

PARENTS NIGHT

by

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Post production draft May 2015

A grade 3 classroom.

John Regal, mid 40s, dressed in a smart business suit, is examining some of the children's art. One piece suddenly captivates him and moves him close to tears.

Nicole, mid to late 30s, the teacher, enters the room carrying a couple of file folders.

NICOLE

That one's Patrick's.

JOHN

I know.

NICOLE

Interesting.

JOHN

Yes it is.

NICOLE

I meant it's interesting that you knew it was his. It's not signed.

JOHN

I noticed. Why not?

NICOLE

We ask the children not to add their names. You know, to keep it about the joy of making something rather than the--

JOHN

Pride of accomplishment?

NICOLE

They can still feel that pride without... taking the credit.

JOHN

Are you sure? Because I--

NICOLE

How did you know he was the one who'd done it?

JOHN

Well it's a very mature piece of work.

NICOLE

Yes it is. But there are others that are also quite...mature.

(pointing one out)

Like that one there, for example.

JOHN

Yeah, it's pretty. Looks Asian. Is it?

NICOLE

I don't know if I'd actually describe it as--

JOHN

I guess I was actually asking if the child who did it is Asian.

NICOLE

She is, yes. That's Naomi's work.

JOHN

Naomi. Right. Patrick talks about her a lot.

NICOLE

She's his reading partner.

JOHN

I know. He says she's smart.

NICOLE

She's very intelligent, yes.

JOHN

Yeah well, aren't they all. Asians I mean. Although is it actual intelligence or just social engineering?

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

JOHN

Well their culture puts such an extreme premium on academic excellence, it's sometimes hard to tell if there are any inherent smarts at work, or if it's all just...

NICOLE

Hard work?

JOHN

Which I very much honour and respect. But when it comes to the Chinese in particular is it all that healthy. I mean the way they drive their kids is pretty--

NICOLE

Actually Naomi isn't Chinese. She's Korean.

JOHN

Well they're hardly a bunch of slackers either. Why do the kids need reading partners?

NICOLE

It helps them learn.

JOHN

Are you sure about that?

NICOLE

Yes. I am.

JOHN

Okay. And that's the only reason? It's not about socialization?

NICOLE

Socialization?

JOHN

Team work.

NICOLE

Well not specifically. I mean teamwork is--

JOHN

Overrated.

NICOLE

Overrated. Really.

JOHN

Oh yeah. The "team" can often act like a very heavy anchor that has to be dragged along at great expense to the... team leaders.

NICOLE

Well perhaps in the world of business but--

JOHN

You think children are immune to the effect a slacker can have on their work?

NICOLE

The word slacker is kind of... When we assign them a group project we try to ensure that they all contribute equally.

JOHN

Yeah and I'm sure that works out just great.

NICOLE

Well it can be difficult, but it's not--

JOHN

Impossible? Yeah. It is. Trust me. Patrick says he often has to do a lot more than his share. Are you going to tell me that's not true?

NICOLE

No. But it's not that often. It's just sometimes. And he's never complained about it. In fact he seems to--

JOHN

Well who would he complain to?

NICOLE

Me.

JOHN

Complain to the teacher about other kids. In this day and age?

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

JOHN

Well he might find himself having to stay late for conflict resolution or something.

NICOLE

I... I actually think the reason he doesn't complain is that he enjoys it.

JOHN

Enjoys what? Working harder than the others?

NICOLE

Taking over. He usually puts himself in charge in a situation like that.

JOHN

A situation where no one else is doing the work.

NICOLE

Sometimes he just likes to be in charge.

JOHN

Because he wants it to be good.

NICOLE

Well Naomi often does more than her share as well, but she tries to make sure it remains a group effort.

JOHN

Even though it isn't.

NICOLE

Yes. I mean--

JOHN

It just looks that way. It appears to be a group effort, and that means you can give them all the same mark... and that means they can all take credit for something they didn't actually do.

NICOLE

It's more complicated than that.

JOHN

How?

NICOLE

It's a form of encouragement. By experiencing the success of the group we hope the individual child will--

JOHN

Learn how to glide through life holding on to other people's coattails. Also it sounds a little...

(whispers)

North Korean, if you now what I mean.

(a thought)

Maybe that's why whatshername is so good at it.

NICOLE

Naomi's family isn't from the North. And I think you're missing the--

JOHN

Whatever. I think the policy should be rethought. And pretty fast. So... basically they're at the same level then?

NICOLE

Who?

JOHN
Patrick and Naomi.

NICOLE
Oh. Well...more or less.

JOHN
More or less...

NICOLE
Depending on the subject, yes.

JOHN
So is that reflected in their...
marks?

NICOLE
We don't mark 3rd graders in the
way you seem to be thinking.

JOHN
Which way is that?

NICOLE
At all. We don't mark them at all.

JOHN
Right. Okay. So... why does Patrick
think she's a lot smarter than he
is.

NICOLE
I don't know... Look I've gathered
all his records and test scores
from the office, so why don't we--

JOHN
Is that where you were? I thought
maybe you were out getting a
Starbucks.

NICOLE
No. I can't really afford Star--

JOHN
Because you were fifteen minutes
late and-- You can't afford
Starbucks?

NICOLE
Not regularly, no. It's expensive.

JOHN
It is?

NICOLE
Yes.

JOHN

You mean on a teacher's salary. Is that what you're saying?

NICOLE

Well I *am* a teacher...who's paid a teacher's salary, so--

JOHN

Are you all saying that kind of thing now? I mean is that a directive from the union or something. Let the parents know you can't afford a Starbucks coffee and maybe they'll be more sympathetic?

NICOLE

(off her files)

Look why don't we just--

JOHN

Because I couldn't be more sympathetic than I already am. Sympathetic and supportive of everything you teachers have to do. Okay that group effort thing is a bit wonky but basically-- Do you think he's intimidated by her? Whatshername?

NICOLE

Naomi?

JOHN

Yeah. I mean do you think throwing them together in such a competitive way might have--

NICOLE

They're reading partners. It's not a competition. They help each other.

JOHN

Equally?

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

JOHN

I mean since she comes from such a high expectation culture do you think she might be trying to outdo him in some way? That might explain the problem you're having with him.

NICOLE

I don't think his behaviour issues have anything to do with Naomi.

JOHN

Are you sure? Because when I was his age--

NICOLE

You were intimidated by seven-year-old girls?

JOHN

Yeah, kinda.

(chuckles)

Especially one very clever little... Anyway if you say that's not the case, that she hasn't cast a spell of superiority over him then--

NICOLE

Don't you think it's more likely that his behaviour is related to his mother's absence?

JOHN

Her absence?

NICOLE

She is, isn't she? Absent from your home?

JOHN

Yes. It's just that I never think of it as an absence.

NICOLE

You don't?

JOHN

No. I think of it as a sickening betrayal. A completely unexpected and very brutal disregard for her marriage vows and her duty to her offspring.

NICOLE

Patrick just said she was... gone.

JOHN

And that she is. Gone. Just fucking gone. Sorry. So...is this what usually happens to children who are abandoned by their mothers? They become disruptive little pukes.

NICOLE

That's a bit-- He's just having some fairly angry outbursts that are scaring the other children and we thought--

JOHN

Angry outbursts. Yeah. Well I've had a few of those myself lately. I mean when I'm not paralyzed by grief and humiliation.

(he starts to cry)

I'm...sorry.

NICOLE

No that's okay. It must be very--

JOHN

Any suggestions?

NICOLE

Excuse me?

JOHN

Any advice you could offer would be really appreciated.

NICOLE

Advice about...?

JOHN

I'm looking for a way to get through the horrible pain and embarrassment I'm experiencing.

NICOLE

I don't think I'm the person you should be asking about--

JOHN

You've never been left by someone?

NICOLE

No. Yes. I mean... in a way. Listen we shouldn't really be talking about... This is supposed to be a meeting about your-

JOHN

I know. I'm sorry--

NICOLE

Your son--

JOHN

Yes. Right. I'm very sorry.

NICOLE

It's not that I don't sympathize
with your--

JOHN

I'm also sorry for behaving like a
total asshole before. All that
nonsense about a fucking drawing.
That's not me. I mean I'm not that
kind of parent. Well I might be but
I usually try to hide it. I'm
just...

NICOLE

You're upset.

JOHN

Yeah. No. I'm not upset. I'm on the
verge of fucking losing it is what
I am! ... Look I think I need a
little break before we continue.

NICOLE

Sure. Or not.

JOHN

Or not what?

NICOLE

We don't really have to continue
this right now. I mean we could re-
schedule for when you're not so--

JOHN

No no no. I need to get to the
bottom of what's messing up my boy.
I mean if it is really his whore
mother then-- Sorry. Sorry about
the whore word. Look I'll be fine.
I'll just go get a latte or
something.

NICOLE

Okay...

JOHN

You want something?

NICOLE

No that's--

JOHN

On me. It's the least I can do.
Come on. Let me get you something
for godsake.

NICOLE

Sure. Okay. Thanks...

JOHN

A latte?

NICOLE

No...a lactose free no water taza
chai.

JOHN

What?

NICOLE

A latte would be fine

JOHN

Okay, yeah. I'll be right back.

He leaves. Then sticks his head back in.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Grande?

NICOLE

Yes, please.

JOHN

Got it.

He leaves.

Nicole starts to look through her files. The door opens and Rosie late 20s, sticks her head in cautiously. She is in tight clothes, has a fair amount of makeup on, and has a few piercings.

NICOLE

Hi there.

ROSIE

Is he gone? That crying guy who
just left, is he gone for good?

NICOLE

No. He's coming back.

ROSIE

Lucky you. I'm early for my
appointment, but I thought if he'd
gone--

NICOLE

Ms. Mack?

ROSIE

Rosie. Yeah. Hi.

NICOLE

Hi. Look, he'll probably be a little while, so we can talk now if you want.

ROSIE

(approaching)

Okay. Sure.

NICOLE

So you wanted to speak to me about a problem Sonya is having at school?

ROSIE

Yeah. I do.

Rosie is looking around the classroom. Nicole perches on the edge of her desk.

NICOLE

So what is it that--

ROSIE

She's scared.

NICOLE

Scared...

ROSIE

Yeah.

NICOLE

Scared of what?

ROSIE

You.

NICOLE

Me? Really?

ROSIE

Yeah.

NICOLE

Are you sure?

ROSIE

Well that's what she says. She says it's because you think she's not very smart. Is that right? You think she's a dummy or something?

