

Lower Learning

By Shahin Chandrasoma

Radio DJ:

in the mid-70s today and unless you're driving a jet pack to work get used to the slow-and-go traffic for your morning commute. Now onto more troubling news emerging from the Coolidge County school district. Millions of dollars are missing from the school coffers due to the district's sloppy accounting procedures and no one can seem to pinpoint the missing loot. District Chairwoman Olympia Parpadelle had no comment, but county insiders blame staff shortages, incompetence and a troubling climate of corruption at a time when the county's children continue to score at the bottom of statewide tests. Moving on to sports, it seems the chimpanzee that interrupted Saturday's community college baseball playoffs... Hey, you okay? Yeah. Same shit, different day, huh? Something like that, yeah.

Boy:

- (bell ringing)
- # I wanted to #
(children chattering)
To find another spot
To pay you
It's just that I forgot
- # But nobody has the time #
- (grunts)

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# To sit and blow my mind #
# But I'm so ready #
# To leave this shit behind #
# And you've been
around the block #
# More times than him #
- (grunts, farts)
- # And everybody catches you #
# When you've got nothing #
# But you're only 24 #
# But you still want more #
# And you gotta start over #
- # Every time you close the door #
- Girl:
# But don't worry, baby #
# There's another night waiting #
# And maybe by the morning #
# There'll be something
worth saving #
# Then I'll say you made it #
# Then I'll say
you made it #
# Yeah. #
(song continues)
# I wanted to find #
# Another way to look at you #
# But everybody's saying #
# That I've got way too much
to lose #
# So I hold you till the morning
meets the afternoon #
# And you don't mind
that I leave #
# You've got your things
to do #
(song continues)
# But don't worry, baby #
# There's another night waiting #
# And maybe by the morning #
# There'll be something
worth saving #
# Then I'll say you made it #
# Yeah #
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(song continues)
# But don't worry, baby #
# There's another night waiting #
# And maybe by the morning #
# There'll be something worth saving #
# Then I'll say you made it... #
(bell rings)
(sighs)
I failed you, Pop.
(filing nails)
Catherine, the bond market
is for pussies.
Oh, God, what do the homosexuals
want now?
- (intercom buzzes)
- Boy:
Send him in.
(march playing on gramophone)
(intercom buzzes)
Woman:
and Adelle Horowitz.
Jasper Macaveady and
Adelle Horowitz.
Oh, for fuck's sake.
(sighs)
Okay.
(march playing on gramophone)
Scotch man, right?
No, actually, I don't touch the stuff.
Pinot then?
Sure.
Jasper poured gravy
all in my hair.
I can see that.
Jasper, where did you get gravy
at 8:
Jasper buddy, you know the drill.
Go walk the railroad tracks
until lunch.
Hey, I don't make the rules.
Adelle, I don't know, honey.
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It will eventually dry, so... (crying) I'll call your mom. She'll bring you some new clothes, okay? Oh, shit. No no no. I can't hug you. I can't hug you. It's against policy. Plus I'll get gravy all over my shirt. So, okay? What do you want? Do you want some grapefruit? I got grapefruit. Look, Conroy, you know I can't discuss my dealings with other parents, but if you want those kind of grades for little Julie, it's gonna cost you more than 10 Gs. Gigi Fenstermacher told me she only paid \$7500. Gigi Fenstermacher is a whore. And do you think I served her the 1986 Bouchemal Pinot you're drinking? Let me answer that for you. No, I did not. I'm willing to pay \$12,000. Now that's a substantial bribe, Harper. I want you to guarantee straight A's. Well, then I guess when little Julie flunks out and she's selling her hot little body for a hit of crystal meth, I'll have to be the one to tell her that her cheapskate dad killed himself out of shame. That's all I'm prepared to pay,

- nothing more.

- You can afford more.
- Bartlett!
- (over intercom) Yes, sir.

Playback.

(over intercom)

I'm willing to pay \$12,000.

Now that's a substantial

bribe, Harper.

I want you to guarantee

straight A's.

