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# The Jane Austen Book Club

By Robin Swicord

I told you I don't have time to wait.  
What is this?  
Do you have any idea? What's going on?  
I know, honey, I'm on my way, okay?  
Hi. I need to check your bag.  
Right this way.  
Come on, let's go. Get out of the way, now.  
Hold it!  
Please take the ticket.  
Please take the ticket.  
Please take the ticket.  
Come on! Get in there!  
Please insert card.  
Please insert card.  
Please insert card.  
Please insert card.  
I can't follow you guys. You drive too slow.  
Bernie. Hey.  
- Sad, huh?  
- Tragic.  
- Poor Jocelyn.  
- It's ridiculous.  
- Daniel, he was her world.  
- Hold up. Cat hair.  
Oh, that's why I never wear black.  
Don't even look in the mirror anymore.  
Should've thought of it years ago.  
We celebrate a very special life  
as we lay to rest Jocelyn's cherished  
companion, Pridey Sahara Morgan.  
Honey, we have to stay.  
She raised him from a puppy.  
All I know is that if I'm not back  
in the office this afternoon,  
Monday is gonna be hell.  
She went to every one  
of Allegra's birthday parties.  
Oh, come on. Allegra is our actual child.  
Let's get some perspective here.  
Do you think if Jocelyn  
were married with kids  
she'd be giving her dog a state funeral?  
This whole thing is warped.  
- I find that personally offensive, Dad.

- What?

I mean, I may never be married  
or be a mother.

Yes, some gay women  
get some version of that,  
but we don't all need the same things.

Can we at least agree that  
human beings need  
human connection?

You know, companionship,  
conversation, sex.

You get those things from Mom.  
Jocelyn gets them from her dogs.

Can I take your car?

Dad had to go.

We can't let Jocelyn sit home and brood.

Maybe we could all take a class.

Learn Portuguese. Go to Brazil.

I don't think I could fit  
one more thing in my week, honestly.

No, no, you're right. You're right.

We should make an effort.

She just lives so far away from everything.

Give it back, Trey.

Come on. Give it back.

See ya.

Thanks. Take care.

Hi.

- Trey. Yeah.

- Trey.

Lovers' Guide to Paris.

Food Lovers' Guide.

We're gonna go to Paris. My husband and I.

It's his first time in Paris. Mine, too.

- It's a business trip for him.

- Really?

They fly him business class.

So we're just gonna do an exchange  
so that I can tag along.

- That's pretty thrifty.

- Yeah.

I've never been to France. I mean...

I've been to Qubec. But that's...

- It's not in... It's in... Okay.

- No.

Do you want me to help you  
carry these to your car?

- No.

- Okay.

- Well, have fun.

- Okay.

Send me a postcard.

- Hi.

- Hey.

Honey, I'm sorry I'm late.

I stopped to buy us a present.

Oh, yeah. What do you got?

- What?

- Oh, baby. I'm sorry.

I thought I said something.

- Yo, jeez, these guys are terrible.

- What?

Been like this all game. This one guy...

Paris is off.

- We're not going to Paris?

- Dale's going.

My boss-boss asked me to take the CEO  
of Consolidated to the NBA playoffs.

I guess the guys at Consolidated  
are like basketball freaks.

But if it's San Antonio, it'll be over in four.

Unless Tim Duncan gets hit  
with an asteroid or something.

Anyway, figure I'll be on the road  
for like a week, maybe eight days.

Maybe 10, just depending on...

Oh, what if your mom came and stayed?

Ten days with my mother?

Prudie.

What, did you want me  
to say no to my boss?

Always doing something wrong, you know?

I have no idea what I did.

I genuinely have no idea.

I was just thinking about  
something Allegra said

at Jocelyn's the other day.

I don't know if it was just

the sadness of the occasion, or...

- Oh, don't make fun, Daniel.

- No, I'm not, I'm not.

- That was her dog.

- No.

I'm saying it affected me.

- Come on.

- Okay, honey. Whatever you say.

Anyway, so Allegra and I are talking about

how we all need to have

connection, you know?

Conversation. Sex.

Companionship.

And Allegra says,

"Well, you get all that from Mommy."

I gotta tell you, it really made me sad.

Oh, baby, she'll find somebody.

No, it made me sad for us.

See, 'cause I've been struggling

with whether a marriage

can sustain all of that

over 20-plus years,

or whether it's just inevitable

that after a certain amount of time...

What are you...

Maybe being with someone else can have

a renewing effect, because for me...

I've been seeing a woman at work.

We've been together six months now.

We can't think of this as a failure.

We have had a very successful marriage.

We've had a long marriage, by any standard.

We've got three wonderful kids.

They're grown, they're working, they're...

Just open the car door, Daniel,

I need a tissue.

The kids, that's... That's all you.

You know, you...

You made all the sacrifices with that.

I know.

But there's a logic to us

quitting while we're ahead.

And I think that they'll be able to see that.

I don't understand a single word

of what you're saying, Daniel.  
Who is this woman?  
Look, I'm tired of lying to you.  
I'm tired of making promises to Pam  
that I can't keep.  
She deserves better. And so do you.  
And I won't give her up.  
That's non-negotiable.  
Syl.  
I really like Edmund in this movie.  
Have you seen it?  
I love this movie.  
Oh, I like it, but it's not Mansfield Park.  
It's more of an interpretation.  
- Do you know the book?  
- Yes.  
And I happen to teach film.  
- Do you like this movie?  
- No.  
Do you know it mixes up Fanny Price  
with the author of the book?  
Makes Sir Bertram  
some kind of slave owner.  
Well, it means well.  
And a little Jane Austen's  
better than none at all.  
No. No. No.  
That is how I talk myself into everything.  
I'm married to a man  
who would cancel our trip to Paris  
for a basketball game,  
which is making me a fraud  
in front of my students.  
A French teacher  
who's never been to France?  
The screenplay is outstanding.  
Excuse me. I'd like to talk to you.  
Come with me.  
You seem to know a lot about Jane Austen.  
I do.  
You know, Prudie,  
I've been married six times.  
You're always happy at first.  
It's how you feel at the end that counts.

I've been thinking, I'd like to get married again, maybe just once more.

My favorite was Ben Weinberg.

And this is Ben.

He produced Fred Astaire movies.

Don't underestimate older men.

We lived in a house in Beverly Hills

that had a little pond

and a bridge and goldfish.

That's how I met my friend Jocelyn.

- Carlos.

- My pleasure.

Ben was her godfather. Her family's loaded.

Who's Jocelyn again?

The one I wanna start the book club for.

Lost her dog?

Eat. So, book club.

I can get Jocelyn and maybe Sylvia.

Jocelyn put Sylvia and Daniel together

in high school.

They've been together ever since.

Though Sylvia's gonna want Daniel

in the book club,

but I think it should be all women.

Don't you?

I mean, men, they pontificate

and no one can get a word in edgewise.

- Well, I think if you...

- And women won't butt in,

but men, they keep monologuing.

Yammer, yammer, yammer.

And we keep listening,

protecting their feelings.

- But if...

- And men don't do book clubs.

Women want to share,

but men, they hoard what they read,

if they crack open a book.

Does your husband read?

He reads stuff online.

You know, it's gonna be

like extracting teeth to get Sylvia,

because she has to read so much already.

She works at the state library. But, oh!

Hey, no. Okay.  
Now, this is brilliant.  
We'll only do books we've already read.  
Is that inspired?  
How do we know what books  
all of us have read?  
Isn't it obvious?  
Mansfield Park, Pride and Prejudice,  
Emma, Northanger Abbey, Persuasion.  
- I'm leaving some...  
- Sense and Sensibility.  
And Sense and Sensibility.  
It's been three years  
since I've read Sense and Sensibility.  
I have to pee.  
When I get back, hot water and lemon.  
And we still have to think  
of two more people.  
Six novels, six people.  
We'll each be responsible for one book.  
All Jane Austen, all the time!  
It's the perfect antidote.  
- To what?  
- To life.  
I get Pride and Prejudice.  
I called the library  
and said you had bronchitis.  
Anne Marie's moving your indigenous  
peoples meeting to next week.  
I should go in.  
Pam Gower did her law degree at Bolt,  
passed the bar in 2002.  
She's an infant.  
She joined the firm  
of Perry, Liebman, Avila in 2006.  
Says here she was divorced in 2005.  
Bitch. She went right for Daniel.  
She's 45.  
She's not even young.  
- Do you think he has a brain tumor?  
- I think he fell in love.  
Well, I'm rooting for the brain tumor.  
People our age don't fall in love.  
I mean, I've never even been in love.