NICOLE

No. No I-

ROSIE

Well she thinks you do. And it scares her. And that's why she doesn't talk much in class. You must have noticed that she hardly ever opens her mouth.

NICOLE

Yes. I have.

ROSIE

Well that's why. She thinks you'll judge her for what she says. Also because she's so afraid of you, it make it hard for her to...you know, hard for her to...

NICOLE

Concentrate?

ROSIE

Concentrate. Yeah. You've noticed that she has trouble doing that?

NICOLE

Yes. Sometimes.

ROSIE

Sometimes she has trouble, or sometimes you notice.

NICOLE

Both.

ROSIE

Right. Well if you want it to get better, this concentrating problem and this "not talking" problem too... you should try to stop making her feel--

NICOLE

Afraid...

ROSIE

Yeah. And stupid.

NICOLE

Okay first off, I don't think she's stupid. So I'm sure I don't treat her like she is.

ROSIE

You mean you don't mean to.

NICOLE

No I mean I don't. I mean even if she *was* stupid, and we don't ever use that word by the way... but even if she was I wouldn't treat her like she was. That's not how I--

ROSIE

How you what?

NICOLE

Teach.

ROSIE

You mean you don't do it intentionally. But we're all human, right. I have a cousin who's a total moron, and I sure don't mean to make her feel bad about it, but sometimes it's really hard. Because... well she's a moron. You see what I'm getting at here?

NICOLE

I'm not sure

ROSIE

Maybe it's because she wears too much makeup.

NICOLE

Your cousin?

ROSIE

No. Sonya.

NICOLE

Oh. Right. Well the fact that your eight year old daughter wears makeup is probably a matter we should discuss, but it doesn't--

ROSIE

She likes it. What's the harm?

NICOLE

Well it kind of separates her from the other kids.

ROSIE

And that's a problem?

NICOLE

At that age, unfortunately, yes it is. Because no matter how much we teach them about tolerance, if someone is not really like them, some kids can still be--

ROSIE

Nasty little pukers?

(smiles)

"Not like them." Yeah. And they're all basically the same, right. Yeah. That's why I was worried about putting her in a school in this neighbourhood. All the nice houses around here. And that one little apartment building where we are. You know the one I'm talking about, right?

NICOLE

There are several buildings in the area.

ROSIE

But just one that looks like ours. You know, where the grass is never mowed because the owner lives in Russia and he doesn't give a shit. We're living there with my aunt. At least for awhile... Okay I get it. I'll try pulling back on the mascara. The other kids can start thinking she's more like them than she actually is, and you can try to be nice to her. Deal?

NICOLE

I *am* nice to her.

ROSIE

Be nicer.

NICOLE

I can't be nicer.

ROSIE

Sure you can. Just make an effort.

NICOLE

You don't get it. I'm already at maximum niceness. I'm right up here. Right at the top. My whole teaching philosophy is based on being as nice as humanly possible at all times to these kids. And there are no exceptions. Ever.

ROSIE

Even if one of them doesn't really belong here.

NICOLE

I never said she didn't belong here. You said that.

ROSIE

Doesn't matter who said it, for chrissake. It's the truth.

NICOLE

This is a public school. Everyone belongs here.

ROSIE

Except for the ones who don't!

NICOLE

Do you tell her that. That she doesn't belong here.

ROSIE

No. What am I an idiot?

NICOLE

Well maybe that's not what comes out of your mouth. But if it's what you thinking she probably--

ROSIE

Do I tell her that most men are assholes? Because I think that too. But I bite my tongue, right. She saw her father deck me twice. And did I tell he was a useless piece of shit? No. I told her that he had a problem, but that's it. I mean I wanted to tell her I prayed every night that she was a dyke and that she'd never have anything to do with men, but I held that in too. So obviously I wasn't going to poison her about your precious school, was I?

John comes back carrying two drinks.

JOHN

(off Rosie)

Oh...sorry.

ROSIE

(to Nicole)

Is one of those for you?

NICOLE

Yes.

ROSIE

(to John)

She sent you out for coffee?

NICOLE

No. He was going, and he--

JOHN

I offered to get her one.

ROSIE

So it's a bribe or something?

JOHN

What. No it's a-- Why would I want to bribe her?

ROSIE

So she'd treat your kid better.

NICOLE

I don't need to be bribed to--

ROSIE

People don't *need* to be bribed. They *like* to be bribed.

JOHN

That's true. It makes them feel powerful.

NICOLE

Well not me, it doesn't.

(to Rosie)

And he wasn't bribing me. He was apologizing.

JOHN

Yeah. Sort of. It was kind of an apology.

ROSIE

For being an asshole you mean.

(off his look)

Hey I get it. Your wife left you for another man, so you're kinda--

JOHN

(to Nicole)

You told her?

NICOLE

Absolutely not.

ROSIE

I was accidently listening at the door.

NICOLE/JOHN

What?

ROSIE

I mean accidently listening at that particular moment.

(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I was just trying to get an idea when you might be finished for godsake.

(off their looks)

Hey these things happen...

JOHN

Only when someone like you fails to respect other people's privacy.

ROSIE

I meant getting left for somebody else. That's what the big "act of betrayal" was, eh. Maybe if you didn't behave like such an asshole.

JOHN

Excuse me?

ROSIE

Well you said it first.

NICOLE

Okay I think maybe we should--

JOHN

(to Rosie)

Who the hell are you anyway?

ROSIE

Who the hell are *you*?

NICOLE

Okay. I mean it. That's enough!

ROSIE

Yeah we better watch out, or she'll make us stand in the corner.

NICOLE

I don't do things like that.

ROSIE

Well that's a lie. You made my Sonya stand in the corner for most of a day once.

NICOLE

That's not true.

ROSIE

Are you saying she lied about that?

NICOLE

Yes. I am.

Nicole picks up her purse, heads for the door.

JOHN
What are you doing?

NICOLE
Leaving. I have a meeting.

JOHN
But we've got more to discuss.

NICOLE
You mean about your son or your marriage?

JOHN
Both.

NICOLE
Sorry.

She leaves.

ROSIE
I'll talk to you about your marriage.

JOHN
What makes you think I'd want to do that?

ROSIE
Well if you're desperate enough to talk to your kid's grade three teacher about it...

JOHN
Yeah that was... Stuff just popped out.

ROSIE
If you say so. Look people need to talk to people. And you obviously don't have anyone else, do you?

JOHN
No. Not really.

ROSIE
So go ahead then.

He is looking at her.

JOHN
She met him at a night class.

ROSIE
Her lover?

JOHN

Please don't call him her lover. She's not in love with him. She's just... *excited* by him. There's a difference.

ROSIE

Okay.

JOHN

She loves *me*. She had a child with me. She made a home with me. A life with me. Then he came along, got her excited, and made her forget all that.

ROSIE

And she's admitted this to you. That they're...

JOHN

Having sex? No of course not. Apparently she lacks both courage and a conscience.

ROSIE

But you have proof that's what they've been up to.

JOHN

I know her. That's my proof. When she left me she said it was just because she needed some space. All of a sudden she needed space. This was a month after she met this guy at some stupid Spanish course she was taking. So I put it together. I'm convinced he seduced her. Guys who all of a sudden, in adulthood, want to learn Spanish? They're probably all sexual predators.

ROSIE

So... it's really him you're mad at then.

JOHN

Well he seduced her, but he didn't drug her. She was capable of doing the right thing and resisting temptation.

ROSIE

Some guys can be pretty persuasive.

JOHN

I guess.

ROSIE

I can have someone talk to him if you want.

JOHN

Talk to him?

ROSIE

Yeah. Or something more. I mean if the talking doesn't seem to be working.

JOHN

You mean beat him up?

ROSIE

Or something more. Whatever's needed.

JOHN

Jesus. Are you kidding me?

ROSIE

Sure.

JOHN

Are you?

ROSIE

Yeah. Unless you like the idea. Then I'm serious.

JOHN

Jesus.

Nicole comes back in. She looks a little shaken.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I thought you had a meeting.

NICOLE

I got stood up.

JOHN

By whom?

NICOLE

The principal.

ROSIE

(joining them)
Really? That's not good.

JOHN

Yeah just how far down the ladder are you in this place?

ROSIE
Probably right at the bottom. It's grade 3 for godsake. You think the higher ups give a shit about what goes on in here?

NICOLE
Actually they do. The principal probably just--

ROSIE
Are you okay. You look a little freaked out.

NICOLE
I'm fine. Listen, I don't meant to be rude. But why are you still here?

ROSIE
Me or him?

NICOLE
Both of you.

JOHN
Well I thought we should continue talking. I think we were getting somewhere. I mean in regards to my son's behavioural problem.

NICOLE
I'm not sure that's true. But even if it is, that's a discussion that definitely requires more--

ROSIE
(to John)
What is it?

JOHN
What's what?

ROSIE
His problem.

JOHN
That's none of your business.

ROSIE
Unless it's related.

NICOLE
To what?

ROSIE
To how you treat Sonya.
(to John)
(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Does she make him think he's an idiot?

JOHN

No. I mean I don't think so.

(to Nicole)

You don't do that, do you?

NICOLE

No. Of course not.

JOHN

Right. Why would you?

(to Rosie)

He's exceptionally intelligent.

ROSIE

So is Sonya. But this one here has--

JOHN

(to Nicole)

Okay here's the issue. He's seen her with a grade four reader.

ROSIE

Sonya?

JOHN

No. Whatsherename.

NICOLE

Naomi. She's his son's reading partner.

JOHN

Except she's reading at a higher level, isn't she?

NICOLE

She needed to be challenged.

JOHN

So you challenged her to skip a reading grade.

NICOLE

I thought she was ready to move on.

JOHN

But not Patrick.

NICOLE

No. Not Patrick.

JOHN

Hey. Patrick can read the newspaper.

NICOLE
I find that hard to believe.

JOHN
You what?

NICOLE
Does he actually understand what he's reading when he's "reading" the newspaper.

JOHN
I don't know. I mean I sometimes don't understand what I'm reading in the fucking thing.

ROSIE
(to Nicole)
What level does Sonya read at?

NICOLE
I'm not sure.

ROSIE
What's that mean?

NICOLE
It means she won't read.

Nicole picks up a reader.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
When I take her aside and do this...
(hands her a book)
Then ask her to read out loud from it, she won't.

ROSIE
Well we know why that is, don't we.

NICOLE
It's not because of that.

ROSIE
Sure it is.

JOHN
Because of what?

ROSIE
She's afraid to look stupid.

NICOLE
Or maybe it's because she can't read very well.