(clicks gun)

Hmm, bribing an elementary-school

principal.

That's a serious crime, Conroy.

\$15,000.

Do it.

(waltz playing)

(sniffs)

Me.

Me me me me!

Go to the bank, deposit that

in my account.

And wear the red wig this time.

It makes your can look smaller.

Okay.

Harper, Rebecca Seberg

from the school board

is on her way here.

Something about

an emergency inspection.

Is everything all right?

Peaches and pearls, Melody.

Peaches and pearls.

Yank my caddy from class, tell him

to meet me on the hopscotch squares.

What?

That ain't mine.

Okay.

Say it.

It ain't yours.

Good girl.

This is your principal speaking.

Please be aware

that an inspector from the district

will be on campus today.

Carry on as usual.

No need to put on a show.

- (buzzing)
- Also, try not to eat the lead-based paint

that's flaking off the walls

in the south wing.

That is called poison.

Due to budget cuts, PE clothes

will now be laundered every third Friday.

And lastly, big thanks

to Bobby Templeton,

shop class is canceled

till we find the finger.

That is all.

(sighs) What?

Are we gonna

learn anything today

or are we just

gonna sit here again

and watch you mope

about your divorce?

(teacher muttering)

You know what, Frankie?

Why don't you go

fuck yourself?

Yeah, Sarah.

Why is Mr. Buchwald

sleeping in the gym?

You like questions, Sarah?

Yeah? Try this one.

How do you think you're gonna

make it to third grade

when you fill out your times tables

like a drunk retard?

Mm,

you know,

when my uncle was my age

he walked in on Aunt Sis

screwing the tub-and-tile repairman.

You know what he did?

He hitchhiked all the way

from Sioux City, Iowa,

to Annapolis, Maryland,

in one day. He dove into the Chesapeake and he just swam straight out. He just swam and he swam and he swam. Next day the Coast Guard found his body bobbing in the Atlantic. You think you kids got some problems? Your favorite Saturday-morning cartoon is preempted by figure skating? You try to fart and you get a little poop in your pants? Give me a break. Try marriage. Yeah, Sarah, what? Can I go to the bathroom? Sweetie, you can go home

Sarah:

Okay.

for all I care.

Whatever. (door closes) Don't get lazy, Walter. I'd go with the nine iron if I were you. Shut up, Walter. You're not a real caddy. (phone line ringing) (cell phone ringing) Is everything in place, Maurice? Like a jigsaw puzzle, my brother. And you're absolutely sure they'll shut us down? Yeah, you got my vote of no-confidentio and the inspector's report which will be nothing short of God-awful. I'd say the coffin is all but shut on your pathetic excuse for a school. Yes, sir, our master plan is gonna make

your parental kickbacks look like peanuts. What about Chairwoman Parpadelle? Why don't we burn that bridge when we get to it? Don't sweat it. She's rolling by later and she's the easiest bribe in the district, brohan. Good work, Maurice. Thanks, man. Gotta tell you, in no time we're gonna be hanging out in fucking Surinam snorting blow off a walrus's cock. Hey, you want to get beer later or something? We could get, like, a cocktail.

Billings:

No.

Later.

You're my only friend.

(snorts)

Harper.

Uh, excuse me, Harper.

Hey, you... you have time

for a chat?

It has to do

with an inspection later.

Come with me.

What do you know?

Nothing.

Same with the faculty.

We're all in the dark.

Here's your brunch, sir.

A hard-boiled egg?

No, I'm good.

It's for the greater good

that no one knows, including you, Tommy. Yeah, but I'm the vice principal. I mean, this is something I should be let in on. It's a public elementary school, Tom, not some third-rate Montessori. Things get hairy when there are too many chiefs and not enough itty-bitty little Indians. Okay, vice principal? I like you, Tom. I know your past, Tom. Don't be a hero. Back to class, Sarah. Oh, hey. Yeah, look at you. Rebecca Seberg. Yeah, the inspector. Well, look, do it. Inspect away. I'll tell you what you'll find, though... a school on the brink, a school beyond all hope, Old Yeller, but not a doq. Wow. It's rare to find that kind of optimism these days. Sarcasm. You know what that is? Lobstergram, yeah, from Uncle Plimpton back in Nantucket. Lobsters are arthropods, crustaceans, cockroaches of the sea, but for all that they are spineless, literally exoskeleton. I'm not sure I follow the analogy.