- You've never been in love?  
- I've had sexual partners.  
I mean, I don't know.  
I wouldn't mind falling in love,  
but it just all seems  
like fiction to me, anyway.  
Well, for a fiction,  
he just threw 20 years of marriage away  
on an impulse.  
Do you think he was thinking,  
the whole time,  
"I can't wait to get out of here?"  
- Am I really that uninteresting?  
- No.  
- I can't believe I'm alone at this age.  
- Mom, you're not alone.  
And listen to me.  
Alone's not the end of the world.  
For as many years as you've been married  
I've been quite happily unmarried.  
It's just so unfair.  
He can start his life over again.  
And at this age.  
You know, men can do that.  
Women... It's over.  
You're beautiful, Mommy.  
Yes, and accomplished and interesting.  
You're not without your options, Sylvia.  
Daniel's the one with options.  
He can sleep with anyone.  
Twenty-year-olds.  
People will say, "Way to go, Daniel."  
If I tried to sleep with someone  
that age, it'd be pathetic.  
Well, yeah, that's 'cause  
guys my age are lame.  
- My body will become a museum.  
- No, it won't.  
We'll get you a membership to my gym.  
You might even meet somebody.  
I don't wanna meet someone.  
I wanna pull the covers over my head  
and read novels.  
And eat.

I'm starving.

Allegra, mija, go get me a dozen eggs.

- I'm gonna make a flan.

- Okay.

Can you stay with her this weekend?

- Actually, I'm moving back in.

- Really?

My lease is almost up and, you know,  
I won't let her be here alone.

Oh, sweetie, that's... Thank you.

You're amazing.

See, that's why people have children.

My father left my mom when I was 10.

Sylvia was the first person I told.

That's when I knew

we were really best friends.

I'm gonna be at Stockton

at the Breeders' Convention,

if you need me, okay?

- Are you here for the Buffy conference?

- Oh, no.

Excuse me.

My dog has the same exact collar.

- She was invisible.

- What?

It's a game. They're vampires.

When you see one of them

with their arms crossed like that,

you should pretend you don't see her.

That's why she didn't answer you.

Nothing personal.

Thanks.

- My name's Grigg.

- Greg?

Grigg, G-R-l-G-G.

Oh. I'm meeting some people, Grigg.

Okay.

Can I have a whiskey straight up?

Excuse me. Could I apologize? I'm Jocelyn.

Your friend isn't coming?

I'm meeting him a little later.

So how do you know so much

about the "faux vampire" scene?

That's funny. Well, it's...

I'm here for a sci-fi conference.  
So the Buffy contingent is a kind of,  
you know, offshoot of that.  
Yeah. You read much science fiction?  
I'm more of a Jane Austen,  
Jane Eyre kind of girl.  
Oh, right, yeah. No, I never really...  
Read those books? Yeah. Yeah.  
So, where do you live?  
I just relocated to the Sacramento area.  
I do tech support at U.  
You know who you might like?  
Ursula Le Guin.  
Left Hand of Darkness. Lathe of Heaven.  
She's science fiction  
but she's just a terrific writer.  
- Have to check her out.  
- Yeah.  
My sisters love those books.  
I really think you might like them.  
And I'm willing to be directed as well.  
Seriously, you know,  
if you tell me who I should be reading,  
I promise to read it.  
I'll give you my email.  
That's the old one.  
I'll write those books, too.  
You know what I'm actually  
wondering before I go?  
How do you feel about older women?  
Great. Yeah.  
I have three older sisters, so...  
You know, I like all women.  
Good. That's great.  
- Well, thanks. I'll be in touch.  
- Oh, okay.  
Great.  
- Yeah, bye.  
- Bye.  
Oh, good, Prudie, you're here.  
Save these tables, okay?  
Oh, Jocelyn, Prudie.  
- Hi, how are you?  
- Hello. Good.

- So what do you want, Prudie?

- A soy cappuccino.

I have to be allowed

to miss one meeting out of the six.

I can only do this if there's no pressure.

- Hey. Mom's looking for parking.

- Hi.

That's Prudie. Say hi.

We're still only five. Too bad about Daniel.

He could've filled in, although clearly

he's never read Jane Austen.

For Prudie's sake,

the last thing we need is an Austen virgin.

We need real discussion.

I sort of invited someone.

Said he might come, maybe.

- He?

- No one I'm interested in.

He's young, compliant,

said he might enjoy being in a book club.

I'm sure Daniel's read Jane Austen.

No man who reads Austen

would ever dump his wife

because it's better for the other woman.

Chai latte with a shot.

I'm so sorry. I'm really behind.

I got slammed with orders on my website.

I've actually... I've started adding  
these little dangles at the top here.

- What do you think?

- I'm no judge.

I mean, my idea of jewelry

is Coco Chanel's Byzantine oeuvre

from the 1920s.

Oh! Definitely. Yeah, I get that.

Being the only child of a woman

who gave birth in a commune

after changing her name to Sky Girl,

I've come to loathe hippie handicrafts.

There she is.

Actually, I'm not so sure

I wanna do this book club.

So, quick, while Sylvia's still in line,  
how she's doing without Daniel?

She's still stuck in the wounded stage.

- When she's ready for anger, I am so there.

- Me, too.

My dad left my mom.

Prudie is no stranger

to marital disappointment.

Actually, we're fine now.

You're married? But no ring, huh?

Yeah, it's this hand, and... I teach French.

You teach French, so you wear your

wedding ring on the right hand?

- It's a European custom.

- Are you European?

So Prudie, you haven't said which book

you wanna be responsible for.

Maybe Persuasion.

'Cause I'm increasingly drawn

to its elegiac tone.

- Don't think I'm doing the book club.

- You're doing it.

You lead one discussion. Pick a book.

Well, I just saw Sense and Sensibility,

and I think,

since I'm back living with my mom,

I really get that whole two-women,

tight-relationship, living-together-

but-really-opposites thing.

Is it weird living back at home again?

I think what Austen is actually writing about

is two sisters,

moving separately toward what

they each believe to be a perfect love.

Okay, but the point is

Marianne and Elinor's relationship...

Maybe if you'd read the book

instead of watching the movie...

- I thought I might do Emma.

- Which leaves what for Sylvia?

Northanger Abbey and Mansfield Park.

Which one's gonna make her feel better?

Because we're only doing the book club

to get her mind off Daniel.

I thought the reason for the book club

was for my not going to Paris.

- Exactly.

- Northanger Abbey.

No, don't make her do Northanger.

I mean, first you're going off

to all these dances,

and then suddenly it's sort of like

Nightmare on Northanger Abbey Street.

I'm afraid this isn't the book club

that I had in mind.

I mean, I find when someone in the group

feels superior to the author,

it just... It sets the wrong tone.

Okay, I'm happy to leave.

- No, Allegra. No. Allegra. No.

- Allegra, you can't. You can't.

After this day, I am so happy

to be talking about Jane Austen.

- Hi.

- Hi. Did we choose the books yet?

Sylvia, Prudie.

Oh, I'm sorry. Sylvia Avila.

- So, how do you feel about Mansfield Park?

- My favorite.

- I love Fanny Price.

- Stop, Mom, why?

She's such a goodie-goodie.

Six books, five people.

We skip Northanger Abbey.

- Definitely.

- And miss out on Mr. Tilney?

- No, you're right.

- He's such a flirt.

We don't have to do all six books, do we?

Doing all six novels

is the raison d'etre of the book club

and it is the only reason I'm here.

- Okay.

- Do you wanna invite your husband?

My husband has never read Austen

and he never will.

Okay, how should we do this?

Just meet once a month

at each of our houses, potluck...

Or, you know, pick some central location.

