and youth pastor, enters.)

MR. DEWEY

(Suddenly)

Ms. Hand!

(HELEN jumps.)

HELEN

Oh Christ! You scared me.

MR. DEWEY

(Up beat, offering a hand)

Lloyd Dewey.

HELEN

Dr. Helen Hand.

MR. DEWEY

Shall we begin this glorious first day of school with prayer?

HELEN

You mean like right here. In the hall?

(MR. DEWEY raises his hands to heaven. HELEN tries to imitate him.)

MR. DEWEY

(Joyfully praying)

Oh Lord! Anoint our teaching and pour down thy blessing on our students. In Jesus name. Amen

(MR. DEWEY waits for HELEN to say "Amen.")

HELEN

(With a counterfeit smile)

Back at ya.

(MR. DEWEY thinks that's a bit odd but lets it go. He enters his office.)

(Back to the pool of light.)

HELEN

(to the audience)

On my first day I began to suspect that I was on the set of The Brady Bunch. But then I overheard something that made me think that Mr. Dewey, the writing professor in the next office, was just like me, faking it.

(HELEN exits just as PEARL enters the hall. PEARL is innocent, sexy and nineteen. She could be the daughter of Pat Boone and Snow White.)

(PEARL enters Mr. Dewey's office.)

PEARL

(Upbeat)

Knock knock!

MR. DEWEY

Pearl! How was your summer?

PEARL

Been writing a lot.

MR. DEWEY

What are you working on?

PEARL

A zombie movie.

MR. DEWEY

I like it. What's it about?

PEARL

It's about this guy and this girl and they're walking in this graveyard at night and they decide to hide in some bushes and have intercourse outside holy wedlock and so they're attacked by devil-worshiping-flesh-eating-Christ-hating zombies. Want to read it?

(She hands him a thick 200 page screenplay manuscript.)

MR. DEWEY

Love to. *(Reading the title page)* "Soul Snatchers, the Zombie Apocalypse: an original movie script by Pearl Fankhouser." Love the title.

PEARL

You read Lloyd, I'll read Pearl.

MR. DEWEY

But your name is Pearl and I'm Lloyd.

PEARL

I know. I'm trying to keep it close. I read good writers do that. Here goes. *(Reading)* "Fade in. Exterior. Graveyard. Night. Two lovers walk down an eerily dark lane. Darkness rains down on them."

MR. DEWEY

"Wow, it's dark."

PEARL

(Reading, dramatic)

"There is no moon."

MR. DEWEY

"Look there is a bush. Let's hide in it and have sex."

(HELEN enters her office with a cup of coffee from the professor's lounge down the hall.)

(Meanwhile back in MR. DEWEY'S office.)

PEARL

"Oh, Lloyd, you naughty boy."

MR. DEWEY

"Oh come on, Pearl, we've been going together for six months."

PEARL

"I'm saving myself for marriage."

MR. DEWEY

"But we're practically already married. I mean I love you."

(In her office - next to Mr. Dewey - HELEN faintly hears this and stops. During the following she moves towards the wall and puts her ear against it.)

PEARL

"Oh, Lloyd, put your hand here where no hand has ever been before."

LLOYD

"That feels so good."

PEARL

"Oh. Oh! Please, I want to keep myself pure!"

(HELEN gets down and tries to listen through the air vent between the offices.)

MR. DEWEY

"I love you, Pearl."

PEARL
 "I love you, Lloyd."

MR. DEWEY
 "More than anything."

PEARL
 "In that case, help me off with my abstinence jewelry."

DICK
 Sorry to bother you.

(HELEN jumps. In her door stands DICK, drop dead handsome, law-abiding, clean cut. His tie and varsity sweater says that he's a virgin. He's intelligent but naïve. He holds a short story neatly and a copy of the "Grace College Student/Faculty Handbook.")

HELEN
(Embarrassed)
 Hi.

DICK
(Innocent, upbeat)
 What ya doin'?

HELEN
 Ah... Nothing. I was just cleaning this air vent.

(In the other office MR. DEWEY and PEARL continue to read the script but their voices and lights fade.)

DICK
 Looks clean to me.

HELEN
 May I help you?

DICK
 You're Miss Hand? The new professor?

HELEN
 Doctor Hand.

DICK

You're too pretty to be a Doctor.

(HELEN tolerates the compliment.)

HELEN

And you are?

DICK

Dick Cheney.

HELEN

(Choking on her coffee)

Excuse me?

DICK

Dick Cheney. You can call me Dick. I'm quarterback on the Grace Bible football team.

(Please note: Feel free to change the name "Dick Cheney" to match the name of any popular, right wing, fundamentalist religious and/or political leader who is currently in the news.)

HELEN

Any relation to...?

DICK

Oh him. Might be. Never thought about it.

HELEN

What can I do for you Mr. Cheney?

DICK

Over the summer I tried my hand at a short story and I was wondering if you'd take a look.

HELEN

Isn't Mr. Dewey, next door, the writer on staff? I just teach English.

DICK

Yeah but his door is closed an awful lot and I thought maybe he might be in there being creative or something so I didn't want to bother him.

HELEN

And what's your story about?

DICK

It's about the trials and tribulations of a black woman living in a ghetto in Chicago.

HELEN

...A black woman?

DICK

Yeah.

HELEN

And what made you want to write about a black woman?

DICK

Thought it'd be neat.

HELEN

Well, you see, there's a bit of a problem... You're white.

DICK

Yeah, I noticed.

HELEN

And there's this unwritten rule that states you should write about what you know. And being that you live in a place that's totally devoid of cultural diversity, I mean, Kansas is like the land of the pod people. *(Beat)* That was a joke.

DICK

(Innocent, Confused)

I don't get it.

HELEN

What I'm trying to say is that generally farm boys from Kansas don't know much about the struggles of black women in Chicago's inner city.

DICK

That's why I did research.

HELEN

Did you now.

DICK

Yeah, I got in my pickup and was going to drive all the way to Chicago but I stopped in Topeka and guess what I found?

HELEN

Wouldn't know.

DICK

Black people.

HELEN

Did you now.

DICK

And I struck up a conversation with one of'em.

HELEN

That's certainly commendable, Mr. Cheney, but I'm not sure that constitutes research.

DICK

And one of them asked me out on a date. Only one problem - I need permission.

HELEN

Permission?

DICK

According to the "Grace Student/Professor Handbook" interracial dating is absolutely forbidden unless you have permission.

HELEN

What? Let me see that.

DICK

Regulation two-nine-seven. I dog-eared it.

(DICK hands over the Handbook. It's an old tome that hasn't been rewritten in fifty years. HELEN finds the entry repugnant.)

HELEN

You've got to be kidding.

DICK

If you don't have permission it's fifteen reprimands and a two hundred dollar fine.

HELEN

I give you permission.

DICK

No. It's got to be from President Filbert himself. And he never gives permission.

HELEN

(Off the book)

Wait. This book only refers to on campus. I mean, what happens in Topeka stays in Topeka.

DICK

No. Rules are rules. Will you still read it?

(He offers her the short story.)

HELEN

Sure.

DICK

Shall we pray?

HELEN

Again?

DICK

My older brother Berry came down with a terrible case of pinkeye and I'm positive that if we pray God'll launch that nasty infection right into deep space.

(DICK bows his head.)

DICK

Dear Lord, please let my brother's pinkeye go into remission, again.

HELEN

Amen--.

DICK

And may the Grace Bible College football team have a better season. Two and six is not up to the Lord's standards.

(MORE)

And that one hundred and five to three trouncing at the hands of Illinois State, well, it was just embarrassing. In Jesus name, Amen.

HELEN

Oh, Amen.

DICK

I'll let you get back to what you were doing.

HELEN

Just cleaning the vent.

(DICK exits her office just as PEARL leaves the other office.)

MR. DEWEY

Bless you.

HELEN

(Not knowing how to answer)

...And with you.

(In the other office, PEARL pulls at her skirt - she has a feminine itch problem but she's too much of a lady to ever scratch.)

PEARL

Looking forward to it. Your notes were stimulating.

(PEARL and DICK exit to the hall, they are smitten with each other.)

PEARL

(Flirting)

Hi, Dick.

DICK

(Farm-boy shy)

Hi, Pearl.

PEARL

Did you hear. There was this repo tow truck driving around campus this morning. Everyone's talking about it.

DICK

Really? A repo truck.

PEARL

Yeah. They say he's looking for a Saab. Know anyone who drives a Saab?

(HELEN hears this and sits straight up. Yes, she drives a Saab.)

HELEN

(To herself in her office)

Shit.

DICK

A Saab? No one around here drives a foreign car.

PEARL

Well, bye.

DICK

Bye.

(PEARL exits in one direction, DICK in the other.)

(HELEN grabs her car keys and is heading out when MR. DEWEY steps from his office.)

MR. DEWEY

Helen?

HELEN

(Nervous, wanting to leave)

Yes, Mr. Dewey?

MR. DEWEY

Please. Lloyd.

HELEN

If it's all right I'd rather keep this formal, Mr. Dewey.

(She starts to leave.)

MR. DEWEY

Fairhope is rather a lonely place.

HELEN

Really? Hadn't noticed.

MR. DEWEY

Population: eight hundred and fifty. Not counting the students.

HELEN

Thank you for the census data. If that's all?

MR. DEWEY

Is there a Mr. Hand?

HELEN

Excuse me?

MR. DEWEY

Married?

HELEN

Ah. No. Why?

MR. DEWEY

Betrothed?

HELEN

I really have to--.

MR. DEWEY

If you're not doing anything - tonight's campus movie night.

HELEN

Mr. Dewey--.

MR. DEWEY

They are showing "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." It's the newly released director's cut.

HELEN

Mr. Dewey--.

MR. DEWEY

You don't have to give me an answer right now. How about if you pray about it over lunch and give me an answer this afternoon.