And I'm not saying there was one. Maybe now there is. Listen, toots, you spend all day in your fancy-Nancy administration building, but this isn't basic training, okay? This is live fire. And I should know. I was in 'Nam... three years ago on vacation, fine. But the point is, I knew when that war was lost, just like I know these kids are pretty much retarded. And a retard's kind of like a dying dog. All they're good for is a laugh and a kickin'. And a kickin'. Got that? I'm gonna look around if you don't mind. Boom. Do it. Okay, and lastly, we need a noun. Basil. Proxy fight. (giggling) (laughing) Here we go. Lately my dad's mistresses are quite alfresco... that's a great word, Calvin, okay... but battle cruisers like that, especially my snuffalupagus kind of booger time... what? - just can't gestate the proxy fight! What? You guys, what did we just come up with? We are funny. I'm glad that we don't suck. It's nice not to suck. Yeah. Don't I know it, Mernay?

Don't I know it? What luck not to suck like a duck stuck in the muck! Did you see what I did? I rhymed it. Oh, well. What's wrong, Turner? Well, if I just had a little more love in this world then everything would be perfect. But we love you. And I love you, Basil. I love all you guys, honestly, so much. It's just I'm talking about a different kind of love, the kind of love that's wet and smells a little. You see, guys, there's so much love in my heart that sometimes it overflows and all the wrong stuff comes bursting out. All right, Rinaldo, all right. It's time for you to get hungry, okay? It's just round three. You gotta take this round, and then you got just 12 more, to make it up. Sack up, all right? (groans) (liquid squishes) Oh, shit. Yeah, come in. (sobbing) I don't want to be alive anymore. Rebecca. Oh my God, Tom. It's not poop. It's gravy. (dings) Okay, that's okay. Have a seat.

There you go.

You had a couple of good shots

in there.

You got anything

you want to let out there?

No? Okay.

All right, Rinaldo, listen up, okay?

It's make-or-break time for you.

It is not just about this match.

This is about your manhood, okay?

This is Live 101.

If you let a girl beat you now,

they will keep beating you

until your prostate is swollen

to the size of a pine cone

in some Chinamen-owned Wal-Mart.

Is that what you want?

You know what? Do you want

to end up like me and Mrs. Buchwald?

You want to end up eating broccoli

and cheddar hot pockets

every morning for breakfast?

No, you do not want...

that's a negatory, Rinaldo Retanovich.

You do not want that.

Now I want you to get out there

and you punch that girl, okay?

I want you to punch her

right in her happiness, all right?

Get up there.

All right, ring it.

Shut us down?

But why?

Tom, I mean,

where do I begin?

Well, yeah, but...

Oh, you want one?

Oh, no no. It's just...

have you always smoked?

What is this, Salem?

Oh, no no, it's just I...

Gonna have yourself

a little witch hunt?

No, not at all.

Not at all.

Look, Tom, everybody knows

that your school has

the lowest scores in the state.

Huh-uh.

What about Petersburg Prep?

Their scores are lower than ours.

And everyone knows

about their heroin problem.

Those clouds are laughing at me.

Tie me off, bro.

I'm sorry, Tom.

I think my inspection

is just some sort of formality.

Perfect.

I don't know anymore.

I just wish God or whoever

would give me

some sort of sign,

show me what to do

with my life.

Wow.

You know what, though?

It all makes sense.

This is the story of my life.

I mean, in third grade

I wanted to be an astronaut

and then the Challenger

blew up.

You'll be fine.

You have a backup career, right?

This was my second backup career.

I've just got

to finally face it.

I'm finished.

Jesus, Tom,

snap out of it.