No, I don't think a coffee shop's conducive.  
I'll host the first one, we'll start with Emma,  
at my place.  
But let's not get into this  
competitive cooking thing.  
Bakeoffs!  
- No, we'll do finger foods.  
- We're gonna do takeout.  
And we have to create  
the Jane Austen mood.  
- Oh, my God.  
- Hey.  
- He came.  
- Yeah.  
Sorry, I sat in the wrong Starbucks  
for half an hour.  
Golly, there are a lot of these places, huh?  
But they've got interesting coffee  
from all over the world, so...  
- This is Grigg, everyone.  
- I'm Bernadette.  
- Prudie.  
- Prudie, and Allegra.  
- Sylvia.  
- Grigg Harris.  
Hi.  
Well, I'm excited.  
Never read anything by Jane Austen before.  
What is it?  
Well, I went to the bookstore  
to buy a copy of each one of the novels,  
and I saw this.  
And I thought,  
"Well, maybe they're all sequels."  
So, I figured it might be a good idea  
to keep them all together in one book,  
in case I needed to refer back.  
Is this the order that we read them in?  
Do you wanna grab a coffee, Grigg?  
No, no. No, I'm fine.  
I had plenty at the other place.  
And... I bought this and they filled it up  
for me, so I'm a little...  
Yeah.

Oh, you said in your email  
there was someone you wanted me to meet?  
Yeah. Yeah, all of us, actually.  
I thought we might benefit  
from the perspective of a male in the group.

- A little testosterone.
- Right.
- Okay. So, none of you ladies are married?
- Prudie.

Right, so we just... What?  
We just read them chronologically, and...

- We're doing Emma first.
- Emma?

Oh. Starting in the middle, huh?

- They're not sequels.
- They're not?

Well, great. We just start anywhere.

- What were you smoking?
- He's cute.

I thought he'd be a distraction for Sylvia.  
She needs an adventure.  
If he becomes a problem I'll get rid of him.

- What happened, you pull a DUI?
- No, no, I pretty much bike everywhere.

Where do you live?  
About 20 miles north. Vista Mar.

- You live in what, that development?
- Yeah. Yeah.

I had this software company  
and my accountant says to me,  
"You gotta buy a house."  
So, we were right by that exit.  
And I said, "Pull over."  
Got out, went in, pointed, bought a house.

- Like that.
- I should sell it, I guess.

Or at least buy some furniture.  
Well, I guess I'll have to,  
if you guys are coming over, right?  
Allegra.

- Bye.
- Yeah. Sayonara.

You know, I never picked a book.  
Could I do that abbey one?



- Perfect. Yeah, it's yours.  
- Oh, Northanger Abbey.  
Great. All right.  
- Emma. Starting in the middle.  
- Yeah.  
Well, you gotta hand it to him  
for taking the dud book.  
It's the shortest, that's why.  
- He's eager to please.  
- Prudie, see you next time.  
He is eager to please. He likes women.  
- A welcome quality in a man.  
- Yes. Yes.  
- Do you think Sylvia responded to him?  
- We let him in. It's done.  
- Bye.  
- Bye. Bye.  
You're up.  
Go big!  
You okay?  
Hey. Hey, you. Listen.  
Can you make sure  
they don't call my mother? Please.  
Just make sure they don't call my mother.  
Mrs. Avila? This is Corinne.  
- I'm a friend of Allegra's.  
- Allegra's.  
And she's asked me to call you.  
We're up here in Vacaville at a...  
- Jewelry show.  
...jewelry show.  
I was showing her how to use my scooter  
and she took a little spill.  
It's minor. She banged up her wrist.  
She doesn't need you to come. It's nothing.  
We're at the doctor's.  
He says she could be a bit sore.  
Allegra didn't want you to worry  
if she's not home tonight.  
I'll remind her. Book club Monday night.  
I'm sorry.  
We don't shop on this side of town, ever.  
Sorry.  
You can have this Whole Foods.

We won't ever use it again. Okay?  
So I was getting the wine for book club  
and I bumped into Daniel.  
He was with her.  
- Oh, sweetie.  
- Yeah.  
They were going home to make dinner.  
He was wearing a jacket with a zipper.  
- No.  
- That's so not Daniel.  
I just... I walk around this house,  
and it's not my home anymore.  
I feel like Fanny Price  
banished from Mansfield Park.  
- That woman is living my life.  
- Honey, she can't live your life.  
Are you all right?  
I know you like being alone,  
but don't you ever get lonely?  
So what'd you think about Grigg?  
The book club guy.  
If you like him, I like him.  
- How about those dreamy eyes?  
- I didn't really notice.  
Well, notice.  
Can you come early tomorrow  
since you're bringing the wine?  
That's my girls. That's my girls.  
That's my girls.  
It's a smallish world, pedigreed Ridgebacks.  
- "Pedigreed" is...  
- Well, it's breeding.  
Certain bloodlines  
are naturally more valuable.  
Mine are out of Queenie of the Serengeti.  
Gorgeous hound. Gone now.  
I bred her to my first  
really important sire, Pridey.  
Sire's the boy dog. Great disposition.  
Passed away last month.  
- I'm sorry.  
- Thank you.  
Miss him. But Queenie was the real star.  
Ridgebacks are matriarchal.

That's one of their attractive features.  
Hey, hey, hey! Sahara, off!  
Sorry. Sorry about that.  
Sahara I had to have spayed.  
Thyroid issues.  
I still show her, though.  
She's very competitive in her category.  
- Yeah?  
- Sexually altered bitch.  
Well, I got you those books.  
You know the ones I suggested?  
Ursula Le Guin.  
Oh, yeah. Thanks, that was thoughtful.  
You don't have to bring a hostess gift  
to these meetings, FYI.  
It's just a book club.  
Where's the heat  
between Emma and Mr. Knightley?  
There's no animal passion.  
Look at Frank Churchill and Miss Fairfax.  
You can tell they're really in love  
because they behave so badly.  
And that's good?  
Emma and Mr. Knightley,  
you just never feel the sex.  
Still, I think Mr. Knightley's very yummy.  
Don't you?  
He may be my favorite of all the Austen men.  
Sans passion l'amour n'est rien.  
- That's not Jane's theme, is it?  
- Jane?  
That's cozy.  
What we're meant to see  
is not the lack of passion  
so much as the control of it,  
and the not giving in.  
Après moi, le déluge.  
But Prudie's right, it is in all the novels.  
Sense and Sensibility, obviously.  
Oh, and then there's Maria's infidelity  
in Mansfield Park.  
I forgot there's infidelity in Mansfield Park.  
Austen's all about keeping it zipped.  
Yeah, but isn't physical attraction

one of the ungovernable forces?  
You know, like gravity.  
That's what we like about it.  
You know, downhill, release the brakes,  
loosen your grip, and...  
Yeah. Love makes people crazy.  
- It does not excuse bad behavior.  
- I agree.  
And Mr. Knightley is violently in love.  
"Violently!" His word.  
And yet, he's never anything  
but a gentleman.  
- Yeah, a gentleman who scolds people.  
- Not everyone.  
You know, just Emma,  
just the woman that he loves.  
C'est vrai. C'est typique.  
A man can do whatever he likes  
to the woman he loves.  
I don't think that's what Austen's saying.  
Actually, Emma stops being crazy  
when she falls for Mr. Knightley.  
It's the event of the book.  
Love is an act of sanity.  
One thing that I noticed about Emma  
is the sense of menace.  
The gypsies,  
Jane Fairfax's boating accident,  
Mr. Woodhouse's worries.  
Austen's entire thesis is that  
none of these things are real, Grigg.  
I mean, Emma, she acts  
on the basis of her fantasies.  
Yes, Grigg, I'm afraid  
you've just entirely missed the point.  
You know, I've read that the Emma plot,  
the humbling of the pretty, know-it-all girl  
is the most popular plot of all time.  
Yes, universally satisfying.  
Okay. Well, what bothered me  
was how Emma kept forcing  
her friend Harriet on Mr. Elton.  
And then she finds out  
who Harriet's father is,

and suddenly, "Ew!"

She's lucky to get the farmer.

I think Jane was being ironic there.

I think some readers might miss that.

- Emma's a snob.

- Please.

People are instinctively drawn to partners who are their near equal in looks.

The pretty marry the pretty,  
the ugly the ugly.