HELEN

Mr. Dewey, I'm fully capable of thinking this through on my own, and will not be needing the Lord's assistance. Thank you but no thank you.

(She starts off.)

MR. DEWEY

Obviously you're looking for something more sophisticated. Next week we're playing "Caddyshack." It's been digitally re-mastered.

HELEN

Mr. Dewey.

MR. DEWEY

Yes?

HELEN

Your fly's open.

(HELEN runs off to move her car. MR. DEWEY looks down; indeed his fly is wide open.)

MR. DEWEY

Well, heck.

(Embarrassed, DEWEY exits.)

(HELEN HAND steps into an isolated pool of light - this is her "e-mailing and talking to the audience" light and will be used between sequences throughout the play.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, when I took this job I didn't know that I was entering a space/time continuum to the 1950s. I realize that this is a private college in the middle-of-nowhere Kansas so you can do whatever the hell you want, but if this racist regulation is not immediately rescinded I must tender my resignation. Signed Dr. Helen Hand. *(Beat)* That's the e-mail I should've sent. But then I thought... Maybe I could change things. You know, from the inside. One student at a time. And I'd start with Dick Cheney.

(The lights shift back to reality.)

(DICK enters and thumbtacks a colorful flyer to the bulletin board outside HELEN'S office.)

HELEN

Hi, Dick.

DICK

Miss Hand.

HELEN

What you got there?

(DICK hands her a flyer.)

DICK

Oh. It's an invitation to our annual Republican Debate Club Pancake Dinner. It's bunches of fun. Lots of fellowship.

HELEN

(Faking a smile)

I'm sure a wonderful time is had by all.

DICK

The Republican Debate Club also sponsors our annual Disco for Downs Syndrome.

HELEN

Could I talk to you for a moment?

DICK

Sure.

(They enter her office.)

DICK

Did you see "Caddyshack?"

HELEN

No, I missed it.

DICK

Wish I could write dialogue that good.

HELEN

Dick, speaking of dialogue. I read your short story. And I'm sorry but I must tell you that it... Ah...

(DICK bows his head.)

HELEN

What are you doing?

DICK

I'm praying that this meeting will go well.

HELEN

Well, Dick, it's not going to go well because, although you have a wonderful writing style, it's uncluttered and precise, you have absolutely no idea what you're writing about.

DICK

(Upbeat)

Note taken. W. W. J. D.!

HELEN

W. W. J. What?

DICK

What Would Jesus Do in this situation?

HELEN

Ah, admit he doesn't know what he's doing and write about something else?

DICK

No. He'd refocus and try harder.

HELEN

But your story has no basis in reality. It's like "Twelve Years A Slave" meets "It's A Wonderful Life"

DICK

(Upbeat)

Note taken.

HELEN

That doesn't seem to bother you. I mean I just told you your writing sucks.

DICK

You did, but my faith tells me that next time I'll do better.

HELEN

Dick, if faith is so powerful then why do we need computers, and medicine, and science--?

DICK

But God's not possible without faith.

HELEN

We all need to hold on to some sort of hope. But shouldn't the important stuff be left to our ability to think and doubt and reason.

DICK

(Puzzled)

I'm confused here. Are we talking about my short story?

HELEN

Not anymore.

DICK

(Deeply thinking)

...Huh.

HELEN

I've said too much?

DICK

No. It's just that I've never had a professor say anything like that before. Wow, you just blew my mind. ...Huh.

(He hands her a flyer.)

DICK

Will I see you at the Republican Debate Club Pancake Dinner?

HELEN

Don't know. What happens? Do the college Republicans debate the college Democrats?

DICK

There is no club for Democrats on campus.

HELEN

Then whom do you debate?

DICK

No one. I guess we should take the word "debate" off the flyer. We just eat pancakes.

(He exits into the hall and runs into PEARL who enters wearing a cheerleader outfit.)

PEARL
(Flirting)

Hi Dick. Go Lions.

DICK
(Nervous in her presence)

Hi Pearl.

PEARL
 You going to the debate tonight?

DICK
 Course, I'm sergeant-at-arms.

PEARL
 Sergeant-at-arms, what does that mean?

DICK
 I'm in charge of the syrup.

PEARL
 I love syrup. Lots of syrup.

(DICK is about to get a boner.)

DICK
 Gotta go.

(DICK exits.)

(PEARL thumbtacks a flyer on the bulletin board. HELEN comes out of her office.)

HELEN
 Ah, Pearl

PEARL
 Yes?

HELEN
 Dr. Hand.

PEARL
 I know. We met at the "Why Catholics are wrong" talk last week.

HELEN

Pearl, I've noticed that you seem to spend a lot of time in Mr. Dewey's office.

PEARL

Yes. Isn't he the best.

(PEARL hands HELEN a flyer.)

HELEN

I've already got one for the pancake dinner.

PEARL

No. This is an invitation to be part of this year's annual Hell House.

HELEN

By Hell House, you mean, like, a haunted house?

PEARL

No, we do a Hell House here at Grace.

HELEN

The difference?

PEARL

A haunted house tries to scare the hell out of you. We try to scare people out of going to hell.

HELEN

And how do you do that?

PEARL

We stage little plays at President Filbert's house.

HELEN

The big mansion up on the hill?

PEARL

Yeah. *(Upbeat)* For example you walk into one room and we act out a scene about a little girl disrespecting her parents. And then you walk into the next room and you see the little girl burning in hell. Then in the next room you see a gay man flaunting his gayness. And in the next you see the gay man burning in hell. And in the next room you see--.

HELEN

That's okay, I sorta get the gist.

(MR. DEWEY enters, always in a nerdy little hurry, he's returning from class.)

MR. DEWEY

So sorry I'm late. *(Disappointed to see Helen)* Hello, Miss Hand. *(Correcting himself)* I mean Doctor Hand.

HELEN
(Curt)

Mr. Dewey.

MR. DEWEY

You know we've all been assigned parking spaces; you don't have to park behind the incinerator. Pearl, you ready?

PEARL
(Upbeat)

I'm always ready.

(MR. DEWEY enters his office. PEARL follows but HELEN stops her.)

HELEN

Pearl?

PEARL

Yeah?

(HELEN calls her over for a private moment.)

HELEN

Ah... If you ever need to talk to someone...

PEARL

About?

HELEN

You know, girl stuff. I just want you to know I'm here.

PEARL

Well thanks. That's awfully nice of you. Bless you.

(PEARL starts into MR. DEWEY'S office.)

HELEN

Pearl. How old are you?

PEARL

Just turned nineteen. Why?

HELEN

Nineteen can be hard. I mean your body's all grown up but you're still a little girl inside... What I'm trying to say is... *(Quietly)* I know what it's like to have a daddy fixation.

PEARL

(Innocent)

I loved my daddy too. He's with the Lord now - Combine accident.

HELEN

What I'm trying to say-- Do you know what an Electra complex is?

PEARL

Can't say that I do.

HELEN

It's manifested in young women in the third stage of psychosexual development. The phallic stage... Have you ever read Carl Jung?

LLOYD

(Calling from his office)

Pearl? I'm ready!

PEARL

Coming! *(To Helen, optimistic)* Sorry, gotta go. Thanks for the offer, Miss Hand, but I don't need anyone, cause I got the Lord.

(PEARL exits into LLOYD'S office and closes the door. The lights shift to the e-mail light.)

DR. HAND

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, Two days ago I managed to find my way to Hays, Kansas to attend an A.A. meeting, but I couldn't, because guess who I saw there? Mr. Lloyd Dewey! So I started doing a little research for my case against him and guess what I found.

(MORE)

He's your nephew and the grand son of the school's founder. I'll make a bet that lets him get away with anything! I cannot continue, I must immediately tender my resignation! Signed. Dr. Helen Hand. P.S. Do you know where I might buy some kombucha? I've asked everywhere, no one seems to know what the hell I'm talking about. *(Beat, she takes a breath)* Delete. A few weeks later...

(The lights shift. HELEN exits. Lights up on MR. DEWEY'S office. PEARL dressed in a cheerleader outfit with pom-pom reads from her second draft.)

PEARL

Okay, so, in this scene my heroes are now in outer space and trying to load the intergalactic space cannon in order to defeat the godless Zombie warlord. *(Reading)* "Exterior. Dark Mountain. Night. It's dark. Pearl and Lloyd try to load the cannon."

(HELEN enters her office with her coffee. She stops the minute she hears MR. DEWEY and PEARL talking.)

PEARL

(Reading from her screenplay)

"Wow, it's big."

MR. DEWEY

(Reading)

"Yes, very big."

(HELEN sits in her office fuming. She can here everything.)

PEARL

"How will it fit?"

MR. DEWEY

"We will make it fit."

PEARL

"But how?"

MR. DEWEY

"We will have to get some sort of lubrication."

PEARL

"But what if it goes off prematurely?"

MR. DEWEY

"If it does we will just have to clean up the mess and start over."

(It is all just too much for HELEN.)

HELEN

Could I Have A Little Quiet Please!

(Pissed, HELEN accidentally knocks over her coffee.)

HELEN

Shit.

(She exits down the hall to get some paper towels.)

(Meanwhile in the other office.)

PEARL

(Earnest)

Have you noticed Miss Hand seems to have anger issues? Do you suppose she's unhappy cause she doesn't have a husband?

MR. DEWEY

I suspect that's the case.

PEARL

Shall we pray for her?

(They throw their hands to heaven.)

PEARL

Dear Lord, let Miss Hand make the necessary changes in her life so that she can attract a husband and end her dark loneliness.

(At the end of the prayer PEARL shakes her cheerleader pom-pom.)

(In a bit of panic, DICK runs in and knocks on MR. DEWEY'S door.)

DICK

Mr. Dewey?