ROSIE

Well what's "very well" mean to you anyway?

JOHN

Well obviously it's being able to read at a grade four level and nothing less.

NICOLE

Okay you're completely missing the point of why I did that.

JOHN

Doesn't matter why you did it. It's had a really harmful effect on my kid.

ROSIE

Yeah. You know, maybe it's because you have these pretty tight-assed standards that some of your pupils are afraid of you.

NICOLE

Jesus. Okay. Look. Clearly you both need much more time to discuss whatever issues your children may or may not be having in class.

JOHN

Well here I am.

ROSIE

Me too.

NICOLE

Yes, well I was thinking that I could make appointments for you both to come back some other time.

ROSIE

Together?

NICOLE

No. Why would you need to come together?

ROSIE

Because of the possible similarity in our problems.

NICOLE

There *is* no--

JOHN

What's wrong with now?

ROSIE
Now's okay with me too.

JOHN
Except I was here first.

ROSIE
Well I was here last. So that would
make me next.

JOHN
What the hell are you talking
about?

NICOLE
It doesn't matter what she's
talking about.

ROSIE
Why not? Because I'm wearing too
much makeup?

What? No because there's not enough
time-- I have to be somewhere so--

JOHN
Okay let's get started then.
(to Rosie)
Okay?

ROSIE
Okay what?

JOHN
You should leave.

ROSIE
I'm not going anywhere. No.
Actually that works for me. I gotta
make a call.

She starts out.

JOHN
Probably to her drug dealer.

ROSIE
(returning)
Don't be too long though, or I
might run out of patience. And when
that happens things could get a
little ugly.

Rosie leaves, taking out her cell.

JOHN
What's she mean by that?

NICOLE
(distracted)
What?

JOHN
Not your typical parent, is she? I
mean for this school.

NICOLE
It's a public school.

JOHN
You mean you couldn't keep her out.
No I guess that's good. I mean
where would you draw the line?

NICOLE
All you have to do is live in the
district.

JOHN
And she does? That woman? She lives
in the district?

NICOLE
Look I'm not up to dealing with
this right now.

JOHN
What do you mean by "this?"

NICOLE
I guess I mean you.

JOHN
Really?

NICOLE
Yeah. And...her. I'm sorry. I know
it's not very professional but...
(taking him in)
My mother died.

JOHN
Really?

NICOLE
I got a call from my sister while I
was on my way to the principal's
office

JOHN
Oh. I was wondering why you looked
so bad. I'm sorry...
(hugs her)
...very very--

NICOLE
What are you doing?

JOHN
I'm just--

NICOLE
Let go of me.

JOHN
Sure but... I need to do this
first.

NICOLE
No. You don't. It's completely
unnecessary.

JOHN
Well it's not really for your sake.
I just need some human contact.
Okay?

NICOLE
No. It's not. So just--

JOHN
Shush. Please. Just for awhile.

NICOLE
No! That's enough!
(pushing him away)
Now get the hell off me!

JOHN
Sure. Yeah. Sorry. That was--

NICOLE
Wrong. It was very wrong.

JOHN
Yeah. And thoughtless too. I mean
here you are with a dead mother on
your mind and... all that means.
The funeral plans. Who to call.
Who's gonna provide the food...
(off her look)
And then there's your grief. Yeah
and I was only thinking of my own
very intense needs for human warmth
of some kind--

NICOLE
(wiping her eyes)
You should probably just leave.

JOHN
Okay but--

NICOLE

But what?

JOHN

Well I still need you to tell me how you think Patrick will be. You know, in the long run.

NICOLE

You mean do I think he'll ever get to a grade four reading level?

JOHN

I mean do you think he'll stop being so angry anytime soon?

NICOLE

I don't know.

JOHN

Okay. Well do you think he might be strong enough to take any other shocks?

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

JOHN

You know if some other bad thing happens.

NICOLE

Like what?

JOHN

Nothing specific. Just wondering...

NICOLE

Well you and your wife separating is hopefully all he'll have to face for a number of years.

JOHN

Of course. But this is life, right. Who escapes the pain and the disappointment for very long. I barely survived failing the bar three times.

(mimes drinking)

My point is, not everyone is strong enough to just suck it up and move on.

(off her look)

I'm sorry. I wasn't talking about you. You're clearly genuinely upset about your loss. I was just... Did she suffer, your mother?

NICOLE

Yes. She did.

JOHN

But in the end it was better,
right. It was more peaceful. More
serene?

NICOLE

No. It wasn't.

JOHN

Not even at the end? Because you
have to think that at the *very* end,
you know, when she was--

NICOLE

Actually dead?

JOHN

Well it *must* have ended then for
god's sake. I mean here's hoping, at
least

NICOLE

Okay. That's enough. I have
absolutely no reason to listen to
you keep talking.

JOHN

I'm sorry?

NICOLE

I quit my job this morning, so I'm
not your son's teacher anymore. And
my sister is waiting for me at the
hospital so--

JOHN

I'm sorry? You quit your job?

NICOLE

Yes.

JOHN

Really?

NICOLE

Yes.

JOHN

Really. And when are you leaving?

NICOLE

Now.

JOHN

Now? You're leaving now.

NICOLE

Yes. This was my last day. It was supposed to be next week. But I don't think I'll make it that long.

JOHN

Whoa. This isn't right. You can't quit in the middle of the school year. What about Patrick? This is just the kind of shock he might not be able to deal with. Well not this by itself. But if anything *else* were to happen ...well it just makes him even more vulnerable, doesn't it?

NICOLE

I'm sure whoever they find to replace me will--

JOHN

No no. You have to stay.

NICOLE

I can't.

JOHN

Come on. Okay you lost a parent. But you're not a kid. Toughen up. Deal with it.

NICOLE

Excuse me?

JOHN

How old was she? Your mother.

NICOLE

What's that got to do with--

JOHN

Just tell me!

NICOLE

She was seventy-four.

JOHN

Seventy-four. Okay that's a little premature but not all that shocking. I'd lost both my parents before I was thirty-five, and I'm all right.

NICOLE

Are you?

JOHN

Well I have my--

NICOLE

I don't think you're all right in the least. I think you're a neurotic idiot.

JOHN

You do?

NICOLE

Yeah.

JOHN

Really? You just decided that now?

NICOLE

No. The moment I met you.

JOHN

Well I don't present very well since my marriage fell apart. I mean my ability to deal with things has kind of eroded so--

NICOLE

Please go away.

JOHN

Please don't quit.

NICOLE

Go away. I need some time alone to get myself together before I go to the hospital.

JOHN

Patrick will need you.

NICOLE

Go away.

JOHN

Just think about it, okay. Think about staying on.

NICOLE

If you don't leave I'm calling security.

JOHN

If you stay I'll augment your salary. It'll be our little secret deal on the side. You stay and help Patrick cope with whatever comes his way in the next little while, and I'll make sure you're very well compensated.

She takes out her phone.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Just think about it, okay. It's the right thing to do.

He starts off. Nicole watches him, then jots something down on a piece of paper.

NICOLE

Wait.

He stops.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Here. My cell number. If there's a problem with Patrick that you *really* think I can help you with... you can call.

JOHN

I can?

NICOLE

Yes. But it has to be about Patrick. Not you.

JOHN

I understand.

NICOLE

That's almost definitely not true. It's people like you who ruined this job for me.

JOHN

What do you mean by people like me?

NICOLE

I mean people who are so up their asses that they can't understand anything about what other people might be going through. People who expect me to listen to every stupid thing that comes out of their mouths. Listen to them whine about their personal lives... how much stress they're under being a parent, how their wife or their husband ran off on them, whatever...

(looks at him, shakes her head)

I mean no wonder your son has outrageous temper tantrums. His mother's left him in the hands of an unbalanced idiot. I'm serious.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

You can call about Patrick, but I don't want to hear another word about *any* of your personal problems ever again.

JOHN

Got it.
(takes the card)
And thanks.

He leaves.

Rosie comes in.

NICOLE

Oh for godsake. Not you now.

ROSIE

It's my turn.
(gestures to door)
What's wrong with him?

NICOLE

What's wrong with *you*?

ROSIE

What?

NICOLE

What kind of idiot lets her eight year old come to school made up like a hooker!?

ROSIE

Hey!

NICOLE

Jesus...

Nicole leaves.

ROSIE

(yelling out the door)
She likes it! She thinks it's fun!!

She looks around the classroom. Looks in Nicole's desk. Finds a booklet. Picks it up. Looks it over.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

John comes back in.

JOHN

Where was she going?

ROSIE

Beats me.

JOHN

Might have something to do with her mother dying.

ROSIE

He mother died?

JOHN

So she says.

ROSIE

Wow. I feel kinda bad now. I mean for giving her a hard time.

JOHN

The hell with her. She has no loyalty.

ROSIE

I thought you'd left.

JOHN

I wanted to tell you that...
(extends a hand)
I'm in.

ROSIE

You're in what?

JOHN

You know... the thing we were talking about before. But something more than a beating, okay.

ROSIE

Are you sure?

JOHN

Yeah. But for both of them.

ROSIE

Your wife too? Jesus, man. That's extreme.

JOHN

Maybe. But I've given it some thought, and I have to move on with a clean slate.

ROSIE

Yeah. I get that. But what about your kid?

JOHN

He'll be okay. I checked with Whatsehername...

ROSIE

Who?

JOHN

The teacher. She thought he'd be okay... basically.

ROSIE

You told her you're were gonna have his mother whacked?

JOHN

No. Come on. I asked her... without being specific, if he could take another shock. Anyway she didn't seem too worried.

ROSIE

Yeah well that could be because she doesn't really give a damn.

JOHN

Yeah. But she did. I mean before she quit, so there could have been some residual--

ROSIE

She quit. She quit her job?

JOHN

Yeah...

ROSIE

Jesus... I guess that explains this.

(hold up booklet)
I found it in her desk.

JOHN

What were you doing in her desk?

ROSIE

Well I've got concerns about who's teaching my kid, right. Who's making her stand in a corner, who's treating her like a retard...

JOHN

What is it?

ROSIE

It's a study guide. She's taking her real estate exam.

JOHN

No kidding.

(takes it from her)
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I thought she quit because she was burned out. She told me it was because of parents like me. I mean us.

ROSIE

Really?

JOHN

Apparently we're just too much to deal with.

ROSIE

We are?

JOHN

Well that was definitely the implication. But it's not that is it? It's clearly about the money.

ROSIE

I thought teachers made good money.