To the detriment of the breed,  
in my opinion.

God, you're such an Emma. Isn't she?

You'd love to pair up the whole world,  
from dogs to people.

Put me together with Daniel.

And you had beautiful children.

Oh, no, don't get up, Jocelyn.

I'll get the tea. Sorry.

Mom.

I hope we didn't scare Grigg away.

- Yeah, he sure got out of here fast.

- Yeah, we'll toughen him up.

Was the book club a bad idea?

Austen has a way of making you forget  
that most marriages end in divorce.

Well, she's all about the weddings, Jane.

Yeah, "Jane." Did you catch that?

Oh, Prudie?

"Jane and I, we know our themes."

And why did she have to speak in French?

And if so, couldn't she do it in France,  
where it's less noticeable?

I feel for Prudie.

She's married to a complete Neanderthal.

Okay, I will call you when I land in Dallas.

You know what?

Let me call you when I check in the hotel  
if there's time before the game,

- 'cause we're gonna wanna get there early.

- Whatever, okay.

Have fun with your mom.

- Hey, Sky. Hi.

- Hi.

Mom, you were supposed  
to sit with the car.  
I'm gonna get a ticket!  
- Yo!  
- Get some ass!  
So... Hey, what're we doing today?  
Well, I'm teaching. It's a school day, okay?  
So I'm gonna drop you at the house.  
Or you can take the car  
and you can go see a movie or something.  
- No, no, I'll hang with you.  
- No, no, you can't.  
They don't allow that.  
Mom, could you... Oh, my God, please.  
Okay, I can't.  
Mom, I'm late. Please. Come on.  
Oh, ditch them. Blow them off.  
Tell them your mother doesn't wanna  
hang around while you go to work.  
What's the story with the clothes?  
You dress like a flight attendant.  
No, I dress like a teacher.  
Or it gets confusing.  
Mom, mind your stupid... For everyone.  
Why would anyone  
wanna teach high school?  
I hated my teachers.  
Well, I'm just gonna settle you at the house.  
No, I'll drop you at school  
and then I'll take the car.  
- Should you be driving?  
- Huh?  
Okay, you know what?  
Just don't forget to come get me at 3:00.  
Okay? Don't forget.  
I'm in Brigadoon.  
Would you mind running lines with me?  
"Of course I'm all right."  
"I'd have died  
if anything had happened to you.  
"I love you so."  
"But how can you be sure in just one day?"  
"I dinna know, 'tis just  
"when a lass falls in and out of love,

she knows it right away."

- What?

- It's a good accent.

Well, languages are my speciality.

I just thought that...

French teacher.

It's your line.

"Do you think you're in love with me?"

"Think? What good does thinking do?"

"But what I feel is something else."

"What do ye feel then, Tommy?"

And then we kiss.

Who plays opposite you?

Karen Bhave.

I think she only tried out because she thought we'd hook up during the play.

I saw you watching me in the library.

- I wasn't watching.

- You were watching.

No, I was reading.

- You were watching.

- I was reading this...

- I was reading this book...

- Oh, yeah?

...about some people

in this house called Mansfield Park.

- Austen.

- Yeah.

We're doing Mansfield Park

for senior seminar, so...

I actually bought the book already.

I'm trying to make myself wait, you know?

Delay gratification. That sort of thing.

- So what happens?

- Right, well...

Well, they decide to put on a play

in the house.

And rehearsing it, it sort of unleashes them.

Two of them actually fall in love, and one...

One of them, Maria Bertram, is set... Stop it.

- Is set to marry someone else.

- Or maybe not.

Well, I think... I think...

I think what Austen is trying to say

is that play-acting is dangerous.  
All of that intimacy backstage,  
the waiting and the whispering,  
and onstage you're gazing at each other,  
and "I love you."

I mean...

Well, you can see how it happens.

Yeah, I can see it happening,  
just not with Karen Bhave.

So, do you wanna go over it again?

Hello?

- Yeah.

- Hey, Grigg, it's Jocelyn.

- Hi. Hey.

- Hi.

- So how's Mansfield Park coming?

- Just great.

Am I disturbing you?

I'm just writing an email to my sisters  
about you, as a matter of fact.

And Ursula Le Guin.

- Did you ever read Left Hand of Darkness?

- Not yet.

Hey, listen, Bernadette and I  
were just saying

we hope Allegra didn't  
scare you off the book club.

- Which one is Allegra?

- Sylvia's daughter.

Really pretty, really passionate,  
wonderful girl.

Ask him if he can make time today.

You might take Sylvia to lunch today.

Tell him that Sylvia and Daniel are  
in court this morning over their separation.

She could use the ego boost.

You have Sylvia's number, right?

Would you wanna come, too?

Listen, I know

there's a difference in your ages,  
but I really think

the two of you will hit it off.

Sahara. I gotta go, okay?

This woman I like



definitely seems interested, but it's weird.  
She's sort of pushing me to date this girl,  
Allegra, who's way younger than me.  
She said I should  
take this girl's mother to lunch.  
Bank assets will be divided equally.  
Each individual will keep his or her own car,  
and each will be wholly responsible  
for the attendant payments and insurance.  
The house owned by Daniel and Sylvia  
will be jointly held,  
with both parties paying an equal share of  
property taxes, upkeep and repairs.  
Sylvia may live in the house. Daniel will not.  
As soon as Daniel hit 50, his wheels fell off.  
Here's what I get from Mansfield Park.  
That a marriage is only as strong  
as its weakest partner.  
Daniel has always wanted  
to find his center by wobbling.  
This is a pretty big wobble.  
Mansfield Park is full of wobblers.  
Lady Bertram lying around,  
letting a houseful of adolescents run riot.  
Fanny Price is the rock of that family.  
Fanny's cousin Maria, married six months,  
dumps her husband...  
And don't forget Fanny's father,  
the unemployed alcoholic.  
Marry the weak link and you're screwed.  
That's what she's saying.  
No wonder why Austen never married.  
It's terrifying.  
- I think I finally hate him.  
- Good.  
I'm home. I'm going out again.  
I have book club.  
You just missed this guy  
who got buried up to his neck  
in a tank filled with cockroaches.  
And they were real.  
You'd think it'd be illegal  
to show stuff like that.  
Here, grab a spoon.

You have to leave.

You put your things in your suitcase

'cause I'm booking your flight.

- Want me to...

- Yeah.

- How did you break it?

- I fell.

Which was kind of lucky, actually.

'Cause I met this girl, Corinne,  
who I've been seeing. She's a writer.

Which, um,

isn't so great, really,

'cause if she had to choose

between me and writing,

she'd probably choose writing.

But she doesn't ever have to choose.

So you never have to know.

So you're a lesbian. Full-time?

You mean, do I ever slip

and accidentally sleep with a man?

No, no, my sister Cat,

she goes out with guys and girls.

She lives in Idaho.

Your sister isn't Cat Harris.

- You know her?

- Bernadette knows everyone.

I met her through my doctor friend

in Laguna Niguel, Bianca Sillman.

You know my sister, Bianca?

I forgot that Bianca and Cat are sisters.

Those are your sisters!

Our world is an English village.

My topic is the long-suffering daughter.

One can't help but see the parallels

between the long-suffering

Fanny Price in Mansfield Park

and the long-suffering Anne Eliot

in Persuasion.

I hate Fanny Price.

Excuse me, we're not electing

the homecoming queen, okay?

I mean, yes, if this were high school, yes,

we all know Elizabeth Bennet

would be most popular

and that Fanny would be least.

- Who's Elizabeth Bennet?

- Of Pride and Prejudice.

Don't give away too much,  
'cause I haven't read that one yet.

- You don't know Pride and Prejudice?

- No.

I think I read somewhere that Fanny Price  
was Austen's favorite.

- Fanny's boring.

- She's faithful.

She's Horton Hatches the Egg.

She sits on that nest  
and she never, ever wavers.

Well, she'd probably be easier to like  
if she would just  
allow some weakness in others.

- She doesn't allow it in herself.

- True.

I didn't see what was so bad  
about Henry Crawford.

Yes. Thank you, Grigg.

Why does it have to be Edmund?

Well, Austen, she's always suspicious  
of people who are too charming.