MR. DEWEY

Yes?

DICK

Could I speak to you? Kinda important.

MR. DEWEY

Pearl and I are--.

DICK

I mean really really important. It's about that thing we talked about.

MR. DEWEY

Oh. The thing. Right. Pearl, do you mind?

PEARL

Not at all. *(Flirting)* Hi, DICK.

DICK

(Shy)

Hi, Pearl.

PEARL

Great victory Saturday. Three and 'O' on the season. Impressive.

(PEARL takes her screenplay and edges by DICK and exits.)

DICK

It happened again!

MR. DEWEY

Dick, we talked about this--

DICK

(Earnestly troubled)

I've done everything you suggested. I keep my dorm room door open all the time, I play Christian music constantly, and I go to the gym day and night, but I'm still overwhelmed by this desire to masturbate.

MR. DEWEY

You need to remember First Corinthians, chapter six, verse eighteen.

DICK

"Flee from sexual immorality." I try to flee, I've been actively fleeing.

MR. DEWEY

And what happens to Onan in Genesis when he spills his seed?

DICK

God smite him.

MR. DEWEY

Do you want to get smited?

DICK

No, but every time I see Pearl I just want to throw her on the ground and do her till the cows come home. That not being an option I catch myself making eyeball babies with her. And then I go back to my dorm room, look her up on Faithbook and.. (*Ashamed*) lust.

MR. DEWEY

Dick, optical intercourse will also impede the soul's ascent.

DICK

Note taken.

MR. DEWEY

We must shun the devil.

DICK

I heard that over at Faith Baptist College in Iowa this became such a problem they made all the male students put their computers in public places and that helped.

MR. DEWEY

No, it didn't, several students were arrested for masturbating in the commons.

DICK

(*Earnest*)

A friend of mine at Kingsway Christian Academy said the problem was so wide spread there they made all the male students sleep in the same room.

(**MORE**)

But that resulted in something called a "circle jerk." Never heard of that before, do you know what that is--?

MR. DEWEY
(Lying)

Can't say that I do.

DICK
Sometimes I get so confused. I know I'm not supposed to think this, but after talking to Dr. Hand I actually thought for a moment that maybe masturbation was a victimless crime.

MR. DEWEY
(Concerned)

You spoke to Miss Hand about masturbation?

DICK
Oh no, but she does make me think about stuff. We talk almost every day.

MR. DEWEY
Everyday?

DICK
She started me on a reading list. This week she's got me reading a book called "Black Like Me."

(Mr. DEWEY spits up his coffee.)

MR. DEWEY
(Deeply concerned)
And this is outside class?

DICK
Then I'm supposed to read something called "The Second Sex" by Simone de Beauvoir.

MR. DEWEY
(Suspicious)
I see.

DICK
She's really opened my mind.

(MR. DEWEY holds up his copy of the Handbook.)

MR. DEWEY

Dick, I'd also like to add a book to your reading list. It's called the "Grace Student/Professor Handbook." It states that masturbation is ten reprimands and up to a one hundred dollar fine for each offense.

DICK

Holy moly. A hundred? That means that by Spring I could owe... *(He does the math)* Over a quarter of a million dollars. I'm in real trouble.

MR. DEWEY

We're all in trouble.

DICK

Note taken--. Wait. "All"? Mr. Dewey, you...?

MR. DEWEY

(Ernest)

Yes. Since Mrs. Dewey died. Why do you think I started the local chapter of Masturbators Anonymous?

DICK

Masturbators Anonymous?

MR. DEWEY

We meet on Fridays.

DICK

Can I come... I mean attend?

MR. DEWEY

We're running out of space but... okay. This week in order to take our minds off masturbating we're working on our float for the homecoming parade.

(From his desk drawer MR. DEWEY takes a small scale model of the homecoming parade float, it's the Oscar Meyer Weiner Mobile. The Weiner is obscenely large.)

MR. DEWEY

Here's a model of it. It's made perfectly to scale... Now the first thing you have to do is stop talking to Miss Hand and download an app called God View.

DICK

God View?

MR. DEWEY

It records every website you go to and forwards the list to your accountability partner so that he can monitor your web activity.

DICK

But I don't have a accountability partner. Would you...?

MR. DEWEY

I'd be happy to.

DICK

Shall we pray?

(They lower their heads.)

DICK

Dear Lord, please stop me from masturbating three times a day and twice at night--.

MR. DEWEY

Tell you what, ah, let's not do this here. Let's trek to the chapel. We need the full mega-power of the Lord.

(MR. DEWEY and DICK leave the office just as HELEN enters.)

MR. DEWEY

Go ahead, I'll catch up.

(DICK exits.)

MR. DEWEY

(Concerned)

Doctor Hand.

HELEN

(Dismissive)

Yes, Mr. Dewey?

MR. DEWEY

I've noticed that you're spending a lot of time with Dick.

HELEN

I'm helping him with his short story.

MR. DEWEY

Dick going through a lot right now and I think it might be best if I helped him. After all I am the writer on staff.

HELEN

Yes - Two self-published novels.

MR. DEWEY

I'm just saying that Dick, being a handsome young man and you being an unmarried woman, students might begin to think.

HELEN

And we wouldn't want them to think would we.

(HELEN enters her office.)

(MR. DEWEY lingers for a second.)

MR. DEWEY

(To himself)

I think she likes me.

(In her office HELEN kneels and cleans up the spilled coffee.)

(PEARL enters. Seeing HELEN on her knees PEARL thinks she's praying and kneels beside her. It takes a moment for HELEN to notice PEARL praying.)

HELEN

Can I help you?

PEARL

Got a minute?

HELEN

Now is not a--.

PEARL

It's a girl thing.

HELEN

...Oh. Sure. Come in.

PEARL
(*Meaning the door*)

May I...?

HELEN

Of course. Have a seat.

(*PEARL closes the door. 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

(*Suspecting something up*)

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, just exactly 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

Thought that maybe someday it would lead to marriage.

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. 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 mother warned me to avoid the humanities.

HELEN

And she is 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... This hard to say but... 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*) 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

I think so.

PEARL

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

HELEN

(Without a hesitation)

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

What have I done to cause this?

HELEN

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

PEARL

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, the Lord isn't 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

Where is that in the bible?

HELEN

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

PEARL

Leviticus? Oh, I have that tabbed.

(PEARL opens her bible to her marked spot.)

HELEN

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

Oh no, 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

(Correcting her)

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.

(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 witnessing.

HELEN

Witnessing?

PEARL

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

HELEN

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 you don't. You, me, Mr. Dewey and thirty other students have been assigned to the same bus.

HELEN

(Thinking "oh shit")

Oh joy.

PEARL

I knew that'd make you happy. Oh, now that we're friends, perhaps someday 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...
(*Attempting 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 like your friend the humanities slut. (*In confidence*) Although I do have one question you might be able to answer.

HELEN

Sure.

PEARL

(*Quietly*)

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

(*HELEN stands there totally stunned.*)

PEARL
(Upbeat)

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

(Upbeat, PEARL exits.)

(HELEN is dumbfounded.)

*(The lights go into e-mail mode.
 HELEN comes out of her daze.)*

HELEN
(Pissed! To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert... You Have Got To Be Shitting Me! Everything here is fake! There's this pristine top-level but underneath you find the real dirt. And while on subject of fake, Doctor Filbert, I wish to inform you that an online Doctor's degree from Oral Roberts University does not count as a real doctors degree. I have a real doctor's degree. From Berkeley. A real university. In a real subject! "Textual Criticism of Pre-Colonial Feminist Literature." Signed, Doctor Helen Hand. *(Beat, she calms down)* Delete. A few weeks later...

(The lights change back to reality.)

(HELEN turns to walk into her office but notices a woman facing away from her looking at the bulletin board. HELEN lingers.)

HELEN

Hi.

WOMAN
(Turning away)

Hello.

HELEN

Need help?

WOMAN

No.

HELEN

(Thinking his is peculiar)

...Okay.

(HELEN starts into her office but stops. It's just too odd. She goes back.)

HELEN

If you do need anything just let me know.

WOMAN

Note taken.

("Note taken" stops HELEN dead. She slowly turns, comes back out and takes a good look at the WOMAN.)

HELEN

(Dumbfounded)

Dick?

(It's in fact DICK dressed in a skirt, nylons, purse, jewelry, Afro wig, hoop earrings, a wide brim hat and realistic feminine, Caucasian makeup. He's kind of pretty as a woman.)

WOMAN/DICK

Shhhh.

HELEN

Holy...!

DICK

Don't call attention to me.

HELEN

Shit! Get in here!

(HELEN hustles DICK into her office and closes the door. Next she runs over and looks into Mr. DEWEY'S office, he's not there. She runs back to her office and closes the door.)

HELEN
(*Freaking out*)

What the...! What are you...?

DICK
(*Dropping the feminine voice*)

Research.

HELEN

What?

DICK

I'm experimenting.

HELEN

Dick, we all experiment in college, okay, I'll say it. My sophomore year, there was this Women's Studies major. And she and I would meet at this coffee house near campus--.

DICK

What are you saying?

HELEN

Sexual... Experimentation.

DICK

What? No! I'm straight!

HELEN

Then why...?

DICK

I'm trying to understand what it's like to be a woman. For my short story.

HELEN

What?

DICK

You told us in class that one of the highest forms of intelligence is the ability to see life from someone else's point of view.

HELEN

I didn't mean that you should... How did you...?

DICK

Shashawna helped me?

HELEN

Who?

DICK

Shashawna. My black friend in Topeka. She gave me the wig and dress.

HELEN

Oh my god!

DICK

Dr. Hand, I've learned so much about being a woman in our society. I went to Mr. Hackler's Tractor Shop over in Philipsburg. You should've seen the looks I got.

HELEN

No shit.