JOHN

Not enough to afford a Starbucks on a regular basis. At least that's what the union is telling them to say.

ROSIE

Fuck. So she quit.

JOHN

Yeah.

ROSIE

And when's she leaving.

JOHN

She already left.

ROSIE

That was her leaving for good just now?

JOHN

Yeah.

ROSIE

Jesus. I don't know how I feel about that. I mean on the one hand--

JOHN

Could we get back to that thing I need you to do?

ROSIE
Yeah I'll ask around. See who's interested.

JOHN
You mean you've got choices?

ROSIE
Yeah well it's rough out there.

JOHN
What is?

ROSIE
Jobs are scarce, right. I know a lot of guys who are pretty desperate. I'm pretty desperate myself. If I can't get more shifts at work I might--

JOHN
No. It can't be you.

ROSIE
Why not?

JOHN
Well we're connected now. We've been seen together.

ROSIE
Right. Okay. So I'll just be the middleman.

JOHN
Sure. Whatever. One more thing though. He has to get done first.

ROSIE
Why?

JOHN
Because I want her to watch him die.

ROSIE
Hey that's not a healthy way to approach this thing. It's way too twisted. Look, you have to get on with things afterwards, right. You have to be a dad to your kid. And with you wanting to have it done like that, it might push you into a very dark place you can't come back from.

JOHN
I think I'm already in that place.

ROSIE

No. You're just humiliated. You can get over that. We'll just do the one execution. The Spanish guy dies.

JOHN

He's not Spanish. He was just *taking* Spanish.

ROSIE

Is that important? No. What's important is getting revenge on him, is something you can live with no problem. But your kid's mother...

JOHN

Yeah. You could be right. It's just that when I was thinking about it, having her watch the blood run out of his body and his eyes roll back in his head... it could really mess her up.

Nicole comes back.

ROSIE

Change your mind?

NICOLE

About what?

JOHN

I told her that you quit.

NICOLE

Oh.

(to Rosie)

No I just forgot something.

She heads for her desk.

John is holding up the booklet.

JOHN

You mean this?

NICOLE

You were in my desk?

JOHN

No *she* was.

ROSIE

Look if you're in the habit of snitching like that, I don't think we'll be able to do business together.

NICOLE

(taking the booklet)
Is that why you're still here? You're forming some kind of business partnership? If so, you should hurry up. The janitor is going to toss you out pretty soon.

ROSIE

What are we going to tell our children?

NICOLE

The best thing is to just apologize and tell them you'll try harder to be responsible parents in the future.

JOHN

She means about you leaving.

ROSIE

No about *why* she's leaving.

(to Nicole)

Do you want us to tell them you'd rather be selling condos than teaching them?

JOHN

She's got a point.

NICOLE

Really. What is it?

ROSIE

You've got a responsibility. Didn't you take an oath or something?

JOHN

What about math?

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

JOHN

I suppose that Korean girl has an edge there too. If putting them together has given Patrick any feelings of inferiority about his math skills, you have a responsibility to fix it.

NICOLE
Don't be an idiot.

JOHN
Hey if he gives up on math, he's
giving up on his future.

ROSIE
Sonya's good at math. But I guess
you haven't noticed that.

NICOLE
Yes. I have. But grade three math
isn't exactly an indicator of--

ROSIE
Of what? Intelligence? You won't
let go of that, will you. No matter
what, it's always going to be
"Sonya the Dummy."

NICOLE
Will you please just shut up about
that.

ROSIE
Hey.

JOHN
(to Nicole)
So?

NICOLE
What?

JOHN
The math issue. Is whatshername
some kind of numbers genius?

NICOLE
Like I was trying to say, it's too
early to--

JOHN
You mean she hasn't been tested? I
thought you guys were all over that
stuff. Aptitude and IQ... So?

NICOLE
What?

JOHN
Answer the question.

NICOLE
What question?

JOHN

I just want to know if that girl
has managed to undermine my son's--

NICOLE

Excuse me. I have to sit down.

She does.

ROSIE

What's wrong?

NICOLE

I'm just a little...dizzy.

ROSIE

Oh wow...

(looking closely)

She's on something. Look at her
pupils.

He does.

JOHN

Yeah.

(to Nicole)

What's the-- Oh.

(to Rosie)

It's her mother.

ROSIE

What about her?

JOHN

I told you. She died today.

ROSIE

Today?

(to Nicole)

That right?

NICOLE

(a little out of it)

What?

ROSIE

Your mom died *today*?

NICOLE

(a little out of it)

Ah... Yeah. She did.

ROSIE

So what are you doing here?

NICOLE

What?

ROSIE
What...are you...doing here!?

NICOLE
(quietly, trying to focus)
Can't deal with it.

JOHN
What did she say?

ROSIE
She can't deal with it.
(to Nicole)
So... what, you took drugs?

NICOLE
What?

ROSIE
You...took... drugs?!

NICOLE
Pills. I took a few...xanax. What's
it to you?

ROSIE
It's nothing to me except it shows
how messed up you are. Maybe too
messed up to be teaching our kids.

JOHN
Yeah. And too messed up to decide
who you make reading partners.

ROSIE
(to Nicole)
There's side effects with Xanax,
you know.
(to John)
It turned me into a zombie.

JOHN
Me too.

ROSIE
How long were you on it?

JOHN
Just until I stopped feeling
suicidal.

ROSIE
I quit when I decided I wasn't
gonna let my husband ruin my life.
I mean he wasn't on anti-
depressants and *he* was the asshole,
right.

JOHN

Yeah. I get that. Plus for me I had a problem with constipation.

ROSIE

Well whatever... the important thing is you stopped.

(to Nicole)

How long you been on it?

NICOLE

On what?

ROSIE

Nevermind.

NICOLE

Right. Nevermind...

Nicole starts to cry.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Can't do anything now. Can't even be there. Just can't...

Rosie's cell rings. She answers it.

ROSIE

(into cell)

He what? ... Did you remind him about the restraining order? ... Well if he comes back call the cops ... It doesn't matter if it upsets Sonya ... He has to learn to keep the fuck away from us ... Okay I'll see ya ... I'm not sure. Probably not too much longer.

JOHN

You've got a restraining order against your husband?

ROSIE

Yeah...

JOHN

Why?

NICOLE

(looking up)

He beat her up.

ROSIE

Hey I wasn't prepared to share that information.

NICOLE

You shared it with me.

ROSIE
I did?

JOHN
How often?

NICOLE
Just once. Earlier tonight.

JOHN
I meant...
(to Rosie)
How often did he beat you?

NICOLE
What's it to you?

JOHN
I'm just trying to place you, I
guess.

ROSIE
Place me?

JOHN
Yeah. I mean if it was just once...
okay that can happen to anyone.
But if it happened a lot, and you
hung around then you're--

ROSIE
I'm what?

NICOLE
A battered woman. And your child--

ROSIE
What about her?

NICOLE
She needs help.

ROSIE
You think?

NICOLE
Yes. I do. She's the victim of that
violence too. And you should be
trying to get her some counselling
instead of coming in here, blaming
me for her fear and her inability
to--

ROSIE
Look lady, I don't think you're in
any condition to be suggesting any
one else needs help.

NICOLE
I'm just upset.

ROSIE
In the wrong place.

NICOLE
What?

ROSIE
You're upset in the wrong friggin'
place. You should be with your dead
mother.

(to John)
What did you mean before?

JOHN
When?

ROSIE
When you said it could happen to
anyone once. Did you get beaten?

JOHN
No. I meant...

NICOLE
He meant he did it. He beat his
wife.

JOHN
That's not true.

NICOLE
Child services informed the school.

JOHN
They did?

NICOLE
So we could keep an eye on your
son. See if there were any--

JOHN
(to Rosie)
It wasn't a beating. It was a push.

NICOLE
(to Rosie)
She broke her arm.

JOHN
You shouldn't be sharing that
information with her.

NICOLE
What can I say? I'm pretty heavily
medicated.

ROSIE

Also she isn't a teacher anymore,
so she can say shit.

(to Nicole)

Right?

NICOLE

I guess.

JOHN

It was an accident. She fell over a
chair.

NICOLE

It's why she left him.

JOHN

She left me for someone else.

NICOLE

Someone who wouldn't beat her.

JOHN

That had nothing to do with it. She
was in love with the prick. It was
always her intention to leave me.

(to Rosie)

Look I know about people. I'm in
human resources, for godsake.

NICOLE

I thought you were a lawyer.

JOHN

I couldn't get a job.

ROXY

What kind of lawyer can't get a
job?

JOHN

Well it's not as easy as you, or
anyone who knows as little as you,
might think. The point is, I'm in
human resources now, and I've
developed the ability to assess who
people are and what they're capable
of doing almost instantly.

ROSIE

Really? So you knew what I was
capable of doing right away then.

JOHN

What? Oh. Look we shouldn't be
talking about this in front of--

ROSIE

Like I was actually going to do anything. Idiot. I was just playing along. You know, getting you to let off some steam. I "assessed" that you just needed to think you were going to get revenge.

(to Nicole)

He wanted me to beat up his wife's lover.

NICOLE

Jesus...

JOHN

She offered. I was just playing along too. You know, venting.

ROSIE

Oh no, I was the one playing along. You were totally into it.

JOHN

Come on. You think I really wanted the guy beat up?

ROSIE

Yeah. Until you changed your mind and decided you wanted to have him killed.

JOHN

I think that was actually your idea.

ROSIE

Like hell it was.

JOHN

Well if it came from me, it was just more venting.

ROSIE

Maybe. But the point is you thought I'd do it. That's how good you are at "assessing" what people are capable of and who they really are.

JOHN

Well I knew right away that you were an asshole.

NICOLE

That's because you are too.

JOHN

Excuse me?

NICOLE

(shrugs)

I thought we all agreed on that.

ROSIE

So did I.

JOHN

(to Nicole)

Well if I'm an asshole, you're a coward who's running away from her teaching responsibilities.

NICOLE

Gimme a break. Are you actually aware of some of the stuff that comes out of your mouth?

JOHN

Like?

NICOLE

Like calling me a coward for needing a break from six or seven hours a day with 23 eight year olds, some of whom have already been damaged beyond repair by their parents.

ROSIE

What a lousy thing to say.

JOHN

Yeah. What's wrong with you?

NICOLE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

ROSIE

I think you did.

JOHN

Yeah. It really sounded like you did.

NICOLE

No I'm... I'm just...

JOHN

You're just what?

ROSIE

I think she's feeling guilty.

JOHN

Yeah? Well if that's true she should just stay. At least until the end of the school year.