Just once I'd like to pick up Mansfield Park  
and see Fanny end up in the sack  
with Henry Crawford.

Yes! Yes!

You can't read these novels  
without wondering  
if she doesn't have a little thing  
for the naughty boys.

Well, who doesn't?

Except for Fanny Price.

Okay, look. I love Fanny. She works hard.

- She puts her family's needs above her own.

- Mom, it's okay.

And she never, ever  
stops loving Edmund, ever.

Even when he's stupid enough  
to do something like  
take up with Mary Crawford.

Oh, dear.

I thought Mansfield Park would be safe,  
didn't you?

I don't think we're gonna get through  
all six books.

Reading Jane Austen is a freaking minefield.

You're awfully quiet, Grigg. Any thoughts?

Yeah.

Yeah. Yes!

The relationship  
between Edmund and Fanny.

They seemed like brother and sister.

But then in the end,

it's like The Empire Strikes Back,

but it's in reverse. You know?

'Cause in Jedi, Luke Skywalker,

he gets over Princess Leia

when she turns out to be his sister.

Edmund gets over Miss Crawford and gets it  
on with Fanny, who's his first cousin, so...

Did that bother anybody else?

- Weren't you gonna call Sylvia for lunch?

- Oh, yeah.

- You know Allegra's gay, right?

- Of course.

Oh. I love your furniture, in your house.

And before we do Northanger Abbey,

I gotta buy a couch, so...

- Is something going on between these two?

- Grigg, you have to...

Would you come with me,

help me pick it out?

If you take Sylvia to lunch.

Great.

Good, that's great.

- Okay, see you.

- All right, yup, here.

- Take care.

- Oh, God. Sorry.

I caught him staring at my titties.

I like that.

- I like this.

- That color's difficult.

I like things that are difficult. I'll take it.

Wait, you just don't buy

the first one you like.

- You don't even know if it'll fit.

- What? It's fine.

You getting hungry?

Grigg, I don't mean to be rude,

but may I ask,

do you have a lot of money?

Never know how to answer that.

Yeah, I have enough money.

But, you know,

I like working in tech support.

- May I?

- Sure.

You should bring Sylvia here.

It's so romantic.

You know, she's planning

this library fundraiser.

- She's busy.

- Call her.

It's hard to be alone.

- Well, maybe her husband will come back.

- Maybe.

Jane Austen should write that.

She did. In Persuasion.

Anne Eliot is in love with this guy

Wentworth who's in the navy, right?

But her family thinks that

he's not good enough.

- Right.

- So he leaves.

And when he comes back

he's become this wealthy man.

- But he's no longer in love with her.

- Okay. Don't tell me any more.

- Oh, so you're enjoying the Austen, I see.

- Yeah. And how's the Ursula Le Guin?

- You didn't like Le Guin?

- I didn't read them.

How are you gonna know what you like

unless you try?

I think at my age I should know what I like.

Age? Come on, age.

Age has nothing to do with anything.

I was willing to read girly books

like Jane Austen...

She is not girly.

Which I found out.

So maybe you would find out  
that science fiction's not just...

- Aliens on rocket ships.

- Right.

All right, hurry up and finish.

I'm gonna show you something really cool.

What you have to understand

is that when I was a kid,

my dad and I

were basically surrounded by girls 24/7.

You know, there was my mom,

my sisters, and their friends.

So there'd be like 15 girls in the house.

It was insane.

My dad would hide out in the shed  
and no one was allowed back there.

And he'd listen to ballgame,

you know, smoke his pipe.

He actually died a couple years ago  
of mouth cancer.

- I'm so sorry.

- Anyway, one day...

I'm like 10 years old,

my dad takes me back to the shed

and he shows me some magazines

that he keeps back there.

He says, "This is strictly guy stuff.

It's top secret. Very private.

"Tell no one."

Yeah, so from then on, it's like...

I don't know...

It's like me and my dad and science fiction.

These were like the first books

that I fell in love with,

and I never got over it.

Arthur C. Clarke. He's a visionary writer.

Theodore Sturgeon. Amazing.

Philip K. Dick.

This was my top-secret all-guy world.

- Andre Norton.

- Very manly.

Except, as it turns out,  
Andrew Norton, a.k.a. Andre Norton,  
- a.k.a. Alice Mary Norton.

- No way.

- James Tiptree, Jr.

- I heard of him.

Real name, Alice Sheldon. Pat Murphy.

- Patrice Anne...

- You were still surrounded.

But by that time I liked girls.

You win. I'll read the Le Guin.

Great.

- Tell me a secret.

- Your turn.

No. You have better secrets.

You can trust me.

Tell me.

Okay, but this is not something

I would tell anyone else.

There was this special needs kid  
in the grade above me, Benny.

He wore his hat squashed down  
really low, and his ears stuck out.

And he was always carrying around  
this basketball and going...

And, one day, I was in fourth grade,  
I saw that he was holding his penis.

So, I just went back to my friends.

Well, later my dad picked me up.

And he was distracted,  
just not really listening, and...

And I don't know why, but...

I said, "Dad, this boy at school  
made me look at his penis."

- Wait. What was his name?

- Benny.

We actually got their address  
and drove to their house.

And Benny's mom answers the door.

I mean, she was old.

She has these two long, skinny gray braids.

And my dad's yelling.

And she starts crying.

"I'm sorry, what do you expect me to do?"

And he says,  
"I expect you to speak to your son."  
And then right behind her is Benny  
with his stupid basketball, going...  
And my dad just stops.  
'Cause he had a little brother like that  
who died.  
Oh, my God.  
So we get back in the car  
and my dad is just silent.  
And then he says, "I think you knew  
"you were leaving out  
the most important part."  
And I just felt horrible.  
You know, I didn't really know  
any of that was gonna happen.  
I just wanted his attention.  
Have you lost your mind?  
I thought about... I thought about calling.  
- I... But I didn't wanna wake you.  
- You can't just show up here, Daniel.  
Somebody's gotta mow the lawn.  
I don't mind.  
Well, I'll pay somebody.  
You know? I mean, this is my home.  
You cannot just arrive here without asking.  
What if I had somebody staying over?  
- Are you seeing someone?  
- Put the mower away.  
I didn't mean that in a weird kind of way.  
I just missed hearing what's going on here.  
Allegra, she acts like she hates me,  
and the boys... I mean, Diego and Andy,  
they call from school,  
but they don't say much.  
They're ashamed of their father.  
So Diego says you told him  
the handle on the shower's loose?  
- Thirty seconds.  
- I'll deal with it.  
Is there something in the house  
you don't want me to see?  
Do you think  
I'm not taking care of the house?



- No, no...

- You wanna do what a husband does?  
You wanna fix things?  
You can't fix this.  
You're not my husband.

- All that's gone now.

- Can I call you next weekend?

- No, you cannot call me next weekend.

- Okay.

I'll check in with you, okay?

My mom said I could buy a motorcycle  
if I paid for it myself.  
It's her one stipulation, right?  
So I work at the mall.  
And I have that whole Kerouac thing  
planned for this summer,  
and now it's, "No."  
I'm 18 years old.  
I have the right to buy a motorcycle.  
But you had a motorcycle once.  
And you ended up hating it.  
Remember, Trey?  
Remember? You used to park it  
on the other side of the gym.  
It was red and black. And...  
You got really tired of taking care of it.  
What're you talking about?  
That was my mom's technique  
when I wanted something.  
She'd say, "But you had  
a birthday party last year.  
"Remember? We had a big cake  
"with pink icing and roses all over it.  
"And you hated it."  
And she was totally messing with you?

- It got her out of giving me a birthday party.

- Wow.

I mean, I have wonderful memories of  
balloons and ballerinas and rollercoasters.  
And it never happened.  
That's pretty messed up.  
"We certainly can't have a big party  
like that every year, can we?"  
So, when did you finally figure it out?