DICK

Dr. Hand, for the first time in my life it's occurred to me that... That...

HELEN

What?

DICK

(A revelation)

Some of my professors are wrong. There is in fact this whole misogynistic subculture out there.

HELEN

I told you that in class--! Dick, I'm required to inform you that the "Student/Professor Handbook--"

DICK

I know, regulation seven-five-three. Men aren't allowed to dress up on Halloween as women - Fifteen reprimands, two hundred dollar fine. But I'm safe; it's not Halloween yet.

(She grabs the handbook and shows him the page.)

HELEN

Dick, regulation seven-five-four says that at any other time of the year it's an abomination and automatic expulsion.

DICK

Holy Moly?

HELEN

You can't leave here. You have to stay until everyone goes home.

DICK

I know I've broke a bunch of rules, Dr. Hand, but I can't imagine that God would punish me for trying to understand my fellow human beings. And then something happened to me. Something I thought would never happen...

HELEN

What?

DICK

I began to doubt.

HELEN
(*Amazed*)

You're kidding.

DICK

I've been doubting a lot of things of late. I mean, what's so wrong with homosexuality? And perhaps masturbation is indeed a victimless crime. And maybe we should take the word "debate" off the flyer for the annual Republican Debate Club Pancake Dinner. Dr. Hand, all my life I've been taught that the universe was this huge clock created by God.

HELEN

It could be. We don't know.

DICK

But which is a better clockmaker, a clockmaker who has to answer prayers and intervene because the clock he created is constantly breaking down. Or a clockmaker who designed a universe that never breaks, runs perfectly. Isn't God's constant intervention proof that he may not be the real clockmaker?

HELEN
(*Amazed*)

All of this came to you all at once?

DICK

Then I started thinking about other things, like morals and marriage. I mean, did God create them or did we?

HELEN

Why are you even thinking about this?

DICK

I bought a ring. Was going to propose to Pearl if we make it to the Victory Bowl.

HELEN

Victory Bowl?

DICK

It's a bowl game only for Christian Colleges.

HELEN

Dick, you need to find yourself before you think of marriage. People who marry young become codependent. Haven't you read, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

DICK

I thought I was in love with Pearl. But now I wonder, what is love?

HELEN

I don't know how to say this but... Pearl's not right for you.

DICK

No?

HELEN

She's... involved.

DICK

Involved?

HELEN

With an older man.

DICK

Darn.

HELEN

And she's not up to your level of intellectual development.

(Outside the office MR. DEWEY runs and knocks on HELEN'S door.)

MR. DEWEY
(Excited)

Miss Hand? Great news!

(HELEN and DICK freeze.)

HELEN
Shit. (Calling off) Just a sec--. (To DICK) Hide!

(HELEN goes for the door, but before she gets there, MR. DEWEY lets himself in.)

MR. DEWEY
You're not going to believe this! Uncle Filbert just received word that Donald Trump, that's right, the Donald Trump - has agreed to come to campus to give the keynote speech at our annual Spiritual Emphasis Jamboree--.

(Please note: update the reference to Donald Trump he's out of date. Any popular right wing religious leader will do.)

(MR DEWEY'S voice trails off when he becomes aware of the 'WOMAN'.)

MR. DEWEY
Oh. So sorry. Didn't know you were with someone.

HELEN
Yes. Busy. That's great news. Donald Trump! Wow. Can we talk later?

MR. DEWEY
Aren't you going to introduce me?

HELEN
Oh. Sure. Ah. This is... Ah...

(DICK gently turns away.)

DICK/TRINITY
(Back to his feminine voice)
Trinity.

(HELEN didn't expect that name.)

HELEN
Trinity--? Okay, Trinity, this is Mr. Dewey.

DICK/TRINITY
A pleasure.

HELEN
Trinity is... ah...

DICK/TRINITY
An old friend from college.

HELEN
...Right.

MR. DEWEY
First time in Kansas?

DICK/TRINITY
Yes, sure is flat.

HELEN
Trinity was just passing through. Matter of fact it's time for her to leave.

MR. DEWEY
Where are you from?

DICK/TRINITY
...Albuquerque.

HELEN
Albuquerque?

DICK/TRINITY
That's right Albuquerque.

HELEN
Yes. She's heading east to Albuquerque.

MR. DEWEY
Albuquerque's south.

HELEN
That's what I meant.

MR. DEWEY
Miss Trinity, was it?

DICK/TRINITY
Yes.

MR. DEWEY
(off Donald's Afro wig)
Love your hair.

DICK/TRINITY
Oh thank you. It's natural.

MR. DEWEY
We don't see hair much like that around here.

DICK/TRINITY
No?

MR. DEWEY
I just want to let you know that you-people are welcome here
at Grace Bible.

DICK/TRINITY
Really?

MR. DEWEY
Absolutely welcome.

DICK/TRINITY
Cause you looked a little shocked when you saw me.

MR. DEWEY
Shocked? Not at all. We love cultural diversity here - it's
just that I didn't expect it showing up in the office.

*(HELEN'S not wearing a wristwatch
but she checks it anyway.)*

HELEN
Look at the time! Better get you back on the road! *(To Mr.
Dewey)* Great news about Mike Huckabee--.

MR. DEWEY
Donald Trump--.

HELEN
But if you don't mind--

MR. DEWEY

The fastest way south is to take county road 36 over to Philipsburg then turn left.

DICK/TRINITY

Note taken.

("Note taken" stops MR. DEWEY.)

HELEN

(Trying to cover)

Donald Trump! Praise the Lord! Time to go!

(HELEN backs MR. DEWEY out blocking his view. She closes the door in his face and then listens for him to leave.)

DICK

Dr. Hand--.

HELEN

Shhhh!

(On the other side of the door, MR. DEWEY thinks about what just happened and then goes into his office. Once HELEN hears him leave.)

HELEN

(Desperate, whispering)

Albuquerque?!

DICK

(Whispering))

What's wrong with Albuquerque?

(In his office MR. DEWEY tries to listen at his wall. During the following HELEN grabs her coat and hangs it over the air vent. In MR. DEWEY'S office the sounds are muffled, he can't hear much.)

HELEN

(Desperate, whispering)

Gotta get you out of here! You can't be seen like this.

DICK
It's too late.

HELEN
What? Who saw you?

DICK
Three of my football buddies. They said they wouldn't tell any one.

HELEN
Really?

DICK
If...

HELEN
If? If what?

DICK
If... I allowed myself to be spiritually cleansed.

HELEN
And how do you do that? Hail Marys? Holy water?

DICK
No. I ran into them at Mr. Hackler's Tractor Shop. They... They... *(He can't say it.)*

HELEN
What? Dick?

DICK
(This isn't easy)
...They... Took me into the alley. They held me down. And they...

HELEN
What did they do?

DICK
They... Took turns humping me. *(Beat)* They didn't take their clothes off or anything, they just held me on the ground and... Humped me. *(Beat, tiny tears)* I need to get into my dorm room.

HELEN
Dick. Look at me.

DICK

It's terrible to be taken advantage of, isn't it?

HELEN

Tell you what, come to my apartment, we'll get the make up off, I'll get you some clothes and we'll get you back to the dorm.

DICK

Thanks.

HELEN

But I want you to know, I'm damn proud of you.

DICK

Really?

HELEN

You tried to understand something outside yourself. It takes a real man to do what you did.

DICK

I'm okay. I'm not crying.

(HELEN touches his cheek.)

HELEN

Oh, Dick...

(A moment.)

(She kisses his cheek.)

(A moment.)

(She kisses his lips.)

(A moment.)

(He kisses her back. It's a great kiss.)

(Lights up on the e-mail light. Only this time it's not HELEN but MR. DEWEY standing in it.)

MR. DEWEY

(To the audience)

Dear Uncle Filbert, I'm writing to inform you that I have concerns about our new hire. Miss Hand has rather unorthodox teaching methods. If my suspicions are true she may have broken the second most important rule in the "Student/Professor Handbook." That's right, she might've "corrupted the youth." May the Lord comfort and protect you. Signed, your devoted nephew, Lloyd Ezekiel Dewey. Amen.

(Black out. Holy music.)

END OF ACT ONE

(Act Two)

(A doorbell. In a pool of light MR. DEWEY, holding his leather bound Bible stands at the open door of a house. He's witnessing.)

MR. DEWEY

(Upbeat to the audience)

I'm having a fantastic day. Know why? Cause I'm born again and I'm goin' to heaven. Ever think about dying? I used to all the time, but now I have no problem with death cause the Lord is my savior and my sins forgiven!

(The door slams in his face. Lights out on MR. DEWEY.)

(A different doorbell. Another pool of light PEARL, holding her pink bound Bible, witnesses.)

PEARL

(Joyful)

Did you know that we're living in the end times? That's right the Rapture could start any second! But that's not a problem for me cause I'm Rapture Ready!

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on PEARL.)

(A different doorbell. In another pool of light it's HELEN.)

HELEN

Please don't close the door. See that school bus behind me? They're watching. They call it the Jesus-mobile. I made a joke about the bus in Tom Wolfe's novel "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test." They didn't know what I was talking about. They think Allen Ginsberg is the son of a Supreme Court Justice. So please just act like what I'm saying is really inspiring. We don't have to actually say anything.

(MORE)

All we have to do is stand here and stare at each other for a few minutes--. Wait. Please don't close the door! Please!

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on HELEN.)

(Ding Dong. Lights up on MR. DEWEY at another door.)

MR. DEWEY

(Singing badly, but selling it)

"When Israel was in Egypt's land let my people go!"

(The door slams in his face. Lights out on MR. DEWEY.)

(A different doorbell. In another pool of light it's PEARL at another door.)

PEARL

It's all darkness, and randomness and futility, and misery, and it all ends in death. *(Buoyant)* But then I found God's happy pill! Now my life is just one perpetual Wal-Mart shopping spree!