ROSIE

I meant about her mother.

JOHN

What about her mother?

ROSIE

Well why isn't she there now? Why did she have to drug herself to even *think* about being there with her?

JOHN

Whatya mean "with her?" She's dead.

ROSIE

So what?

JOHN

Well it has to make some kind of difference.

ROSIE

I mean I bet she wasn't there much even when she wasn't dead.

NICOLE

What would you know about it?

ROSIE

Well does anybody wanna watch someone they love die? I didn't. But I sucked it up and did it.

NICOLE

Good for you.

ROSIE

And I never left my mum's side for the whole month it took her to do it. I figured I owed her. Maybe that's it. Maybe you figured you didn't owe your mum squat.

NICOLE

It's not about "owing her." It's not even about *her*.

(looks at her)

And once she was dead, what then?

ROSIE

Whatya mean, what then?

NICOLE

Well what did you say?

ROSIE

Who to?

NICOLE

Well was your sister there? Was your father there? Didn't you have to say anything to them? Didn't you have to listen to them say things to you?

ROSIE

I don't have a sister. And my father disappeared when I was ten.

NICOLE

Lucky you.

ROSIE

Jesus...

NICOLE

Like I said, you don't know shit about it.

She is looking around the classroom.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

This is a real waste, you know.

ROSIE

What is?

NICOLE

Me. Having to quit teaching. I know so much.

ROSIE

About what?

NICOLE

Teaching. What else? I know a hell of a lot about teaching and about kids.

ROSIE

Says you.

NICOLE

Trust me, it's true.

(looks at them)

For example, I'm almost positive neither of your children crawled before they walked.

ROSIE

What the...

NICOLE

(looks at them)

Well did they?

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

(to Rosie)
Sonya didn't, did she?

ROSIE
No. But so what?

NICOLE
(to John)
And Patrick?

JOHN
Yeah. He crawled. Backwards.

NICOLE
That doesn't count.

JOHN
Count for what?

NICOLE
And Sonya probably rolled...or
squirmed.

ROSIE
Squirmed? You mean like a snake?

NICOLE
Well was it? Was it like a snake or
did she--

ROSIE
She rolled, okay! She...just
rolled.

NICOLE
Yeah. And then one day she just got
up and started to walk.

ROSIE
Yeah. She did. And it was pretty
amazing.

NICOLE
And also unfortunate. There's
theory - controversial but it has
some backing- that children who
never crawled before they walked
often suffer from various forms of
cognitive deficiencies.

ROSIE
What the fuck...

JOHN
Patrick crawled!

NICOLE

Crawling is not something you do backwards. Moving backwards on you hands and knees is something else.

JOHN

What?

NICOLE

It's wrong. It's a sign that something's wrong.

JOHN

Really? Can it be fixed.

NICOLE

There's a therapy for it.

JOHN

What kind of therapy?

NICOLE

Primal motion yoga therapy.

(to Rosie)

It will be good for Sonya too.

ROSIE

Go fuck yourself. I'm not sending her to any--

NICOLE

It looks like this.

She gets on the floor in a difficult yoga position, tries to move, but falls over onto her side.

ROSIE

Jesus Christ...

NICOLE

Eventually when properly executed over time, a child's cognitive abilities are greatly improved. I don't feel so good.

She turns and lies on her back.

JOHN

So all of a sudden what I'm hearing from you is that my son's "cognitive" abilities are not up to scratch.

NICOLE

Which is why he has a reading problem.

JOHN

So now you're saying he has a reading problem?

NICOLE

Yes. That's why I have Naomi helping him.

JOHN

Helping him? You told me they were partners.

NICOLE

I lied.

JOHN

Why?

NICOLE

Because it's almost impossible for people like you to hear the truth about their kids.

JOHN

Jesus...

ROSIE

(to Nicole)

Hey.

NICOLE

What?

ROSIE

Are you okay. There's a lot of very strange shit coming out of your mouth right now. It's like you're not actually thinking about what you're saying before you say it. Because you're saying some really hurtful shit.

NICOLE

I am?

ROSIE

Yeah. Plus you're lying on the floor.

NICOLE

I am?

ROSIE

Yeah.

(putting out a hand)

Here, let me help you up.

Nicole puts her hand out, but Rosie can't do it that way. She bends down to get hold of Nicole's shoulders.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Hey, you've been drinking.
(to John)
I can smell it on her.

JOHN
(to Nicole)
You were drinking in your
classroom?

NICOLE
No. In my car. I keep a mickey in
my glove box.

JOHN
Really?

NICOLE
Yeah. "Really." And I needed a
little something before I headed to
the hospital.

ROSIE
You had more than a little. You're
smashed.

NICOLE
Come on. From one drink?

ROSIE
Well plus the xanax, I guess.

NICOLE
(sitting)
Yeah. I forgot about that.

JOHN
Well that explains a lot.

NICOLE
Yeah? Like what?
(trying to stand)
You sorry excuse for a...

JOHN
It explains all these very
questionable opinions you have
about my son. And his various, his
various...

NICOLE
Issues! He has a lot of issues. And
most of them are your fault!

JOHN

Okay okay. I think I'm about to say something I might regret. I need some air.

He leaves.

NICOLE

(to Rosie)

Anyway I'm pretty sure I'm not the only teacher in this school who needs a little pick me up at the end of the day. Some of the older ones probably need one in the morning before they even enter the building.

(a hand out to Rosie)

Are you going to help me up or not?

ROSIE

I just did.

Nicole observes where she is now.

NICOLE

Right. Thanks.

ROSIE

Sure.

NICOLE

You know, I really think that primal therapy can help Sonya. She just needs a course correction.

ROSIE

A course correction?

NICOLE

Yeah. I guess you weren't able to spend much time with her when she was younger.

ROSIE

I did what I could.

NICOLE

Sure.

ROSIE

I had to work.

NICOLE

Yeah...

(sitting)

Two jobs, right?

ROSIE

Yeah when I could. And that meant--

NICOLE

Leaving her with your chronically unemployed husband.

ROSIE

You heard that from...

NICOLE

Childrens Services, yeah.

ROSIE

Yeah... I think he just propped her up in front of the TV. And left her there until I got home.

NICOLE

And Sesame Street can only do so much.

ROSIE

If she was even watching that. I mean I told him how much she liked it but--

NICOLE

I wish she'd talked to me more. Her test results are--

ROSIE

She's been tested then.

NICOLE

Yeah and she's basically--

ROSIE

Slow?

NICOLE

No. She's not slow. She's actually quite intelligent. But she's... different.

ROSIE

Yeah. Because she doesn't talk, because she wears makeup, because she--

NICOLE

Doesn't connect. She doesn't connect to other kids.

ROSIE

She's shy.

NICOLE

They don't think it's about shyness per se. They think it's because she wasn't socialized.

ROSIE

Who are "they"?

NICOLE

The Board psychologists.

ROSIE

And they think she wasn't socialized. Like you're suppose to do with your dog.

NICOLE

I don't have a dog, so I wouldn't know what--

ROSIE

You're supposed to let them hang out with other dogs.

NICOLE

Well it's probably a little more--

ROSIE

I took her to the park on my days off. Even her dad did that sometimes.

NICOLE

And she played with other kids there?

ROSIE

Sometimes.

NICOLE

And other times?

ROSIE

She didn't. Look I don't want to talk to you about her anymore okay.

NICOLE

You don't?

ROSIE

No. I mean what's the point. You're leaving, and she's... she's...

Rosie might be crying. It's hard to tell because she has her head turned.

NICOLE

Are you okay?

ROSIE
(looks at her)
I know she needs help. But I don't
want her to be treated like she's
... I mean I don't want her to go
someplace where they have her doing
all that crazy stuff you were doing
on the floor.

Rosie sits next to Nicole. Looks at her, puts her head
between her legs.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Her father's an addict.
(looks up)
You probably know that.

NICOLE
It was mentioned in the report.

ROSIE
Just mentioned?

NICOLE
Mentioned a lot.

ROSIE
Yeah well he's tried to kick it but
so far... he hasn't even gotten
close. I bet you don't have many
druggy parents in this school, eh.

NICOLE
Not many on the hard stuff,
probably. Prescription pills...
that's a different matter.

ROSIE
Like us and our xanax you mean.

NICOLE
No. Stronger things. And not just
for moments of extreme stress. I've
got a couple of mothers I'm pretty
sure pop pills all day.

ROSIE
Lorazepam?

NICOLE
Klonopin.

ROSIE
Jesus. My aunt's on that. And she's
barely there sometimes. That
reminds me...
(takes out her cell)
(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I better call to make sure she
hasn't put my kid in the clothes
dryer again.

NICOLE

Or...you could just go home.

ROSIE

Too early.

NICOLE

I'm sorry?

ROSIE

This is my one night out this
month.

NICOLE

Really?

ROSIE

Yeah you're actually my date.
(punches in a number)
You didn't know that?

Rosie is waiting for the call to be answered.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Four rings. Not a good sign.

NICOLE

So how does Sonya deal with her
dad's...problem.

ROSIE

He's been on heroin since way
before she was born. Heroin and
then meth... So I guess she's used
to it.

NICOLE

It's not something a child should
have to get used to.

ROSIE

No kidding.

(to phone)

Answer the fucking phone!

(to Nicole)

But it's not that simple.

(to phone)

What took you so long? What the
hell were you doing?

(smiles)

Don't feel bad. She cheats ... Yeah
I won't be much longer ... Yeah,
bye.

(to Nicole)

(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

So the two of them are playing some game, and Sonya--

She disconnects.

NICOLE

How?

ROSIE

How what?

NICOLE

How is it not that simple? She saw him desperate to get high. Then she saw him high. Right out of it probably. You let her go through all that.

ROSIE

Hey. I didn't "let" her go through anything. That's just what happened. You think I've had control over everything in my life, lady?

NICOLE

No. I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

ROSIE

Look when my mother was dying, there was no one else around to help us. We were alone and Brian was there.

NICOLE

Yeah well there have been consequences for Sonya from him being there. So you coming in here and telling me all her problems are *my* fault--
That was unfair. Really unfair.

ROSIE

Yeah, maybe. Except...

NICOLE

Except what?

ROSIE

Well you're pretty screwed up, aren't you?. So who knows how much of that you pass on to you pupils.

NICOLE

First of all--

ROSIE
What's this thing about your mother
all about?

NICOLE
She's dead.

ROSIE
Yeah I got that part. But you're
not there because of your sister
and your dad? What's that about?