Well, by then she had this other trick.  
So suggest something to me.  
Something you'd like to do.  
Okay. Um...  
Let's get a room.  
Let's not get a room and just say we did.  
Then we give up?  
You weren't a very persistent kid, were you?  
- Trey, you really shouldn't come on to me.  
- Why?  
Because you're a teacher?  
I... We can't do this.  
Let's get out of here.  
We'll go back to my place. We'll just talk.  
Let's not and just wish we did.  
I don't wanna pretend.  
Um, we're late.  
Just give me a second.  
God.  
- Does this place seem creepy?  
- It's quiet.  
- Wow, Sylvia, you look great!  
- Hottie!  
It's the new me.  
- Hey, how's Corinne doing?  
- Great.  
So, are we up for Grigg's amazing insights  
on Northanger Abbey?  
Stop it. He might surprise you.  
- I hope his couch has arrived.  
- Oh, I don't mind sitting on the floor.  
- Passing around cans of aerosol cheese?  
- Stop it. Fine.  
Grigg is a grownup.  
I'm sure he's made it very nice.  
All right.  
Welcome. Please come in.  
- Whoa.  
- Grigg? Whoa!  
Apparently, he thinks it's Hallowe'en.  
- No, it's Northanger Abbey! It's Gothic!  
- Right!  
No one gets out alive!  
- I don't like this. I don't like this.

- Sylvia, Sylvia!  
- Grigg? Grigg? Grigg?  
- Sylvia, it's a joke.  
- He's just having fun...  
- Oh, Sylvia, Sylvia, Sylvia!  
It's okay. It's all right.  
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.  
- Look.  
- It's a send-up of Northanger.  
- It's a program.  
- Bernadette, that's your phone.  
This is my remote.  
And everything's on sensors.  
Prudie? Oh, hi, Dean.  
Is Prudie running late?  
- What do you do on Hallowe'en?  
- Oh, Hallowe'en is big.  
Hallowe'en is much, much bigger.  
You should come over for Hallowe'en.  
- Wait.  
- Oh, that's terrible.  
I got inspired reading  
The Mysteries of Udolpho.  
You know, the book in Northanger Abbey  
that Catherine's obsessed with reading?  
- You read The Mysteries of Udolpho?  
- Food!  
- Hey, Grigg, that color almost works.  
- When did you...  
- He read The Mysteries of Udolpho.  
- Wow.  
Wait, that book they were reading  
in the book? That's a real book?  
Yeah, with the black veils  
and Laurentina's skeleton.  
- Didn't you think that sounded great?  
- Yeah, it sounded awesome.  
Dean, I'm so sorry.  
Prudie must be devastated.  
Prudie said to ask you.  
She's supposed to talk or something,  
about some book?  
Persuasion.  
We don't know how long we're gonna be

down in San Diego, so...

She may have to cancel.

Tell her we'll save Persuasion for the end.

It's better to do it last, anyway.

It was Austen's final book.

I thought Northanger Abbey was  
the final book.

- Written first. Published last.

- That makes much more sense.

- Why?

- What happened with her?

'Cause it's a novel about novels.

You know? You see Austen as

the young writer, questioning herself.

"Who's a heroine?"

What makes a good story?

"Are novels a waste of time? Am I  
gonna write? What should I write about?"

- I like that.

- That's actually very perceptive, Grigg.

Thanks.

Prudie's mother died.

- What?

- Jesus.

She got into her car yesterday,  
this was in San Diego.

She made a left coming out of a parking lot  
into oncoming traffic.

- Jesus.

- Terrible.

- Were Prudie and her mom close?

- Well, there was tension.

What do we think? Is Persuasion  
too depressing to take on right now,  
with the dead mother and everything?

She doesn't die on the page.

Even Sense and Sensibility, the dad dies.

What about Pride and Prejudice?

I could use a little encounter in the woods  
with Mr. Darcy right now.

- Are we all up for a little romance?

- Ready.

I think we're all overdue.

And it'll be better for Prudie.

I still can't believe you read  
The Mysteries of Udolpho, Grigg.

- Bravo, Grigg. Bravo.
- Yay for the grilled artichokes.
- You can move in with us any time, Grigg.
- Please, don't bring skeletons.

She loves these.

Are you and Grigg seeing each other?

No. He's interested in Sylvia, obviously.

That was the plan, right?

I don't wanna fight, okay?

I don't know why you didn't  
just take her back to the car  
and have sex with her.

I mean, clearly you wanted to.

I talked to her...

I talked to her for like five minutes.

Longer. Longer, Dean.

And with those ridiculous plastic boobs.

Is that what you go for?

Prudie, you know,

I was just trying to be nice to your friend.

Okay. Chloe Baher is not my friend, Dean.

Chloe Baher came to my mother's funeral  
to gloat. "Ha-ha! Your mother's dead."

And you hit on her!

- I do... I do...
- You hit on her!

I was not hitting on her.

You know, when I was in the 10th grade,  
I wrote an entire paper on Julius Caesar  
in iambic pentameter.

And Chloe Baher removed it from my locker  
and she read it aloud to the whole class.

And everyone laughed at me.

Baby, high school's over.

High school's never over.

"And turning 'round,  
he looked for a moment at Elizabeth  
"till catching her eye,  
he withdrew his own and coldly said,  
" 'She is tolerable but not handsome  
enough to tempt me.  
" 'I am in no humor at present to give

consequence to young ladies

"'who are slighted by other men.

"'You had better return to your partner  
and enjoy her smiles,

"'for you are wasting your time with me.'"'

You know, I don't know if we can  
do *Pride and Prejudice* next week,  
because it's the library dinner.

Well, we need to go for Sylvia.

Daniel's bringing Pam.

- That's so unnecessary.

- Tell me about it.

- His firm's buying a table.

- Well, then we should buy one.

All of us, the book club.

- Show up in force.

- Yes.

"The Central Valley River City

All Jane Austen, All The Time Book Club,"  
is what Grigg calls it.

He's so funny. I'm so glad  
he finally made a date with Sylvia.

He's taking her to lunch.

I sure hope there's some dancing  
in this thing.

I'm trying to diet.

My husband is bringing a date  
to my fundraiser.

Yeah, re-reading *Pride and Prejudice* again,  
I keep thinking,

"You know, courtship is easy."

- Where's Austen's novel on divorce?

- I wouldn't say it was easy.

Depends who you're courting, I guess.

- Does Jocelyn ever go out with anyone?

- Occasionally.

She used to date my husband  
in high school.

Then she sort of gave him to me.

Daniel's the one

that first bought Jocelyn a dog.

- She traded your husband for a dog?

- Look, I adore Jocelyn, but...

If loving is letting go,

then whoever wants Jocelyn is going to have to pry her fingers loose, one by one.

- Hey.

- Hi.

Hey.

Do you know Lynne from my writing group?

- I don't, actually. Allegra.

- Hey.

Listen, I just have to say, you have been so good for Corinne.

Ever since you two have been together, she's been writing nonstop.

Didn't you just love that story that she wrote last week?

Well, Allegra and I don't discuss what I'm working on.

Okay.

"Dear Ms. Corinne Mahern, we regret

"that we must decline to publish the three short stories you sent us.

"Benny's Basketball" is strong narratively, "but the depiction of your penis-waving retarded boy felt a little unkind.

"And isn't the title

"Separating Eggs For Flan" a bit obvious "as a metaphor for your parents' divorce?

"Yet we confess that "Skydiver" puzzled us most.

"Why would a beautiful, self-centered young lesbian jump out of a plane?"

I thought we could drive together.

We should hurry.

I don't want Sylvia sitting there alone.

- Sahara, off.

- Sylvia's already at the library.

- She said she had to get there early.

- So you offered her a ride first.

No, she happened to mention it at lunch.

That's a great dress.

Stay.

I converted it to biodiesel.

So it basically runs on donut grease.

This is so great. I never get to drive it.

Or vacuum it, apparently.

I like your hair.  
You need to dance with Sylvia tonight.  
- You do know how to dance, don't you?  
- Of course I do.  
I have three older sisters. I can dance.  
Wait, if we stay in this lane,  
we're gonna be late.  
Given that I have to convert  
donut grease into biofuel  
every time I fill up the tank,  
I just try not to drive very fast.  
We're barely moving.  
You ever read those Le Guin books  
I bought you?  
I prefer books about real people.  
Okay, so Elizabeth Bennet is real  
and people in science fiction aren't.  
Is that it?  
Science fiction books have people in them,  
but they're not about the people.  
Real people are complicated.  
Well, there's all kinds of science fiction.  
When you've read some,  
I will be interested in your opinion.  
- Why are you getting off here?  
- I enjoy seeing the river.  
What are you, Mark Twain?  
Now we're gonna get stuck at every light.  
Look at the talent in this room.  
Half the Silicon Valley is here.  
To romance.  
- Hi.  
- Hello.  
I'm planning on meeting a software baron  
and moving to Pemberley.  
Well, everyone knows a rich man  
is eventually going to want a new wife.  
- Hi.  
- Hi.  
I'm Dean.  
Yeah, he's not doing book club with us.  
Uh, moral support.  
She's had a rough couple of weeks.  
- Well, you're welcome to join in, Dean.