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on PEARL.)

(A different doorbell. In another pool of light it's HELEN at another door.)

HELEN

(Desperate)

Without being obvious, look down. See my right hand?

(She wiggles a twenty-dollar bill between her fingers.)

HELEN

That's a twenty-dollar bill and it's yours if you'll let me witness to you for five minutes. *(Listening)* ...What? You're Buddhist? *(Dumbfounded)* You do know this is Kansas?

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on HELEN.)

(Ding Dong. Lights up on MR. DEWEY at another door.)

MR. DEWEY

(Singing loud and proud)

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in
Theee!"

(DEWEY give a big thumbs up and the door slams in his face. Lights out on MR. DEWEY.)

(A different doorbell. In another pool of light it's PEARL at another door.)

PEARL

Well geeze, of course there was enough room on Noah's Ark for the dinosaurs. Obviously, Noah was smart enough to take the dinosaurs in the egg form.

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on PEARL.)

(A different doorbell. In another pool of light it's HELEN at another door.)

HELEN

(Desperate)

Being that this is Kansas I know you got lots of guns in there. So would you be so kind as to please kill me. Just go in there and get your gun and I'll just wait right here.

(The door slams in her face. Lights out on HELEN.)

(Black out.)

(Lights up. Back to the offices. HELEN arrives at her office. MR. DEWEY enters.)

MR. DEWEY

Good morning, Doctor Hand.

HELEN

Good morning, Mr. Dewey.

MR. DEWEY

It sure was a great week witnessing for the Lord. Did you enjoy the stop at the brand new Museum of Creation Science in Potsfield?

HELEN

Yes. Very informative.

MR. DEWEY

My favorite part was the diorama of Jesus riding a dinosaur.

HELEN

(Incredulous)

Yes. Loved the spurs.

(HELEN enters her office. Disappointed, MR. DEWEY enters his.)

(PEARL enters and sticks her head in HELEN'S office. She holds a children's plastic sand bucket.)

PEARL

Donation?

HELEN

To?

PEARL

The student council has decided that when Donald Trump makes his entrance at the Spiritual Emphasis Jamboree we're going to hire a special effects company to do a whole laser light show. We want to make it like a Rolling Stones concert, only without the devil worshipping.

(DICK enters.)

PEARL

Hi, Dick.

DICK

(Not interested)

Hi.

HELEN

(Concerned)

Haven't seen ya in a while. You okay?

Yeah.

DICK

PEARL
Congrats on the four and four season.

DICK
It was okay.

PEARL
It was good enough to be invited to the Victory Bowl. Hear we're playing Calvin College.

DICK
(Not interested in football)
Yeah, they think the final score is predetermined, we'll prove'em wrong.

(DICK hands a private note to HELEN.)

DICK
Wanted to give you this.

HELEN
Oh?

(HELEN starts to open the note.)

DICK
Don't open it now.

PEARL
(Desperate for his attention)
How about if you meet me in the gym in five minutes and I'll show you some brand new cheers we've worked out for the bowl game.

DICK
Can't. Mr. Dewey wants to see me.

PEARL
Maybe later, okay?

DICK
(Not interested)
Maybe.

(DICK walks over to the other office, MR. DEWEY is on the phone but welcomes him in.)

(Meanwhile in HELEN'S office.)

PEARL

Did you hear the rumor about him? He's T-MAD.

HELEN

T-MAD?

PEARL

Temporary Misplaced Attraction Disorder.

HELEN

Are you trying to say he's gay?

PEARL

President Filbert does not allow us to say the word "gay."
We're to call it "T-Mad."

HELEN

Temporary Misplaced...

PEARL

Attraction Disorder. The key word is "temporary." But I will use all my feminine charms to show him the error of his ways. Pray with me? We must save his soul.

(PEARL kneels, HELEN can't.)

PEARL

Dear Lord. Once again the devil has raised his ugly-- You're not kneeling.

HELEN

Yeah, ah, problem with my knee.

PEARL

Oh, we'll pray for that too.

(The lights switch to MR. DEWEY'S office. MR. DEWEY hangs up his phone.)

MR. DEWEY

Close the door.

(He closes the door.)

MR. DEWEY

Dick, I want to speak to you about your web usage. The God View app sent me a list of sites and there are grounds for concern.

DICK

I haven't been to Pearl's Faithbook page in weeks.

MR. DEWEY

That's not it.

DICK

Mr. Dewey if there are pornographic sites on the list it must be my roommates logging on when I'm not there.

MR. DEWEY

The God View App not only gives me a list of sites but also the times you logged on, and the times in question are when your roommates are in class. Do you care to explain these?

(MR. DEWEY hands DICK a list. He reads it.)

MR. DEWEY

Dick, you must understand I'm not your only accountability partner, the web sites you go to are also being recorded forever by your greatest accountability partner.

DICK

The N.S.A.?

MR. DEWEY

No, God.

DICK

Oh, right.

MR. DEWEY

Do you want to explain these? Three hits on the Richard Dawkins Homepage. Four on the American Atheists website. And one on something called "The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster."

DICK

Mr. Dewey, I'm doing research.

MR. DEWEY

In what? The Devil?

DICK

Dr. Hand told me that the highest form of intelligence is the ability to see life from someone else's point of view, you don't have to agree, but it's important to try to understand.

MR. DEWEY

You are not to meet with Miss Hand again.

DICK

Why not?

MR. DEWEY

Because she goes to a lot of very questionable sites herself.

DICK

How do you know?

MR. DEWEY

President Filbert ordered the I.T. guy to install the God View app on her computer also.

DICK

(Confused)

Did she ask President Filbert to be her accountability partner?

MR. DEWEY

No. But God did.

(The lights switch to HELEN'S office. HELEN leads PEARL to the door.)

PEARL

(Continuing their conversation)

Well of course there was a Big Bang, Miss Hand.

HELEN

Then you agree?

PEARL

Oh yes. Got spoke and BANG it happened! It's just that it happened only 6000 years ago, not billions and billions.

HELEN

But, Pearl, if that's the case, it means that the Jurassic Period happened on a Tuesday.

PEARL

It might've. Were you there? I know I wasn't. *(Condescending)* Miss Hand you need to think this through a lot more. *(Looking at her watch)* Oh! Look at the time. Gotta run. Today in Bible Study class they are explaining why Episcopalians and mainline Protestants are going straight to hell. Wouldn't want to miss that.

(HELEN and PEARL exit one office just as DICK and MR. DEWEY exit the other.)

PEARL

(To Helen)

Oh that's right. I've been meaning to tell you, that stuff really did the trick. My monkey is great now.

HELEN

Happy to hear it. Monkey hygiene is critical.

PEARL

(Flirting)

Bye Dick.

(DICK doesn't answer. He exits in one direction, Concerned, PEARL turns to HELEN.)

PEARL

(Frustrated, in confidence)

T-Mad.

(PEARL exits. Leaving DEWEY and HELEN in the hall.)

MR. DEWEY

Did I hear correctly? Pearl has a monkey?

HELEN

Yes. Come to think of it so do I.

MR. DEWEY

(Beat)

May I see it?

HELEN

...No. Ah, she bites.

(Confused, MR. DEWEY exits.)

(E-mail light.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

Dear President Filbert, Thank you for your invitation but I do not care to join you and the rest of the faculty on a sightseeing tour of Kansas in your personal jet - It isn't because I don't want to fly around in a crappy second hand 727 with the words "Jesus Jet" painted on the side, but more because... It's Kansas! What The Hell Is There To See?! Just driving across Kansas is so depressing that when you call the Road Report number it automatically connects you with the Suicide Prevention Hot Line! Signed Dr. Helen Hand. *(Beat)* Delete. A few days later.

(Far off wild cheering. Donald Trump is speaking in a nearby gymnasium.)

(HELEN enters her office and quickly primps.)

(DICK enters - He's even more handsome in a t-shirt that shows off his muscles.)

DICK

(Tentative)

Hi.

HELEN

(Tentative but inviting)

Hi.

DICK

May I?

HELEN

Please.

(DICK enters her office and closes the door.)

HELEN

Read your note. You're right. This is the perfect time.

DICK

It was the only time I knew we could talk. With Mr. Trump speaking the rest of campus is a ghost town.

HELEN

Donald... I need to apologize for what happened.

DICK

No need. You're a very passionate person.

HELEN

That wasn't a kiss of passion it was just a friendship kiss.

DICK

No, it was passion.

HELEN

I was trying to comfort you.

DICK

I don't regret it. Do you?

HELEN

(Beat)

No.

DICK

It helped me make a major decision in my life.

HELEN

Oh?

DICK

When you kissed me, it awoke feelings I hadn't felt before. Suddenly I want to know about all those things I've never been allowed to know about. So after a great deal of thought I've made a decision.

HELEN

And that would be?

DICK

I've decided to become a writer. Which means I'm going to need more life experience.

HELEN

True.

DICK

So I've made a list of things I gotta do.

(He takes out a long list.)

DICK

First, I need to learn how to drink coffee. Then I need to smoke at least one Marijuana cigarette. And of course I'm going to have to join the Socialist Party. But top on my list is, if I'm going to be a writer, I gotta ditch my virginity.

HELEN

(Clearing her throat)

Excuse me?

DICK

I'm going to be twenty-three next summer and I've never known a woman. The most I've ever done is hold hands with my kid sister and I don't think that counts. But when you kissed me I knew I had to change. And I knew you could help.

HELEN

(Clearing her throat)

Help?

(HELEN nervously rearranges the pens on her desk.)

DICK

Yes.

HELEN

Ah, Dick... ah... I'm... honored that you thought of me. And, although-I-can't-imagine-that-it-wouldn't-be-absolutely-fantastic, I do think you should find someone your own age.