You used to be, like,

the world's biggest optimist.

Yeah, well, I've figured out

that the world

has got most of us by the balls.

All we can do is try and keep

our shrieking to a minimum.

So turn it around. You take the world by the balls for a change. The world is just one giant hairy ball. It's so unmanageable. Look, the district's closing the school today and something doesn't smell right. It's the gravy. No, it's Billings. He's got something up his sleeve. Alas, Pangaea was no more. So take cover as continental drift continues to shake things up all around the world. In conclusion, I hope that you have all found the phenomenon of plate tectonics very moving. Wow, that was really great, Otis. I didn't assign it but, you know, that was spectacular. Yes, Sarah. Joanne McVickers has boobs. When will I get boobs? When you can afford them. Mrs. Buchwald, aren't you gonna at least try to teach us something? Does it really matter, Frankie? I mean, this ain't Rutgers, okay? It's the second grade. The only thing I remember from second grade is my hymen breaking during a tetherball game. Maybe if you'd paid more attention your life wouldn't have turned out to be such total garbage. All right, that's it. That's the ballgame.

Your choice... you can either go to the principal's office

or I'll handcuff you to Smelly Alice again. Just because you're miserable doesn't mean the rest of us have to be too. What a sad old sack you've become, Laura Buchwald. Look around you, Tom. This isn't a Del Taco shutting down. It's a school. It's an incubator for the youth of America. Whatever happened to respect for your goddamn elders? She just went through a tough divorce.

Laura:

Well, thanks for the pep talk, Rebecca, but sometimes you've just got to flush the baby down with all the other crap in the toilet, you know? Wanna...? - It's Harper. Leave a message. - (beep) Hey, Harper, it's Maurice. Hey, man about earlier... I'm like... I don't even know what I was thinking. Honestly, I don't ever like beer, so... I mean, so yeah. Well, you know, I just wanted to get that off my chest. So I think we're good. I think we're square. So call me back. Or don't. You don't have to. You don't even have to call me back, 'cause we're good. Cool. Coolio. Holla. (kids cheering) Oh, shit. Look at her go. - (bell ringing) - All right, all right. (whistling a tune) (ticking) - (bell ringing) - Recess! Recess. Not again. Hey, that punk didn't pay you for your smack. Dang! (clicks tongue) I'm gonna blow his brains out. Pow pow pow! What the hell are they doing? Oh, just playing a little drive-by. (boys imitate screeching brakes) They took all the rock-climbing walls after the lawsuit, so... And you're okay with all this? The school's getting shut down anyway, right? Remember when we had kick-boxing in fourth grade and that douche bag Matt Bonner beat the crap out of me? It was you that said, "Nothing is impossible. Go down fighting." I still have that weird click in my knee from when he took me out, but you were right... in theory or something. The point is, Tom, don't give up on these kids. Sorry, is that...? Pain pills. I have back problems.

And the...?

It's whiskey, Tom. I have to
wash it down with something.

What, is this Nuremberg?

It's not like I'm rendering fat of Jews
to make soap and candles.

So?

Okay, fine.

If it'll make you happy

I'll go speak with the faculty.

I don't think it's gonna do
any good.

(grunts)

Man:

to come to terms with it, you know? Maybe she was a guy, maybe she was a girl, but at the end of the day why am I gonna get so upset about a blowjob? Hey, everybody. Hey, you guys, if I can get your attention just for a... hi! I... I have some bad news to share with everyone. The district might shut us down today. Okay, maybe you guys didn't hear me. Geraldine Ferraro might shut down, and permanently this time, not like that incident with Diarrhea Teddy and the hazmat team. That was great. Now look, I don't want to have to assert myself... Assert yourself? With what authority? Haven't you figured it out, Tom? You're a figurehead, a veep. You're Spiro fucking Agnew. All hat and no cattle, Tommy.