NICOLE
I don't want to--

ROSIE
Hey I just told you basically my
whole life story.

NICOLE
Yeah but--

ROSIE
Sure I get it. We're supposed to do
that, but not you! You don't have
to share anything with us. We're
just--

NICOLE
It's about blame!

ROSIE
What is?

NICOLE
My problem with my father and
sister.

ROSIE
Yeah? Are you the one doing the
blaming?

NICOLE
Oh no. I'm the blam-ee. I can
handle it under normal
circumstances. I mean I've spent
most of my adult life being blamed.

ROSIE
Okay I apologize for that.

NICOLE
Do you apologize for all the other
parents?

ROSIE
A lot of them give you a rough
time, eh.

NICOLE

Roughly 30 per cent most years. Not all of them are blamers. I'd say about half of them are just too... involved in their kids' lives. Then there's about 15 percent of that 30 percent who just aren't informed enough about what's appropriate to teach 8 year olds. And the rest are... well, I'm pretty sure they're insane.

ROSIE

Wow. Really?

NICOLE

In all the ways that matter to me, yes.

ROSIE

And that... percentage stuff, you actually figured that out?

NICOLE

Well you start to feel a little persecuted so it's important to remind yourself that it's not everyone who's making you feel that way.

ROSIE

But your sister and your dad...

NICOLE

I haven't done anything right when it comes to my mother in years.

ROSIE

According to *them*.

NICOLE

Yeah, and according to them, they're right.

John comes into the room. His jacket is ripped. His shirt is out and he is bleeding from a cut over his eye.

JOHN

Still here. Good.

ROSIE

What the hell happened to you?

JOHN

Accident.

(points to Nicole)

It's her fault.

NICOLE

Of course.

JOHN

I went to get my son from my assistant's house. I was going to bring him back here and confront you with him in the room. But while I was driving there I decided maybe I should confront my wife first. Because really she started all this.

NICOLE

All this what?

JOHN

All this need to confront someone. You know, about his problems. I mean who gets the blame, right.

Rosie and Nicole exchange a look.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Then I thought "no fuck her, she's out of his life." So I headed to my assistant's house again. But then I thought maybe my wife shouldn't get off so easy so I-- Anyway, I guess I kept changing lanes while I was trying to decide where to go and then...well there was this pile up, which I guess I caused. But that's relatively unimportant compared to the issue at hand, so I just left. Because what's actually important is us getting to the root of why this kid of mine is as fucked up as you're suggesting he is!

NICOLE

I never said he was fucked up.

JOHN

Issues. He has issues. What the hell do you think that means?

ROSIE

It means he has issues.

JOHN

Be quiet. I'll get to you in a minute.

ROSIE

About what?

JOHN

False representation. Broken agreements.

(to Nicole)

You suggested that he's troubled.

NICOLE

He is.

JOHN

Then you suggested that he's kind of simple-minded.

NICOLE

No I didn't. Why would I think that?

JOHN

He can't fucking read!

NICOLE

Not at grade level, no.

JOHN

Well whose fault is that?

NICOLE

There's really no need to blame anyone.

ROSIE

She's right.

JOHN

Shut up.

NICOLE

He just needs some help.

JOHN

With math too apparently.

(to Rosie)

She should have noticed this, you know.

NICOLE

I did.

JOHN

Not you. My wife. This is just one of the ways she was negligent. This is just one of the reasons she should be made to suffer.

(to Rosie)

Which brings me to you.

ROSIE

You're bleeding pretty bad there.

JOHN

Don't try to change the subject.

NICOLE

She's right. I'll go see if I can find a first aid kit.

ROSIE

You don't keep one in the class?

NICOLE

I'm not allowed to administer first aid.

JOHN

(to Rosie)

They don't even trust her to put on a band aid. Quite a reputation she's got for herself.

NICOLE

It's not just me. None of the teachers can--

JOHN

(crying)

Negligent. Negligent and mean and selfish. And...

(staggering)

I think I need to sit down...

He does.

NICOLE

I'll see what I can come up with.

Nicole leaves.

JOHN

Okay listen to this. I realize it was pretty stupid to get into that thing in front of her... But I need to hear the truth from you. No fucking around. Can you help me with that problem with my wife?

ROSIE

You mean making her...?

JOHN

Dead. Yeah.

ROSIE

Her and her boyfriend.

JOHN

Yeah... Or were just messing with me, like you said.

ROSIE

Yeah...

JOHN

Yeah you were just messing with me?

ROSIE

Yeah, But maybe...

JOHN

Maybe what?

ROSIE

Maybe I wasn't. Not deep down.
Maybe I was actually toying with
the idea.

JOHN

Really?

ROSIE

Maybe. Where's your son?

JOHN

What?

ROSIE

You said you wanted him here for
the ...confrontation.

JOHN

I decided against it for some
reason.

ROSIE

Maybe because it would do more harm
than good.

JOHN

Yeah that sounds right.

ROSIE

Good. Maybe the accident shook some
sense into you.

JOHN

Maybe. It definitely gave me a
slight concussion and a couple of
broken ribs. I'm having a little
trouble breathing ... So whatya
say? Are we on or off.

ROSIE

We're somewhere in between.

JOHN

Jesus...

Nicole comes back in with a first aid kit.

NICOLE

There was one at reception.

JOHN

Good for the receptionist then. At least she's committed to her job.

ROSIE

See if there's any tape in there. He says he has some broken ribs.

NICOLE

Well then he needs to go to the hospital.

JOHN

I'm not going anywhere until we get to the bottom of this disaster.

John pulls a bunch of papers from his pocket.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Look what I found in my glove box.

ROSIE

What are those?

JOHN

Copies of the grade 3 government curriculum in math. Multiplication facts, units of measurement, properties, and all the other skills students are expected to learn in the school year.

ROSIE

Where'd you get that?

JOHN

Off the internet. It's great what you can find on there? You should try it out sometime.

ROSIE

What's that mean?

JOHN

It means I think you're an--

NICOLE

Okay, just a get a grip.

ROSIE

I don't think he can. He has a concussion.

NICOLE

(to John)

Is that right?

JOHN

Who the fuck cares? I printed this out a few months ago when I got his first report card from you.

NICOLE

And you noticed his mark wasn't--

JOHN

An A. It wasn't an A.

NICOLE

We don't mark like that. We just--

JOHN

Yeah yeah you just suggest things. Well the things you were suggesting made it sound like he wasn't an A student in math.

(a little sob)

Or even A minus. Or Jesus Christ maybe not even B. So I printed this out to see what was going on. And look at it!

(waving the papers)

Numbers and comparing. Place values. Addition. Division. Data and graphs.

(waves the paper in Nicole's face)

Data and fucking graphs! For eight year olds. Eight year olds with no mother at home. With no one to help because she's out banging a--

NICOLE

They're exercises. They're just meant to get them used to thinking about--

JOHN

They're mind fucks. No one can understand that stuff when they're eight years old.

NICOLE

Sure they can.

JOHN

Can my kid?

NICOLE

He will.

ROSIE
Mine can now. She's good at graphs.

JOHN
Fuck off.

ROSIE
Be careful.

JOHN
Or what? You'll get your husband to whack me?
(to Nicole)
He's a killer for hire, you know.

ROSIE
I never said that.

JOHN
You were definitely trying to leave me with that impression.

ROSIE
No I wasn't. The only person my husband's gonna kill is himself. I was thinking of Uncle Ray.

JOHN
Who the fuck is Uncle Ray?

ROSIE
He's my fucking uncle. Who do you think he is?

JOHN
And he's a killer?

ROSIE
No he's unemployed. Which might make him open to being a killer.

JOHN
Jesus...

NICOLE
Anyway, she was just messing with you about that?

JOHN
Messing with me. Right. Everyone's just... messing with me.
(to Nicole)
How is he in social studies?

NICOLE
We don't do social studies in grade 3.

JOHN

Oh. But you do charts and graphs
and...and place values. It's
insane. The world has gone insane!!

ROSIE

Or maybe its just you.

JOHN

(crying)
Yeah...

He puts his head on a table. Nicole approaches him slowly.

NICOLE

What's... wrong?

JOHN

I'm so... alone. Maybe we could go
to dinner sometime.

ROSIE

Jesus...

JOHN

(turns to her)
I'm sorry. Was that inappropriate?
Is that kind of inquiry considered
improper in your circle of thieves
and cutthroats.
(to Nicole)
It doesn't have to be dinner. Maybe
just a coffee.

ROSIE

God you're pathetic.

JOHN

Yes. Apparently I am. And what are
you?

ROSIE

I'm a woman who has a kid who can
do charts and graphs.
(to Nicole)
I think we should call the police.
He left the scene of an accident.
An accident he caused.

JOHN

Relax. I'm sure someone took down
my license number. I'm gonna pay
for my transgression. Which is a
lot more than my wife will do.

ROSIE

Unless I help you kill her, you
mean.

(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

(to Nicole)

He's serious about that, you know. We have to let the cops know about that whole thing when they get here too.

(taking out her phone)

This is for your own good. You're outta control.

JOHN

You don't want to do that. I'll implicate you.

ROSIE

Won't work. She's my witness.

NICOLE

To what?

ROSIE

Him making those suggestions that I kill his wife and her lover. And me looking like I didn't have a clue about what he was saying.

NICOLE

I don't know what you're talking about. The medication must have kicked in big time around then.

JOHN

(to Rosie)

It'll be your word against mine. And you're...

(shrugs)

You're ...

ROSIE

I'm what?

JOHN

You're ...whatever you are. And I'm...not.

ROSIE

You're not whatever I am? No matter what I am.

JOHN

Yes. I mean no.

ROSIE

You mean you're not poor.

JOHN

No. And I'm not ignorant uneducated either. And I don't have a criminal record.

ROSIE
Me neither.

JOHN
Yeah, right.

ROSIE
(approaching)
Yeah! Right!

JOHN
Okay oksy... But I bet your husband
does.

ROSIE
So what?

JOHN
Whatya mean so what? Because in a
he said/she said situation, I'll be
the one they-- Okay here's the
deal. Put your phone away. Like I
said the cops will get me
eventually for leaving the scene
and there's nothing to gain by
bringing up that ...other matter.

ROSIE
Except it'll be on my conscience.
You know, if you go ahead with it
and I don't do anything to stop
you.

(to Nicole)
You know what I mean, don't you.

NICOLE
If you're referring to what I think
you are, I'm almost positive he
hasn't got it in him. We're talking
about him killing his wife, right.

ROSIE
Yeah and her boyfriend.