- Nah, that's okay.  
I think I'll just head to the bar.  
Let you ladies talk.  
There is no bar. It's a library.  
- Serving liquor.  
- Well, that'll work.  
You guys need anything?  
We had this big fight on the way over here.  
- Have some champagne.  
- Mom?  
I broke up with Corinne.  
Oh, my God. Honey.  
- Nice.  
- We have plenty of time.  
Honey, whatever happened between  
you and Corinne, you don't just walk out.  
- You don't even know what she did.  
- Did she hit you?  
Did she say cruel things?  
You are so quick to love. You're too quick.  
You jump in, you jump out.  
That's Daniel in you. Quick to act.  
"It's not working? Well...  
Fix it. Or break it. Who cares?"  
We don't just dispose of people we love.  
You stay. You repair.  
Okay, you know what?  
This is not you and Daddy.  
This is Corinne. The difference being  
that Daddy actually loves you.  
So you go repair. Power on.  
Maybe Daddy'll give up  
this woman he's been fucking.  
- Allegra.  
- But Corinne, I'm dumping the bitch.  
- We're gonna be so late.  
- I'll call a cab.  
I will not let Sylvia be alone when Daniel  
walks into that library with Pam.  
You got your phone?  
I'll find a payphone.  
Are you attracted to Sylvia?  
Yeah, she's, um... She's nice.  
She's more than nice.

She's smart and funny...

- And she's in love with her husband.

- Well, she needs to get over that.

Why don't you stop interfering?

Let Sylvia work out her own life.

It's interfering

to want my best friend to be happy.

If that's interfering, I hope I never stop.

What about me? Am I your friend?

Or am I just some widget to help you  
make Sylvia feel better about herself?

Why did you invite me

to be part of your book club?

What went through your mind

the first time you saw me?

"There's a man who is dying to read  
every book Jane Austen ever wrote."

- Is that what you thought?

- No.

But I thought, "What a beautiful woman.

I hope she looks over at me."

I thought if I read your favorite books  
that you would read mine.

But, no, no, no. You just wanna be obeyed.

That's why you have dogs.

For such a famously romantic story,

Pride and Prejudice is a parade

of bizarre marriages.

I've had every marriage in this book.

My first husband was a politician.

He was embarrassed by every move I made.

He said I was rude and loud.

"Stop pointing your breasts everywhere,"  
he'd say to me.

I was 17. I was Charlotte Lucas.

I married the first man who looked at me.

Tout le monde est sage apres le coup.

You don't see your own marriage

until it's too late.

So, um... I actually thought

that Charlotte Lucas was gay.

Really, I think that when she tells Lizzie  
she's not as romantic as she is,

I think that's what she means.

Charlotte Lucas is not gay. She's not.  
She just... She just has no options.  
Wait. Austen meant Charlotte to be gay  
or Charlotte is gay  
and Austen is not aware of it?  
I just love the idea  
of a character having a secret life  
that the author doesn't even know about.  
You know, frankly,  
I kind of admire Charlotte  
for looking at her situation  
and deciding to marry Mr. Collins.  
I mean, yes, yes, she knows  
he'll never be the "love of her life,"  
but that's okay.  
That is exactly the reason  
that Jocelyn would hate her.  
Jocelyn has contempt for anyone  
who settles for anything less  
than the perfect love.  
You know, it's probably why Jocelyn  
has never married.

My apologies, everybody.

- Hello.

- Hi.

We ran out of donut grease.

- Grigg Harris.

- Dean Drummond.

- Wait, Grigg... Grigg from the book club?

- Yeah.

No, it's just Prudie would say "Grigg,"  
and I just didn't picture it as a guy.

So you thought Grigg was a girl?

Dean thinks "Austen"

is the capital of Texas.

Wow.

You'll notice that Jane,  
she never shows what happens  
after the wedding.

Maybe Elizabeth and Darcy  
start hating each other.

Maybe Lizzie went off to Pemberley,  
and she turned into this crazy person,  
like her mom,

because our mothers are like time bombs.  
They just... They tick away inside of us.

Let's not give Mrs. Bennet  
more importance than she deserves.

- You know, I mean, what about the father?

- What father?

You know, my mom showed me  
a picture of a guy in uniform.

Well, maybe she made him up.

Or maybe she bought it at a garage sale.

And I kept it in my room, this...

I kept it in my room.

Let's not do this now, okay?

Dean, I got it.

Bernadette.

Daniel never came.

Good.

I'm in love with one of my students.

But I mean, nothing's happened. Much.

But it could.

It could, if I let it.

I fantasize about him constantly.

Sweetie, your mother died. This is grief.

He looks at me like he's the spoon,  
and I'm the dish of ice cream.

It's a good thing we're reading

Sense and Sensibility next.

- I love you so.

- But how can you be sure in just one day?

I do not know. 'Tis just when a lass falls in  
or out of love, she knows it right away.

- You think you're in love with me?

- Think?

What good does thinking do  
but what I feel is something else?

- Hey, you got your cast off.

- Yeah.

- How does it feel?

- Great.

You can reach it.

Just really stretch your arm out.

There you go.

Just give the rope a little bit of a shake.

You can do it, there... Can you put your...

Can you put your right foot  
in that blue thing?

It's gonna be fine.

- Here, hang on.

- You can reach it.

- Just reach up.

- It's caught.

It's okay. You're doing good.

I'm totally okay. I'm not even hurt.

It's nothing.

I'm sorry, I have to stop you here.

It's not likely to be anything  
more than a concussion.

I'd like to keep Allegra under observation  
for a few days, okay?

And if you need to reach me, I'm Dr. Yep.

How many times have we had to come here  
to get her stitched up?

- It's always Allegra, never the boys.

- Well, she's the one

who goes mountain climbing  
and skateboarding and snowboarding.

It's a miracle she never tried parachuting.

She's so extreme.

One minute she's crazy in love  
with Corinne,

the next minute she's never  
hated anybody more.

- She's gonna be okay, right?

- She's fine.

She just took a knock on the noodle.

This is gonna sound, probably, horrible,  
considering the fact that  
she's got this lump on her head, but...

It's just...

It's great to have us all  
in the same room again.

Just feels so normal.

Normal, yeah.

You know, I haven't been seeing Pam  
for a couple of months now.

So, that must be a big change.

You know, I was thinking just this morning  
about this book club that we're in,

Allegra and me.  
The first meeting was...  
Yeah, we had just been separated.  
'Cause Allegra had just moved in.  
And I was realizing how different I feel.  
I don't think I'm the same woman  
that you left.  
I can see that. I so see that.  
Well, it's probably the same for you.  
I guess that's what happens  
when you let go.  
We did a good job taking things apart.  
I'm kind of proud of us.  
I'm warning you, if Grigg starts  
making little remarks, I'm gonna walk out.  
You two just keep it together  
for one more book.  
I wish he'd just drop out of the group.  
Austen sets up this juicy triangle  
between Elinor, Edward and Lucy Steele.  
And then at the end, she practically  
has to whip a rabbit out of a hat  
to make Lucy Steele run off  
with Edward's brother?  
- Yeah, that requires some hand-waving.  
- I think the ending's well-plotted.  
To me, the part that seems forced is  
Marianne ending up with Colonel Brandon.  
- Anyone else feel that?  
- Oh, I have no problem with that.  
He rides up on a big stallion,  
sweeps her into his arms. I'm there.  
From the time Colonel Brandon  
meets Marianne,  
he just lavishes all this attention on her.  
And meanwhile,  
she's throwing herself at Willoughby.  
Willoughby is a player.  
Women never go for the nice guy.  
Please. Men say that, but you get to know  
some of these men who complain the most,  
you find out they're not as nice  
as they like to think they are.  
Okay. You know what struck me?