Okay, I'm just trying to help. Well, we don't need your help. What do you think will happen to the school if it's shuttered, huh? You think we'll lose our jobs? Well, I got tenure, bitch. We all have, except for two people... this guy and you, Tom. Keep your nose in the roses and out of the smelly stuff. You're the smelly stuff? Yeah, I'm the smelliest stuff there is, Tom, the smelliest stuff this side of Dixie. Guess what side of Dixie we're on. (hisses) So that was useless. Are you just gonna stop there? What would your father say? That's a low blow. Maybe it wasn't low enough. What would your dead father say? Jesus, Rebecca. "Jesus, Rebecca" yourself. Get angry, Tom. What does it take to rile you up anymore? What happened to you that day? I don't want to talk about it. (door opens) Hey. Thanks for the grapefruit. It was the best ever. Oh, you're welcome, Adelle. I like you. And you smell good. Daddy smells like bourbon. Well, I'm sure that doesn't change how much he loves you.

Nuh-uh. He wrote a song called

"Social Worker, Social Worker, Come Take Adelle Away." You're not like him. You're super-duper nice. Well, I think you're nice too, Adelle. Whoa whoa whoa. But we still can't hug. Sorry. We get lawsuits. We get law... she knows we get lawsuits. You set that up, didn't you? No, Tom, songs like that are sung every night. Okay, all right. If this school's going down, I'm going down with it. I've got nothing to lose. But on one condition... you're in this with me. Tom, I'm here to inspect you, not save your ass. I could lose my job. I will... I will lose my job. That's exactly why no one else is helping me. I can't do this alone. I need you.

Fuck a duck.

- I'm in.
- Yeah!

Okay. Okay.

Yeah.

Okay.

A plan... we need a plan.

Right.

Well, we've got about five hours until school's out,

so this whole "Cat's Cradle" thing you just drew isn't gonna happen.

Okay. Okay, here it is:

First we rally the faculty.

They've got to teach their hearts out starting today.

- Then we to to stage two.

- Which is...?
We stage a walkout
right at the end of school.
How's that gonna help?
Because I'm gonna call the media
right before.
Make the news van show up,
splash the kids

across the 11:

there's no way they'll shut us down. And all the teachers who don't give a shit now will change their tune if they know a camera's gonna be in their faces.

Billings:

(soprano singing)

- (door opens and closes)
- Have a seat, Fowler.
- I'm innocent, Billings.
- Yeah, heard that song before.

You know the drill.

Do you want to get suspended?

What's going on?

Are you clearing out of here?

You know what, Fowler?

I'm feeling felicitous today.

Let me give that back to you.

Why don't we just both pretend

you were never in here?

Actually, let's go halfsies.

Give me back that 10 spot.

Yeah.

People are talking, Frankie.

Shit's about to go down.

What's that got to do with me?

It's Billings, Frankie.

He's selling us out for the big game.

Jesus H!

I know we've had our differences in the past.

Yes, Bartlett, we have.

And that's it, baby.

That's long division.

Oh, Bartlett, you're everything
a man should be.

- Tell me again about remainders.

- (screams)

No, Frankie, no!

It's not what you think! No!

Frankie: Hard to believe that was just yesterday. We can't let them close the school. I don't know what I'll do, Frankie. I have a wife and kids to think about. You do? Not yet, but someday. You have to get word out. Take this. We're all counting on you, Fowler. Forget our past. I'll do what I can, Bartlett, but I'll never forget our past. (children playing) That's the thing, though, you know? You give and you give and you give. And what do they do? Take it. They take take take. Even still, we need the ladies. Honest to goodness, we need 'em. God bless 'em, every last one of 'em. I know I needed Mrs. Buchwald, but not anymore, though. Maybe you're right. Maybe I do. I don't know. I can't hear you, Mr. Buchwald. I think my brain is bleeding. I want you to listen to me. Are you listening? Do not marry young, 'cause right now you're shit.

You're a zygote.

You may think you're hot stuff,

but out there in the real world

you want to know what you are?

Bang. Zero.

That's you. Look at that. You.

But in a few years you might

begin to bark instead of just yap.

A few years more...

you begin to snarl and growl.