NICOLE
Yeah. He can't do that. Look at
him.

ROSIE
Yeah. You're probably right, but
suppose you're not and we just let
him go ahead without--

JOHN
I'll give you money. Put away the
phone and I'll write you a cheque.

ROSIE
You're kidding.

NICOLE
No. He offered me money before too.

ROSIE
For what?

NICOLE
To make me stay and teach his kid
until the end of the year.

JOHN
That's before I discovered how not
dedicated you are.

NICOLE
The point is you offered me money.
Why?

JOHN
Because I have it.

NICOLE
And because you think it will solve
all your problems? Maybe that's the
message you send to your son.

JOHN
Don't be ridiculous.

NICOLE
(to Rosie)
Patrick came to school one day
wearing a t-shirt that read "Future
CEO."

JOHN
That was a joke.

NICOLE
It wasn't funny.
(to Rosie)
A lot of the parents thought it was
actually disgusting.

JOHN
Not all of them though. I picked
him up that day and some of the
parents thought it was pretty cute.

NICOLE
They're assholes. The parents who
thought that t-shirt was cute or
appropriate attire in any way, are
assholes just like you.

JOHN

It was his mother's joke. She's the asshole.

ROSIE

(to Nicole)

Is that right?

NICOLE

I don't know. I've never met her.

JOHN

Yes you have. She came to the last parents night.

NICOLE

No she didn't.

JOHN

She didn't?

NICOLE

No.

JOHN

Then where was she?

ROSIE

Guess.

JOHN

Jesus... It was going on even then?

NICOLE

Or maybe she was seeing someone else at that time.

JOHN

Jesus...

ROSIE

Maybe you should be asking yourself what it is?

NICOLE

Why what is?

ROSIE

What it is that's driving her to all these other men.

JOHN

All these other...? God.

He sobs some more.

ROSIE

Maybe it's that. I mean you cry a lot, dude. And it turns some women right off. Sure turns me off. Not that you ever turned me on. I'm just saying...

Nicole's cell goes off. She answers

NICOLE

Not now, okay.

She disconnects.

ROSIE

Your sister?

NICOLE

My father.

ROSIE

And you can't talk to him.

NICOLE

It won't be talking. It'll be blaming. Lots of blaming. About me not being there with my mom, to start with. Then he'll go on from there. There's a lot of things he'll have to remind me about. Ways I've disappointed him. It's the perfect opportunity for him to finally do it.

ROSIE

Do what?

NICOLE

Make the break. End our relationship. Ever since he found out I was studying for my real estate license the writing's been on the wall.

ROSIE

He's gonna to kick you outta the family for becoming a real estate agent.

NICOLE

No for leaving teaching. He thinks of it as a personal betrayal.

JOHN

(wiping his eyes)

He's right. It is. It's definitely part of the reason I'm feeling so vulnerable.

NICOLE

(ignoring him)

My father was a teacher. So was my mum. My sister has her fucking Masters in Education. The only one in the family not to enter the profession is my brother, and he's developmentally delayed, which I sometimes envy him for.

ROSIE

Wow.

NICOLE

Not really, but you know...

JOHN

(to Rosie)

She never cried. My wife. I never saw her shed a tear even once. So maybe you're right. Maybe the ice princess was just disgusted by me. She had a very low opinion of most people though.

(to Nicole)

She thought you were incompetent.

NICOLE

Like I said, we never met.

JOHN

It was because of the inane comments you wrote on the report cards.

NICOLE

I'm expected to write inane comments. I'm given them, and expected to use them.

ROSIE

Really?

NICOLE

It's a board directive.

ROSIE

They should take it back. You wrote something on Sonya's that really messed with my mind. Something about her influences. I can't remember exactly what it was, but it really pissed me off.

NICOLE

It did?

ROSIE

And her father too. He was so mad he was gonna let the air out of your tires.

NICOLE

He was?

JOHN

Jesus. What is he, a moron?

NICOLE

Yes.

(to Rosie)

Sorry.

JOHN

Why are you apologizing? If he's a moron, he's a moron.

ROSIE

He's an addict.

JOHN

You mean he's a moron *and* an addict.

ROSIE

Just an addict.

JOHN

No one is *just* an--

NICOLE

(to Rosie)

What was it? The comment on Sonya's report card...

ROSIE

I told you I can't remember!

NICOLE

Well it was nothing personal.

ROSIE

How could it not be personal? It was about *her*.

NICOLE

No. It was from the Board like I said. They're pre-written. So it wouldn't be about her specifically. It would be about kids in her situation or, you know... not actually in her situation but close enough to group with other kids not exactly in her situation.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I mean close enough for the Board,
which is honestly not all that
close. I mean when you look at it
well... realistically.

ROSIE

And who's doing that? Looking at
each kids' situations
realistically?

NICOLE

I could usually see through the fog
of the restrictions and directives
and parental interference and--

He phone goes off again

NICOLE (CONT'D)

For godsake, is he going to call me
all night. Okay, the hell with it!

She answers the phone.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

(into phone)
Hi...

JOHN

(to Rosie)
Please don't call the police.

ROSIE

I'll think about it.

NICOLE

(into phone)
Yeah. Eventually.

ROSIE

How much are you willing to pay me?

JOHN

For what?

ROSIE

For putting my phone back in my
pocket. Come on, it won't be the
first time you've paid me.

JOHN

I'm sorry?

ROSIE

You don't remember. Geez. I guess
we all look the same when we're
shaking our asses in your face.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

ROSIE

Solid Gold?

JOHN

What?

ROSIE

It's a strip club. I gave you a lap dance. Two of them actually.

NICOLE

(into phone)

Listen. I know all this. I've heard all this a dozen times from you. I did the best I could under the circumstances...

JOHN

I've never been in that place.

ROSIE

If you say so...

NICOLE

(into phone)

Whatya mean what circumstances... Where were you all when Jenna was dying?

JOHN

Are you telling me you can recognize all the men you've done that to?

NICOLE

(into phone)

Her name was Jenna.

ROSIE

You cried. It was something you don't forget. Most men don't cry.

NICOLE

(into phone)

No. She hadn't been Jenna since she started to transition. You know that.

ROSIE

Look what's your problem. Lots of guys like you came in for one.

JOHN

What's that mean? Guys like me?

NICOLE

(into phone)

It doesn't matter what you were used to. Her name wasn't Jeffrey. It was Jenna then. And it would have been decent of you to be there at some point when she was *fucking* dying! But you weren't. Not you, not mom, not Kirsten! And I'll never fucking forgive any of you for that! Because it was so cruel!!

She disconnects. Notices that both Rosie and John are looking at her.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

She leaves the room.

ROSIE

That was intense. How much of that did you take in?

JOHN

Hardly any... I mean until she started yelling. I was too upset by your accusation.

ROSIE

It wasn't an accusation. I was just-

JOHN

If I was there. I don't remember. And that means---

ROSIE

You were drunk.

JOHN

Exactly.

ROSIE

Okay,

JOHN

And it also means I wasn't responsible.

ROSIE

For what?

JOHN

Being there. I wasn't consciously aware of being in that place or paying you to--

ROSIE
Look, relax. I was just making a point.

JOHN
About what?

ROSIE
I forget now.

Nicole comes back in. Her hair is wet. She is drying her face with a paper towel.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

NICOLE
Yeah. I'm fine. I shouldn't have lost control like that.

ROSIE
You mean in front of us.

NICOLE
Yes. That's exactly what I mean. That was a very personal matter and I should never have--

ROSIE
Jenna was a friend of yours?

NICOLE
Look I really don't want to--

ROSIE
Sure. That's okay. I was just--

JOHN
And I heard something about a Jeffrey. Who was he?

ROSIE
Didn't you hear her? She doesn't want to--

JOHN
Well you asked who Jenna was. So why can't I--

NICOLE
(inhales and exhales
deeply)
He was my husband.

JOHN
I didn't know you had a husband.

ROSIE

She doesn't. He's dead.

JOHN

No Jenna is dead. I heard that much.

NICOLE

Jenna was Jeffrey.

JOHN

Oh. So he was...

NICOLE

Transitioning.

JOHN

Trans-- Oh he was a tranny.

NICOLE

(sitting)

He was still pre op when he got sick. It was pancreatic cancer, and it took him just a few weeks after the diagnosis.

ROSIE

And your family didn't come to see him. Her.

NICOLE

No. They didn't. Not once. And I'll never get that. Because they were very fond of her when she was Jeffrey, and she was still basically the same great person.

JOHN

How can that be true?

NICOLE

How can that *not* be true? Don't you know the slightest thing about human nature?

JOHN

I guess I don't. I mean I thought my wife would never--

ROSIE

(to Nicole)

And what about you?

NICOLE

Whatya mean?

ROSIE
You were okay with the...
transition?

NICOLE
Yeah. I was.

ROSIE
Really?

NICOLE
Yeah. Really. I loved him. I loved
her.

ROSIE
Well I guess you're unusual then. I
couldn't do it.

NICOLE
Of course you couldn't. Your
husband is a selfish irresponsible
mess. Mine was a thoughtful kind
man who just knew he'd be happier
as a woman.

JOHN
Yeah but even so, most people
couldn't deal with that kind of
thing. You might have serious
shortcomings as a teacher but-

NICOLE
(a sudden alertness)
I'm sorry?

ROSIE
I think he means you weren't very
successful dealing with some of our
kids' problems. But you're still--

NICOLE
Sit down.

ROSIE
What?

NICOLE
You heard me. Sit down. Both of
you.

They look at her.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Go ahead.

They sit next to each other at a table facing Nicole's desk.
Nicole takes her seat behind her desk.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Good. Now pick up your pencils and write your names on that piece of paper in front of you.

ROSIE

Why?

NICOLE

Just do it, okay.
(smiles)

Trust me. It'll be helpful for you.

ROSIE

What will?

NICOLE

The test.

ROSIE

You wanna test us? No way.

JOHN

She's right.

NICOLE

Okay. But I thought you cared.

JOHN

I do. Cared about what?

NICOLE

Your children's educations. Or are you both just full of shit.

ROSIE

I don't get it.

NICOLE

No. You don't. But the question is, will you ever?

ROSIE

I meant I don't get why you're being so hostile.

NICOLE

Just write your names down, or get the hell out of my classroom.

JOHN

It's not actually your classroom anymore.

NICOLE

You know it's possible I might be rethinking that.
(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Now do you actually give a damn
about what your kids are learning
or don't you?

They look at her. At each other. Then write down their names.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Now introduce yourselves.

JOHN

To you?