DICK

So do I.

HELEN
(*Disappointed*)

Oh?

DICK
So I've decided to bed Shashawna.

HELEN
Bed?

DICK
Last week I broke two Grace College regulations on the same day. I took Shashawna on a date and saw an "R" rated movie.

HELEN
Quite a step.

DICK
After, she invited me to her place, but I chickened out. So I've asked her to another "R" rated movie and this time, I'm going to bed her.

HELEN
(*No knowing how to react*)
Ah. ...Go Team.

DICK
All I need from you is a few pointers.

HELEN
Such as?

DICK
Well, I've heard-tell that I need something called "protection."

HELEN
Always a good idea.

DICK
Where do I get this protection?

HELEN
Well, ah, you need, at the very least, a condom.

DICK
Is that what I've heard-tell called a rubber?

HELEN

Yes.

DICK

Where do I pick up one of these condom rubbers?

HELEN

Well, you can buy one at the drugstore in Philipsburg.

DICK

Okay, so first thing I do is drive fifty miles to Philipsburg, go to the drugstore, and buy a condom rubber. What do I do with it?

HELEN

Well, ah, you put it on your...

DICK

Yes?

HELEN

Your... ah... What's the opposite of a monkey?

DICK

I need a monkey?

HELEN

I mean, is there a special word you use because you don't want to say the word... penis?

DICK

No, pretty much generally I refer to my penis as a penis.

HELEN

(This isn't easy)

Okay. Ah. So you unwrap the condom and you unroll it over your... *(Pantomiming and getting aroused)* ah... erect... *(She clears her throat)*

DICK

Do I do this before or after the movie?

HELEN

After the movie and before... you do it.

DICK

How does it work, is it like a tent? Or does are their straps, or snaps?

HELEN

No, it just fits.. Automatically. If you have the right size.

DICK

They come in sizes?

HELEN

Yes.

DICK

(Earnestly, innocently)

Okay, so I'll ask for an extra large. What does this condom rubber do?

HELEN

(Holding back, sexually aroused)

Well, if it's on right, and it doesn't break, it... ah... prevents you from impregnating her. *(She clears her throat)*

DICK

Note taken. Now, I've also heard some of the players in the locker room joking about something called "premature ejaculation." And this is to be avoided.

HELEN

Preferably.

DICK

How do I do that?

HELEN

You can take regular... ah, breaks... or... *(Flustered)* I'm sorry, I can't. You're obviously not ready.

DICK

No, I am. I just want to make sure I do it right. And I know you're the one to help.

HELEN

Me?

DICK

Well, let's face it, you're an expert.

HELEN

Expert?

DICK

Rumor on campus is that you aren't a virgin. That makes you an expert. Sorry, does that upset you?

HELEN

Not at all. Ah. *(Clearing her throat)* It's true. I've had several relationships in my life. Some more successful than others.

DICK

Which one failed?

HELEN

Well, there was a short-lived affair with a bus boy at Denny's-- But-that's-not-important-right-now.

DICK

So isn't it logical that you're the one to help? So I snap the rubber on my penis and then what?

HELEN

Well, ah, before that comes foreplay.

DICK

Foreplay?

HELEN

You know like... Kissing and hugging and other things to get her in the mood.

DICK

Like what other things?

HELEN

(Horny)

Well, for some women, just talking about it is enough. *(She clears her throat)*

DICK

I'm embarrassing you?

HELEN

No. It's just that, I'm sure that if Shashawna has let her intentions be known, she most likely will be able to guide you through the steps.

DICK

Yeah, she said she could help. She also said she's got a surprise in store for me.

HELEN

...Surprise?

DICK

Yeah. Said she had one big surprise waiting for me.

HELEN

(Suspicious)

Ah... Dick... Did she give any indication of what that surprise might be?

DICK

No, but she did say I should keep an open mind. Which is something I know I can do cause I learned that from you.

HELEN

Ah... What does Shashawna look like?

DICK

Well, she's awfully pretty.

HELEN

And?

DICK

She has nice eyes.

HELEN

Does she have any unusual features, like, say, a large Adam's Apple?

DICK

Now that you mention it, it is abnormally large.

HELEN

Dick, ah... *(Trying to find the right words)* Being that this is your very first time. Perhaps Shashawna isn't the best one to take you on this... journey.

DICK

No?

HELEN

I don't know how to tell you this, but, not-that-there's-anything-wrong-with-it, but there's a distinct possibility that Shashawna is a man.

DICK

A what?

HELEN

A man dressed as a woman.

DICK

What are you saying? That she's a guy from a different Christian college doing research too? Wouldn't that be something?

HELEN

I'm sorry but I must advise you not to go through with this.

DICK

But you said a writer needs experience.

HELEN

I did, but this might be a little too much experience too soon.

DICK

Well darn.

HELEN

Besides, sex is just sex, unless you care for the other person. How do you feel about Shashawna?

DICK

She's nice.

HELEN

Do you love her?

DICK

Don't think so.

HELEN

Sex without love is just calisthenics.

DICK

And what's love?

HELEN

Well... It's... It's... love. It's when you want nothing more than to be near someone special. Haven't you ever fallen in love?

DICK

I thought I was in love with Pearl, but that was just lust.

HELEN

Then maybe it's best you wait.

DICK

Well darn. But when you're right you're right.

HELEN

Thank you for stopping by.

DICK

No. Thank you. Helen?

HELEN

Yes?

DICK

I think you're the only person I can be truthful with.

HELEN

I feel the same way about you. Keep thinking. And hold off on sex until you've really thought about it.

DICK

Note taken.

(DICK exits.)

(Alone, HELEN takes a deep breath. She's flush. She needs a cold shower.)

(Suddenly DICK re-enters.)

DICK

Helen?

HELEN

Huh?

DICK

I've thought about it.

HELEN

Thought about what?

DICK

I'm in love with you and I'd like to make love to you. Only one problem, before we do it I have to drive over to Philipsburg to get a condom rubber. Get ready, I'll be back in two hours.

(DICK starts to leave.)

HELEN

Wait!

(Beat. Horny as hell, HELEN considers him for a moment.)

HELEN

I have one in my purse.

(She take out a condom. They fall into each other's arms.)

(Black out.)

(Lights up on the e-mail light. HELEN enters adjusting her skirt and hair. She feels fantastic.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, I'm writing to inform you that while Donald Trump was speaking to the students about the need for high morals and low taxes, Dick Cheney was banging me on my desk - There are very few women who can make that claim and be telling the truth. Go lions! Since that momentous occasion, Dick Cheney and I sometimes secretly meet in the library, in the fiction section, where the books on evolution are kept. The sex is mind-blowing now that premature ejaculation is less of a problem. Who would've thought the phrase, "note taken" would have so much meaning. Only once in my life was the sex better and that was a rocking one-night stand with Gene Simmons of Kiss. *(Beat)* No, I'm wrong, Dick Cheney is better. Two nights a week he sneaks into my apartment and we read Keats and e.e. Cummings to each other. We're also talking about someday co-writing a novel--!" *(She can't continue, panics)* What The Hell Am I Doing! *(She pulls herself together)* Signed Dr. Helen Hand.

(MORE)

(Beat, she calms) P.S. What can I do? When he holds me in his big quarterback arms the world disappears for a few moments and I'm... safe. *(Beat)* Delete. A few days later.

(Back to reality. HELEN is about to enter her office when PEARL runs in.)

PEARL

Got two sec?

HELEN

Got an awful lot of grading to do--.

PEARL

I've been thinking. You're right, sometimes one needs to see things from a different point of view.

HELEN

(confused by this)

Okay.

PEARL

For months now, I've been getting all my notes on my screenplay "Soul Snatchers, the Zombie Apocalypse" from Mr. Dewey. Then I thought, maybe I should hear what someone else thinks.

HELEN

Always a good idea.

PEARL

Would you be willing to read it?

(PEARL takes out her massive screenplay. HELEN takes it.)

PEARL

Bless you.

HELEN

Pearl?

PEARL

Yes?

HELEN

Got a sec?

PEARL

Sure.

(They enter her office.)

HELEN

Close the door, have a seat.

PEARL

Is it a girl thing? Monkey problems?

HELEN

No, ah, my monkey is doing remarkably well. *(She clears her throat)*

PEARL

What's up?

HELEN

Well, ah... You see, Pearl... I owe you an apology.

PEARL

You do?

HELEN

How do I say this? It's occurred to me that... We're alone, stuck in the middle of an incomprehensible vastness.

PEARL

I know Kansas is a big place.

HELEN

No, I was thinking the universe.

PEARL

Oh, that's much bigger.

HELEN

And then I thought, who am I to judge?

PEARL

"Judge not lest ye be judged."

HELEN

Exactly. I mean, we're trapped on a lonely rock floating in the cosmos, who am I to criticize? Why shouldn't we find a little companionship? Someone to share existence with. Someone to hold us.

PEARL
(*confused*)

Why do you need to apologize for that?

HELEN

Pearl... (*She weighs this carefully*) I know about you and Lloyd. And I'm okay with it.

PEARL

Miss Hand--

HELEN

No need to say anything. Just go, be careful, and know that the heart is a lonely hunter. That's all I wanted to say.

PEARL
(*Beat*)

Are you on drugs?

HELEN

Huh?

PEARL

Cause there are rumors going around campus that you do drugs.

HELEN

No, I don't use drugs. Anymore--. What I'm trying to say is that I understand about you and Mr. Dewey.

PEARL

Are you suggesting that I... like Mr. Dewey?

HELEN

Pearl, I can hear you two going at it through the vent.

PEARL

Going at what?

HELEN

My god, child are you in complete denial?

PEARL

Denial of what?

HELEN

And you're the one who called me a slut.

PEARL

I never called you a slut.

HELEN

You're having an affair with Mr. Dewey.