Is that Colonel Brandon is only  
a few years younger than Mrs. Dashwood.

Well, why does he take up with  
the daughter and not the mother?

Yeah, why not Mrs. Dashwood?

Maybe Mrs. Dashwood

won't give him the time of day.

- The book is about the young people.

- Yeah, because Jane Austen thinks  
that nothing interesting can happen  
to a woman over 25.

When actually, a novel about a woman  
seducing a slightly younger man  
just yields so much more.

Well, then maybe Mrs. Dashwood  
should go for Willoughby.

Why not?

It's a long, hot summer.

Maybe Mrs. Dashwood

has more sense than that.

Okay, can I just point out,  
she's hardly in the story.

Sex is messy.

Maybe Mrs. Dashwood

prefers a more well-ordered life.

Maybe that's why

she's such a minor character.

- I think if you read Austen's novels...

- Oh, I have.

You wanted me to, and I did.

I think you'll see she always writes  
in favor of order and self-control.

- Nothing unwise.

- Nothing in haste.

Okay, so, this is...

This is what, this is a rulebook?

We could do worse.

I think Jane Austen wrote about women  
falling in love because she was lonely.

Oh, you couldn't be more wrong.

Austen lived a very full life.

She could've gotten married anytime.

- She almost did.

- That's right.

- But she decided not to.  
- Why, too messy? Too out of control?  
His name was Harris Bigg-Wither,  
and they were engaged for one night.  
"Oh, Harris Bigg-Wither!"  
I can't believe you know that.  
I understand why Colonel Brandon  
goes for Marianne.  
And it's not 'cause she's young.  
It's because she's generous with herself.  
She's willing to risk her heart.  
No rules, no fear.  
- And Willoughby tramples her.  
- She just picked the wrong guy.  
No rules, no fear.  
I like that.  
- Hi.  
- You're wearing that to your book club?  
It's Bernadette's idea to do this beach day,  
'cause in the novel they all go to Lyme,  
which is, you know,  
like, the beach in England.  
This is your last one, right?  
I think we're gonna do some more books  
after this one.  
Prudie's gonna be hours late  
and Grigg called. He's bringing a woman.  
Thank God it's the last meeting.  
Yes, there's getting to be  
a little too much plot.  
Not that I blame Grigg.  
Something about reading Austen  
sort of makes you wanna get it on.  
Hi.  
Started reading it with Allegra  
at the hospital. This is a great book.  
Are you joining our discussion?  
- Am I? 'Cause I'd like to.  
- Hi.  
- Daniel wants to join us.  
- Well he's not in the club, is he?  
Oh, come on, this is my favorite Austen.  
So far.  
It's all about mistakes and second chances.



Yeah, you can stay.

Glass of wine?

I can't believe he brought a date  
to our last meeting.

- I kinda had him in mind for you, as a fling.

- For me?

Honey, I took your boyfriend away from you  
in high school.

Look how that turned out.

- Hi.

- Hey.

- How ya doing?

- Guys, this is Cat.

- Hello.

- I'm Grigg's big sister.

Oh, God, that's wonderful. That's so...

I'm... God, that's wonderful.

You're Grigg's sister.

I'm Jocelyn. This is Sylvia.

- How are you?

- Hi.

- Good, thank you.

- Hi. Bernadette.

- I don't believe it.

- Look at you!

- You look great.

- Good to see you.

Thank you.

- Wow, are you visiting from Idaho?

- Yeah, yeah.

We kept seeing these emails.

And we said, "What kind of strange power  
"do these women have  
that they got Grigg to read Jane Austen?"

Just thought I'd check it out.

You wanna take a walk?

Well, sure.

Excuse me.

Bernie! Mom! Hey. Hey!

- Hi.

- Dr. Yep?

Samantha. Thank you for inviting me.

- I'm sorry we're late.

- Oh. Yeah. Well, Prudie's not even here yet.

Is that Dad?  
- Let's say hi.  
- Okay.  
A doctor.  
Nothing in haste.  
- Dad! Hi!  
- Hey.  
Would you do me a favor?  
Would you read this?  
Please. Right now.  
Isn't that what your  
special little book club's for?  
I really want you to read it.  
Please, Dean.  
It doesn't... They don't...  
Prudie, I feel like you want me  
to be something that I'm not.  
I just walk around being me.  
I don't pretend to be anything else.  
I'm the guy who thinks "Austen"  
is a city in Texas.  
I shouldn't have said that. That was mean.  
You just set me up for a test  
that you don't want me to pass.  
No, no. This is not a test.  
This is something to share.  
Why don't you just tell me what it's about?  
It's about these two people  
who used to love each other.  
And they don't anymore.  
And it's how they persuade themselves  
to give it another try.  
Look, I can get you started off. Okay?  
- "Sir Walter Eliot...  
- Prudie.  
"...of Kellynch Hall in Somersetshire  
was a man who...  
"for his own amusement, never took up  
any book but the..."  
Come on, you're really not gonna  
read all of this out loud.  
One page.  
"There he found occupation  
for an idle hour

"and consolation in a distressed one."

- Come on.

- So I've been trying to figure out that moment in Persuasion when Wentworth and Anne just began to stop hating each other.

Maybe it's when they went with everyone to Lyme.

After Louisa Musgrove fell.

After Wentworth used her to make Anne jealous.

You think he was using Louisa?

Yeah. That's one interpretation.

- I think the guy was just trying to feel...

- Valued again.

It was a bonehead move.

I mean, he knows he's nothing without Anne.

He loved her then, he loves her now.

I like how Austen always lets the men explain themselves.

Darcy writes a letter to Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice, and Frank writes to Emma.

Yeah, in Persuasion, everything hangs on Wentworth leaving her that note

- when everybody's talking all around them.

- Yeah. Yeah. Sneaky.

No, smart guy. Perfect timing.

Yeah.

Let us never underestimate the power of a well-written letter.

Grigg has always loved dogs.

You know, we were never allowed to have one when we were kids.

Dogs and books. That's our Grigg.

Okay, he'd kill me for saying this, but my brother likes you.

I'm figuring he'll never tell you.

And this way it's up to you.

My sisters and me,

I wouldn't say we ruined him,

but he's just way too considerate to make the first move.

- Hey.

- Hey.

I was just wishing that Austen  
had written a bunch more books, you know?  
I'm gonna miss this.

"All of the ladies were contented to pass  
quietly and carefully down the steep flight,  
"excepting Louisa.

"She must be jumped down them  
by Captain Wentworth.

"She was safely down and instantly,  
to show her enjoyment,  
"ran up the steps to be jumped down again.

"He advised her against it, but no..."

Shoot.

I'm so sorry. I should've called first.

I read these books.

I love them.

I couldn't stop reading.

I went to the all-night newsstand on  
State Street to buy Searoad, the next one,

- but they didn't have it, and...

- Do you wanna borrow Searoad?

I mean, I have... You know, there...

There are other writers that you might like.

Hey.

Hi, honey.

I didn't expect you back so soon.

Wait, wait, wait.

Hey, has anyone read those

Patrick O'Brian novels?

- British Navy.

- Yeah. Jane Austen's navy, 1805.

Yeah. But aren't there, like, 20 of them?

- There's more of us now.

- I'm in.

- Oh, my God, is that Bernadette?

- I thought she was in Costa Rica.

Buenas noches, everyone.

This is Senor Obando.

- Hola.

- Hello.

- Hello.

- He's working on his English.

- I'm working on my Spanish.

- Hello.

And so far I have te amo.

And mi esposo.

- Oh, my God!

- Congratulations!

- That's incredible!

- That's incredible. Congratulations!

- Oh, it's gorgeous.

- Thank you.

- I'm so happy for you.

- Congratulations.

- Dad, check it out.

- Well, let's get you a drink, Mr. Darcy.

- Don't be gone too long.

- Yikes. That makes seven.

- What?

- Yeah.

Hey, guys. Guys.

He hasn't read a word of Austen.

Oh, poor man.

Ah, yeah. We'll fix that.

- Cheers!

- Cheers!