NICOLE

No. To each other ... Go ahead.

They just look at each other.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Having a problem with that, are
you?

ROSIE

We already kinda-

NICOLE

Just do it!

ROSIE

Okay, okay. But calm down for
chrissake.

(to John)

Hi. I'm Rosie.

JOHN

Rosie? Your name is Rosie? Really?

ROSIE

Yeah really.

JOHN

Rosie. Jesus.

ROSIE

Man, you've got a real problem.

JOHN

Maybe. But at least my name isn't
Rosie.

ROSIE

Keep it up, pal, and you're gonna
get me truly upset.

NICOLE

Look how about you drop all that
tough talk, and just ask him what
his name is.

ROSIE
I don't give a shit what his name
is.

NICOLE
Ask him. Just ask him for godsake.

ROSIE
(turns slowly to John)
What's your name?

JOHN
John.

ROSIE
John. Now that's funny.

JOHN
Why?

ROSIE
Figure it out, pal.

She stands and shakes her ass in his face seductively while she turns her head towards him and licks her lips.

JOHN
(to Nicole)
What the hell is she doing?

ROSIE
You don't like it all of a sudden?

JOHN
(to Nicole)
Make her stop.
(to Rosie)
Please. Don't do that, okay. It's
very... unsettling.

ROSIE
That means he's getting hard.

NICOLE
Jesus...

JOHN
(to Rosie)
Please...

ROSIE
Sure. Whatever you want. Just like
always.
(blowing him a kiss)
But that one was for free. You
know, for old time's sake.

Rosie sits.

NICOLE

So I guess we could all agree that this isn't going too well. Most of my third graders do it with grace and good will after just the slightest encouragement. They introduce themselves to the person sitting next to them, and that opens a door to a possible life long friendship.

John and Rosie just look at each other with contempt.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

But not your kids. Your kids both have a real problem with that too. You see, grade 3 is the time when we start to encourage the children to begin socializing with their peers. You know, to move beyond familial relationships. And neither of your children can do it. So let's talk about why.

JOHN

Well in Patrick's case--

NICOLE

I actually meant let *me* talk about it. And *tell* you why. In Patrick's case it's because his primary approaches to other children are bossing them around or screaming at them. And I'm wondering if that's because his mother, before she decided to just desert him, was a cold and highly critical parent. And his father well his father is just indecisive, often irrational and...

(focusing hard on him)
confused about who exactly you are.

ROSIE

He's a "John."

NICOLE

And you're a lap dancer. Did I hear that correctly? Or am I... just projecting? It mean it wasn't on the file.

ROSIE

I've only been doing it for a few months.

NICOLE

So really... you're a stripper.

ROSIE

Exotic dancer. Part time. Are you gonna to judge me for that?

NICOLE

No what I'm going to judge you for is exposing your daughter to your husband, a brain damaged druggie with the same parenting abilities as someone in a coma. And for letting her come to school made up like a--

ROSIE

A hooker?

NICOLE

A freak.

ROSIE

Fuck you. I told you, that make-up thing is just fun to her!

NICOLE

But not to the other kids. It just scares them. And your daughter pays the price for that.

ROSIE

Okay that's enough of this shit.

They stand.

NICOLE

Sit down. We're moving on.

A stand off.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Please. Sit down. This next part will be more fun.

(smiles)

Promise.

They look at each other. Sit slowly.

Nicole takes a study guide from her desk

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Now get your pencils ready

Hey. Do it.

They do. But cautiously.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Okay. Listen carefully now. Because I won't be repeating it.

John and Rosie look at each other.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

(from the guide)

Emily, Glen, Cathy, and Errol each bought snacks from several vending machines. Each person got back six coins, but they were different combinations of coins. Each person received less than \$1 in change. The machines returned only nickels, dimes, and quarters. Each person had at least one of each coin. Emily had the fewest dimes but the same number of quarters as Errol. Glen had an equal number of nickels, dimes, and quarters. Cathy had the same number of quarters as Glen. Errol had more dimes than Cathy. Cathy had more dimes than quarters. Emily had fewer quarters than Cathy. How much money did each person get back from the machines? How much money did they get back in all?

(smiles)

Answers please. You can use your paper to write down your calculations.

(off their expressions)

Too hard? It's just a typical grade three riddle. Honest.

She shows them the guide's cover.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

So the answer is?

JOHN

Can you go through that all again. But more slowly

ROSIE

And how much did Errol have again?

NICOLE

None of that will help you. Here it is.

(smiles)

Emily had 55 cents. Glen had 80 cents. Cathy had 85 cents. Errol had 70 cents. Altogether, they had \$2.90. Most of my grade three kids can get to that kind of problem fairly easily by Christmas break and few of the exceptional ones...

(to John)

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

And that would include your son's "nemesis" Naomi, well they can create a chart explaining their reasoning.

JOHN

Sure they can.

A paper from her desk.

NICOLE

And this is how she did it.

Nicole takes a piece of paper out of the guide.

ROSIE

What's that?

NICOLE

Naomi's work sheet.

JOHN

Oh God.

NICOLE

Emily has 20 cents in nickels, 10 cents in dimes, That is, one dime plus one quarter. 55 cents in all. Glen has two nickels, 2 dimes and two quarters for a total of 80 cents. Cathy has one nickel, three dimes and two quarters for a total of 85 cents. And Errol has 1 nickel, 4 dimes and 1 quarter for a total of 70 cents.

(lowers paper)

And do you know how to find the total amount of money each person got back? The kids do. Actually this part is pretty obvious. But you'd be surprised how many adults miss it. You add the amounts each person received. So for those of you with a touch of ADD, that's 55 cents for Emily. 80 cents for Glen, 85 cents for Cathy and 70 cents for Errol. A total of? No? Not even able to add those up in your head? Or even remember where we started? The answer is, surprise! ... 2 dollars and 90 cents.

(standing and leaning forward on her desk)

That's the kind of reasoning and problem solving I teach them every single day. And that's just one of the many things I teach them. And teach them very very well.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

And what that means is that there's been nothing lacking in my teaching ability. It also means that you are both, in some very important ways, messing up as parents!

(pounds her desk)

So get it the fuck together!

She sits. Puts her head on the desk. They look at her, each other. Then Rosie leans forward a bit.

ROSIE

(quietly)

Miss?

(raising her hand)

Miss...

NICOLE

(head up)

Yes?

ROSIE

It's not my fault. The makeup I mean. It's something my aunt does every morning. She likes to make Sonya's face..."sparkle." It's what she had done to her when she was a kid. She's pretty out of it, so we don't want to upset her I guess I thought what's the harm, right.

NICOLE

Your aunt wore make up as a child?

ROSIE

It's what some of my family did to their daughters. You know, to attract future husbands. It was a tradition.

NICOLE

For an eight year to go husband hunting?

ROSIE

(shrugs)

They're Travellers. They have a lot of very--

NICOLE

Travellers. Irish Travellers.

ROSIE

Yeah.

NICOLE

So you're family are gypsies.

ROSIE

Kinda. It's not totally the same but--

NICOLE

Are you one too?

ROSIE

Not anymore.

NICOLE

You mean you just...stopped?

ROSIE

Well it took some time to... transition. You know, like your husband. But my aunt's one still, so that explains the makeup on Sonya's face.

JOHN

Excuse me. But I haven't got a clue what you guys are talking about.

NICOLE

Which means it's probably a good idea for you to remain silent.

JOHN

I'm just saying it's kind of rude.

ROSIE

(hand up again)

But what my family is isn't really the issue, is it. It's my husband, right. I mean unless you really want to make a big deal about how I make my living. Yeah I'm a dancer and a stripper. So what? In this world we all shake our ass for someone. And nothing I do to feed myself and my kid is ever gonna make me ashamed.

NICOLE

What about your husband?

ROSIE

I can't give up on him. I've known him since we were kids. I know what his family was like. So I know why he had to get away from them, and why he got into drugs. I can't ever just write him off. I've explained all I could about him to Sonya and I'm pretty sure she understands ... And she still loves him a lot ...

(MORE)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

So that's all I have to say about what you said before. You know, about me getting it the fuck together ... I'm doing my best.

Nicole and Rosie just look at each other. Both quietly upset. Then they slowly turn to look at John.

JOHN

So can I talk now?

NICOLE

Sure. What the hell.

JOHN

Well I've been wondering. Is grade three too early to specialize? I mean maybe if we concentrated on Patrick's math skills and sort of let things like art and social studies or whatever just take a back seat for now-- not that I have anything against art, but let's be real for a moment and think about future employment, okay.

NICOLE

(to Rosie)

Could you tell me a little more about your family?

ROSIE

I guess...

NICOLE

Start as far back as you can. Anything you know about their history.

ROSIE

That would just be from stories I was told.

NICOLE

No that's good. Because maybe we could share some of those stories with Sonya's classmates. So that--

ROSIE

They'd "get her"?

NICOLE

Well maybe they'd get her. But for sure they'd know something that they don't know now. No harm in that, right.

Rosie smiles. Nicole turns to John

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Right?

JOHN

Absolutely. And then can we talk about specialization?

She look at him. Lights begin a slow fade.

NICOLE

How about you just listen, and try to understand why specialization for children only closes doors.

JOHN

Well I don't want that. I'm only worried about the economy will be like.

NICOLE

Well maybe in the future things like art will be valued more.

JOHN

He likes music.

ROSIE

Well there you go. He could become a famous musician. Example, Lenny Kravitz.

NICOLE

Other example, Lady Gaga.

JOHN

Why'd you say Lady Gaga? She's a woman, right.

NICOLE

Yeah.

JOHN

I mean she's not a drag Queen. Or is she? Do you think Patrick wants to be a woman? Is that what you're getting at? Not that I couldn't deal with that. I'd just like him to be a woman with a job. Do you think he's gay?

And they start to speak more quietly as we approach blackout

NICOLE

I don't know. But those things aren't connected. Being a gay and wanting a sex change.

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

We shouldn't be discussing this anyway. It's very complicated. And I'm not qualified.

JOHN

Sure you are. I mean you were married to one for godsake.

ROSIE

Sonya's gay.

NICOLE

How do you know that?

ROSIE

She told me.

JOHN

She told you?

ROSIE

Well she's not sure. But she told me when she grows up she thinks she wants to marry Naomi.

JOHN

Naomi. That girl has people under some sort of spell.

NICOLE

(to Rosie)

That doesn't mean she's gay. It's because boys can be mean to girls at that age and she just... But that's a whole other subject...

Darkness. Silence

The end