PEARL

What? No! I'm in love with DICK. It's written in the stars that he and I are to get married and he's to be a famous short story writer and I a celebrated screenwriter and we are to have two boys and two girls.

HELEN

Pearl, trust me he's not interested in you.

PEARL

Yes he is!

HELEN

No, he likes someone else.

PEARL

(Devastated)

...Who?

(HELEN nervously rearranges the pens on her desk.)

HELEN

Ah... Don't know. I've just heard rumors.

(PEARL begins weeping.)

PEARL

Oh my god!

HELEN

Let's not over react.

PEARL

(Total breakdown)

This isn't happening!

HELEN

(Trying to comfort her)

It's not the end of the world. There are lots of other fish in the sea.

PEARL
(Slobbering)

Oh, Miss Hand--!

HELEN
(Correcting her)

Doctor.

PEARL
I've done everything in my power to make Dick like me! I go to all his games. I cheer. I flirt. I pray. I make eyeball babies with him.

HELEN
But there's more to love than... than eyeball babies. Do you ever talk to him? He's a smart boy and a darn good writer. He needs someone who can stimulate him... intellectually.

PEARL
Miss Hand, can I be honest? In fact I really do like Mr. Dewey.

HELEN
And that's okay. He's too old for you but who am I to judge?

PEARL
But I'd never do anything to stand in your way.

HELEN
My way?

PEARL
Miss Hand, Mr. Dewey likes you. He told me that he thinks you're neat.

HELEN
Huh?

PEARL
He said that if he could just go to one date with you he could start the healing process.

HELEN
What healing process?

PEARL
To get over his dead wife. Miss Hand, he needs you. And you, let's face it, being well past your prime, need him.
(MORE)

I'd never do anything to stand in the way of your slim chance of finding marital bliss.

HELEN

Pearl, I'm quite sure Mr. Dewey doesn't have feelings for me--

PEARL

Are you blind? He's making eyeball babies with you all the time! It's so obvious! Why do you think President Filbert gave you this job, he was looking for someone to marry his nephew.

HELEN

Holy sh--oot.

PEARL

Mr. Dewey, even-though-I-really-really-like-him, is yours. Dick is mine!

(PEARL shakes as she sobs.)

HELEN

Look, why don't you go back to your dorm and rest.

PEARL

I need a tissue.

(PEARL opens her purse and digs for a tissue. She takes out lipstick, a mirror and then a handgun.)

(PEARL finds the tissue and blows.)

PEARL

(Her dark side comes out)

If I ever find that bitch who took my Dick from me I'm going to put a hex on her! I'm going to cut her face!

HELEN

Okay we're having some anger issues--.

PEARL

(Possessed)

I'm Going To Send Her Bloody Damn Butchering Nazi Pig Soul To Hell!

(Interesting side note, "bloody damn butchering Nazi pig soul" is a quote from the 1973 movie The Exorcist.)

(HELEN looks at her watch-less wrist.)

HELEN

Look at the time! I'm late for class!

PEARL

(Repenting)

Oh, Miss Hand. What am I doing? I just racked up maybe fifty reprimands and hundreds in fines! That was a really unchristian thing to say. I must remember, W. W. J. D.! What would Jesus do to get his aggression out?

HELEN

Don't know. Flog some bankers?

(PEARL puts things back in her purse including the gun.)

PEARL

(Calming her self)

No. He'd remain calm, refocus and try harder.

HELEN

Or that.

PEARL

Wait a minute! Hold on!

(PEARL puts her hands towards heaven. Beat.)

PEARL

Jesus has just sent me a revelation! It's her!

HELEN

Her?

PEARL

Dick mentioned to me that he met an older woman.

HELEN

Older?

PEARL

An older woman with a past, who had done drugs, and alcohol, and had affairs, and read books. That must be it! He was doing charity work, helping some lost older slut, taking pity on her soul, and somehow she got her devil claws into him. Shall we pray for her?

HELEN

For the older woman?

(PEARL raises her hands to heaven.)

PEARL

Dear Lord, let this old lonely sad slut take her evil claws out of my Dick! Amen! Gotta run. I must prove to Dick that I'm his perfect wife! I need to show him my plan! God's plan!

(PEARL runs out.)

(HELEN takes a deep breath.)

(After a moment she opens PEARL'S screenplay and reads.)

HELEN

(Reading to herself)

"Oh that feels good. Put your hand here. Where no hand has ever been before." *(Beat, she puts it together)* Holy crap.

(Lights up on the e-mail light. HELEN steps into it.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, I am become death, the destroyer of worlds. I'm a grown woman, with a PhD from Berkeley, and in my first three months of teaching I've managed to win the quarterback away from the head cheerleader. Do you see what living in Kansas does! *(Beat)* Delete. A few days later.

(Back to reality. Tired, HELEN enters her office and sits.)

(DICK enters the hallway. MR. DEWEY enters from the other direction.)

MR. DEWEY

Dick, could I speak to you for a moment?

DICK

Sure. What's up?

MR. DEWEY

I'm concerned. You disconnected the God View app.

DICK

Yeah. I did. I don't need an accountability partner anymore.

MR. DEWEY

So, what we talked about is no longer a problem?

DICK

I haven't spilled my seed in weeks

MR. DEWEY

Weeks?

DICK

And I don't think it'll ever be a problem again.

MR. DEWEY

We're sure?

DICK

Swear to God.

MR. DEWEY

Congratulations. Darn proud of you.

DICK

Thank you, Mr. Dewey.

MR. DEWEY

Tell you what, I'm going to run over to the campus Xerox shop and print you up a certificate stating you've graduated from Masturbators Anonymous. Matter of fact, you're our first graduate ever.

DICK

Thanks.

MR. DEWEY

It's a nice certificate. Suitable for framing.

(Pleased, MR. DEWEY exits.)

(DICK walks over and sticks his head in HELEN'S office.)

DICK

Got a minute?

HELEN

(Adjusting her hair)

Right now? Might be a problem. *(Hinting)* But at two o'clock I've got to go to the library.

DICK

No, seriously, got a minute?

HELEN

Oh, you mean, like, to talk.

DICK

He's not in his office, we're safe.

(HELEN wants to be kissed but DICK lingers by the closed door.)

HELEN

Everything okay?

DICK

Yeah. There's just something I need to say. *(Delaying)* Kind of important.

HELEN

(Concerned)

Okay.

DICK

As you know, I went home for the weekend.

HELEN

I missed you.

DICK

Saturday morning, after chores, I walked out to the far corner of my parent's farm. Way out to the pickup truck graveyard, and sat on my grandfather's old Studebaker, and thought about things, didn't pray, just thought.

HELEN

About?

DICK

How my world has changed.

HELEN

For the better?

DICK

You turned me on to some pretty cool stuff. Kafka, Kierkegaard, Kerouac, Kombucha - And that's just the "K"s. Because of you I discovered condoms, and Christopher Hitchens, and I learned what spanxs were - never would've guessed women wore things like that. Before you... *(Trying to find the words)* There was an official version of life. But then you showed my untaught eyes a few things. Ever since, it's like I'm trying to learn to walk again. Every step requires thought.

HELEN

(Concerned)

And you'd rather not learn to walk again?

DICK

Don't get me wrong, I'm glad you did. But sometimes out here in the light, don't you get the feeling that something's missing? That there is this... loneliness.

HELEN

Loneliness is the price we pay for rationality.

DICK

Please. I got this all worked out and if I lose my place I'm not sure I'll be able to say it. Darn, I'm going to have to read it.

(MR. DEWEY re-enters his office, he stops and listens to the faint voices.)

(DICK takes out a piece of paper and reads.)

DICK

(Reading)

"We're just simple creatures that are harassed and buffeted by the careless brutalities and trials of an empty Godless cosmos, a Dadaist carnival, where the only meaning we scarp together is canceled by death." *(Beat, he stops reading)* And so I'd like you to have this.

(DICK opens a small box, takes out a tiny diamond ring and kneels.)

HELEN
(Dumbfounded)

What the hell are you doing?

DICK
I thought we'd send out little cards to everyone we know - Dr. Helen Hand to wed Dick Cheney.

HELEN
That could be a problem with some of my friends in San Francisco. Ah, sweetheart...

DICK
I know what you're thinking, being a small, close-minded town people'll talk, but I got it worked out. I'm quitting at the end of the semester and we're moving to Manhattan.

HELEN
New York?

DICK
No. Manhattan Kansas. I've heard-tell it's the most cosmopolitan city in all of Kansas.

HELEN
Dick, sweetheart, this happens with young men, they sometimes confuse their first sexual experience with love. Have you ever seen the movie "The Graduate?"

DICK
Have you confused sex with love?

HELEN
That's not a fair question.

DICK
Was it just calisthenics for you?

HELEN
Ah...

(HELEN nervously rearranges the pens on her desk.)

DICK

I love you.

HELEN

Dick... More and more, I think we don't really fall in love with another person; we just... remake the other person into our self.

DICK

Don't answer right away. You taught me that we have to think about things. So, first think. Saturday morning is the Victory Bowl. The team'll fly back on the Jesus Jet after. Then, I'll drive up to my parent's farm and wait for you in the pickup truck graveyard.

HELEN

You want me to go to your farm?

DICK

Here, directions.

(DICK turns the piece of paper; on the back is a map.)

HELEN

I--

DICK

I know you have a terrible sense of direction. But you taught me that it's important to try to change and grow. And you're right we don't want to be co-dependent, so you'll have to find your way with just this.

(He hands her the hand drawn map.)

HELEN

Dick, I once tried to drive from San Francisco to Los Angeles, even with G.P.S. I ended up in Seattle.

DICK

I'll wait for you until sundown Saturday. If you show, then I know you love me. If you don't, well, I'll know it's over. Or that you're in Seattle.

HELEN

Dick--

DICK

You'll think about it.

(He kisses her - One last beautiful kiss. Wow.)

DICK

You'll know you're in the right place when you see the rusted Studebaker-- Oh, I forgot, don't use your computer to communicate with me. President Filbert installed spyware on it.

HELEN

What?

DICK

I know. This place is sick. Let's find someplace new. Someplace we can "tend our own garden." That's from Voltaire.

(He smiles sweetly and exits.)

(Lights up on the e-mail light.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, It has come to my attention that you've installed spyware on my computer. Knowing this, I've been surfing for bizarre websites. Today I found: "Gerbil bouncing.com" A web site that teaches you how to play basketball with a Gerbil. Muppets Making Love.com" A website devoted to Miss Piggy pornography. And "Cats who look like Bob Ross humping cats who look like Mr. Rogers.com." That one is pretty much self-explanatory. Signed Dr. Helen Hand. P.S. *(Beat, quietly, desperate)* I'm worried.. worried that this atom called earth is all there is. And that after a lifetime of gaining knowledge, at our very peak of self-awareness it all ends.. At some point we must all hit.. delete.

(The lights go back to reality.)

(MR. DEWEY cries at this desk. He holds Grace College football pennant. HELEN hears him crying and tentatively enters his office.)

HELEN

You okay?

MR. DEWEY
(Upset)

Sure.

HELEN

Obviously something's up.

MR. DEWEY

May I speak to you? In private.

MR. DEWEY

Went to the game. Flew with the team.

HELEN

Didn't know you were part of the football program.

MR. DEWEY

I was there as a representative for Masturbators Anonymous.

HELEN

Ah... Okay... And where is this going?

MR. DEWEY
(Dramatic)

God works in mysterious ways, don't you agree?

HELEN

...Sure.

MR. DEWEY
(With great meaning)

But *He* has a plan.

HELEN

If that's all, I'm due back on the planet earth.

MR. DEWEY

The Victory Bowl... *(He is too overwhelmed to continue)*

HELEN

I know. Disappointing. What was it, seventy-five to nothing? Who would've guessed, the Calvinist were right.

MR. DEWEY

I knew something was wrong before the game when I saw him reading a book by Stephen Hawking.

HELEN

Him?

MR. DEWEY

Dick. Isn't it strange, he won the first four games with decisive victories, but then something went wrong in his life and he's lost every game since. Do you know what might've thrown his concentration?

HELEN

(Clearing her throat)

No.

MR. DEWEY

Then, on the flight back there was an event. The Jesus Jet was hit with violent turbulence. There was an injury.

HELEN

(Fretful)

Oh no.

MR. DEWEY

Not a physical injury, spiritual.

HELEN

Spiritual?

MR. DEWEY

During the turbulence, while everyone was praying, Dick began loudly questioning the existence of God. Pearl and I tried to pray with him but he said he just wanted to be alone and listen to Celine Dion. Oh, Miss Hand, I'm afraid he's gone over to the dark side.

HELEN

Lloyd, he hasn't gone to the dark side, if anything for the first time in his life he's completely rational. Except, of course, that part about Celine Dion. I don't know what that was about.

MR. DEWEY

Do you realize what this means? He broke the most important rule in the "Student/Professor handbook." Page one, rule one!

HELEN

"Thou shall not doubt."

MR. DEWEY

President Filbert immediately gave him two hundred and fifty reprimands, a one thousand dollar fine, and expelled him. When we landed Dick walked away. Everyone's looking for him, no one knows where he is.

HELEN

(Under her breath)

Shit.

(HELEN runs back to her office, grabs her winter coat and the map to the pickup truck graveyard. She starts out but finds MR. DEWEY in the hall.)

MR. DEWEY

(Bitter)

When did you lose your faith?

(That stops HELEN.)

HELEN

I... ah...

MR. DEWEY

Yes?

HELEN

It happened when my father ran off with his dental hygienist?

MR. DEWEY

Jesus'll show you the way, Miss Hand. He's waiting for you with open arms. All you gotta do is turn on your G.P.S.

HELEN

Lloyd, did you ever think, maybe that's the problem today, too many of us are running on G.P.S.?

(She starts out.)

MR. DEWEY

If you're going to the pickup truck graveyard, don't bother. Pearl's already there.

(That stops her.)

MR. DEWEY

Haven't you done enough damage? Let Pearl handle this. She knows how to bring him back from the dark side.

(MR. DEWEY starts to exit but stops.)

MR. DEWEY

Oh by the way, President Filbert wants to see you his office. Like, now.

(MR. DEWEY exits.)

(HELEN leans against the bulletin board. The cutout of a Caucasian, blue-eyed Jesus looks down on her.)

(Lights up on the e-mail light.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear President Filbert, According to the "Student/ Professor Handbook," to date, I've racked up fifty two thousand reprimands and two point six million in fines. And so I tender my letter of resignation. Sincerely, Dr. Helen Hand. P.S. Our lives are a succession of parts and particles that we hope will someday appear to us as a unified truth. But when we become so convinced that we've found truth that we start handing out reprimands and fines and hate - we lose the one thing that makes us human. Our faith in our ability to doubt. *(Beat)* Send. A few days later.

(Back to reality.)

(Far off upbeat wedding music and a party.)

(PEARL runs in wearing a simple pure white wedding dress and holding a bouquet.)

PEARL

Miss Hand! Wasn't it a lovely ceremony? I can't believe this is the very first time they've had a wedding at the campus chapel. And so sudden.

HELEN
(*Dispirited*)

Out of the blue.

PEARL
But when he asked I had to say yes.

HELEN
I wish you the best.

PEARL
I just had to come up and tell you how truly sorry I am that you'll be leaving us.

HELEN
Thanks.

PEARL
You know if you had played your cards right it would've been you and Lloyd getting married today.

HELEN
Another missed opportunity.

PEARL
And I want you to know, I forgive you. (*Sincerely*) God most likely doesn't, but I do.

(*MR. DEWEY enters wearing a new suit and boutonniere.*)

MR. DEWEY
There you are. We're going to be late for the reception.

PEARL
I just wanted to say goodbye to Miss Hand--.

MR. DEWEY
Pearl, you must remember Corinthians chapter eleven, verse three. What does it say?

PEARL
God said that the head of a wife is her husband.

MR. DEWEY
And who is the husband here?

You are, dear.

PEARL

And who is the wife?

MR. DEWEY

I am.

PEARL

Let's go.

MR. DEWEY

(They start out.)

Pearl?

HELEN

(PEARL stops, MR. DEWEY exits.)

HELEN

What happened when you went to the pickup truck graveyard?

PEARL

What do you mean?

HELEN

Dick wasn't there?

PEARL

No. He wasn't.

HELEN

Oh?

PEARL

But there was this woman.

HELEN

A woman?

PEARL

An odd looking woman. She told me that she was very disappointed to see me, which is was queer thing to say cause I had never seen her before. Said her name was Trinity.

(HELEN smiles.)

PEARL

So I left, came back to town, ran into Lloyd in the town square and we started talking about life and movies and then...
(Romantic) The church bell started ringing and I heard the voice of God.

HELEN

Did you now.

PEARL

Pretty sure. And I looked at Lloyd and I knew that God wanted us to be one.

(MR. DEWEY runs back in.)

MR. DEWEY

Pearl!

PEARL

We're going to co-write my zombie script together.

MR. DEWEY

Everyone's waiting. And if we're late for the reception, we'll be late for campus movie night and I've got to run the projector.

PEARL

You're right dear husband, we don't want to be late for "Toy Story 3."

MR. DEWEY

(Yelling off)

It's okay, she's obeying me now!

(Mr. DEWEY exits.)

PEARL

I know what you're thinking - You think the age difference is going to be a problem. But sometimes, Miss Hand, you just have to follow your heart. Sometimes all we got is faith.

HELEN

(Beat)

Note taken.

(PEARL smiles and exits.)

(For a second it looks like HELEN is about to step back into the e-mail light but she doesn't.)

(DICK enters dressed as Trinity. He holds a football.)

DICK/TRINITY

Hello.

(HELEN takes him in for a moment. He really isn't a bad looking woman. She smiles.)

HELEN

Is this going to be a regular thing?

DICK

(Dropping the voice)

There's method to my madness.

HELEN

Oh?

DICK/TRINITY

My pickup's packed.

HELEN

So's my Saab.

DICK/TRINITY

No. Ah... It was towed.

HELEN

What?

DICK/TRINITY

Yeah. A few minutes ago. The repo man got it. But I got everything out. You're stuff is in my truck. Thought maybe I could give you a lift.

HELEN

Thank you.

DICK/TRINITY

But before we leave I thought perhaps we could go for one last walk round campus.

HELEN

With you dressed like that?

DICK/TRINITY

And I thought, while we walk, we could hold hands.

HELEN

Why that would be breaking rule *(making up the numbers)* six-five-seven.

DICK/TRINITY

And then we could kiss right in front of President Filbert's mansion.

HELEN

I like how your mind works.

(They kiss. It's sweet.)

(HELEN steps into the E-mail light.)

HELEN

(To the audience)

"Dear Professor Hill, the first thing you need to know about me is that I doubt. I doubt why I'm here. I doubt my purpose. I doubt a lot. But I no longer doubt what love is. And I have no doubt that sometimes you have to turn off your G.P.S. and get really lost, in Kansas, in order to find faith in yourself. If you can accept this about me then I'd be happy to come to Northern Iowa University as a temporary adjunct sabbatical replacement. Sincerely, Dr. Helen Hand." *(Beat)* P.S. By any chance is your football team looking for a really open-minded quarterback?

(HELEN kisses DICK CHENEY in a dress. It's a great kiss.)

(Black out.)

THE END

(PS - Please feel free to change "Northern Iowa University" to the name of any local college or university.)