But what if you're stuck

with some cooze

that you shacked up with back when

you were just a little yapping yapper?

I mean, what the fuck?

Does that compute?

What the fuck is wrong

with this world?

Does it make any sense to you?

No! Thank you!

No, it doesn't.

Okay, amigo, good talk.

Up you get.

Oh!

Nurse Gretchen.

Nurse Gretchen!

Yes, Mr. Abernathy.

(muttering)

- Sorry?
- What?

What did you say?

You said something.

No, you said, "Sorry?"

What?

No, you tried to say something

and I said, "What?"

And then you said, "What?"

But you were gonna say something.

So what did you say?

No, you said, "Sorry?"

And then I said, "What?"

And then I said, "You just say

what you said. "What?

I said, "You said, 'What? '

And I said, 'What?"' And then now I'm saying "What?" again, as in, like, what are you talk...? What? - What? - Sorry. Okay, come on, hon. Um, I have Dip Dip. Yeah, I see that. You have some. - (Rinaldo groans) - No, thank you. I actually think his brain is hemorrhaging. So I'm gonna take him to the nurse's office, okay? Oh, okay. Yeah, whatevs. I'll just chill. Lates. No bigs. (whimpers) (bell ringing) - Oh, darn it all. - Stinks. (machine beeps) Hey, Harper, it's Maurice. Um, we got off on the wrong foot on my last message and I just... I feel like... why aren't you calling me back? What's...? Why not? I mean, I'm leaving you messages. Usually that elicits a callback. So think about it. So we'll turn this corner and wind up right here. Now I'll cover the north side. You cover the portables and the east side. If we round up enough teachers

with clean underwear by lunch we'll call the news. What? Nothing. It's just for a second there I saw a little bit of your father in you. - Tom, what happened that day? - Shh! Let's not dig up old graves, okay? Let's go save the future. Oh, you precocious little bastards, weaned on your chocolate breakfast cereals and your Hannah Montana, dressing as though you want to be raped by a professional basketball player. Oh, shame on the lot of you. Shame. - (knocks) - What? Old Curt, a word, please. Fine, no more Sponge Bob videos. And? And no more giving them shots of Nyquil so I can sit and read my "Us Weekly" in fucking peace and quiet. That's the spirit. Bitch. It's time to rally my angels. The periodic table of elements... what everything is made of, what you are made of, and me. Okay, hot hands.

School spirit.

School spirit.

Your scraper and your scraper.

All right, go for it.

Have fun in there.

Salute me.

Who told you to do this?

Vice Principal Willoman.

Yeah, he's trying

to make the school better.

Oh. Oh.

Really?

Then what if I told you

that your dad makes hot sauce

out of dolphin fetuses?

Nuh-uh. Papa works at the mill.

Exactly.

And by that same logic,

Vice Principal Willoman

is a big fat liar.

Now get back to class!

(playing out of tune)

Is this the best you have?

Of course it is.

Pretty boy...

ponytails...

fat person...

and flute...

follow me.

You guys want a job?

Like, for money?

Of course for money.

I need you to follow me around

playing your little instruments.

I don't even think that's legal.

Hey, look up here.

Look at me.

Shut up.

You want five bucks

for the afternoon or not?

Okay.

I also want a Fruitsy Pop.

Fruitsy Pops all around.

Billings:

listen up.

This is your principal.

It has come to my attention

that certain subversive elements

are planning a walkout, instigating some kind of weird-ass leftist pinko coup d'tat. Any such attempt will be immediately met with a schoolwide lockdown. Everyone will be confined for an indefinite time, except for Scotty Hendricks. Scotty, the TB test was positive. Please leave campus immediately. Donovan sat at the window of his small shack, motionless. There was loneliness all around him, shrouding him like a shroud. And from the abandoned sawmill nearby... yes, he hears it... the faint yet unmistakable sound of a dog raping a cat. Yeah, Zippy. Imelda and I have something to share. Okay, go ahead, Zip. We're pregnant. Well, that is just great. Come on, guys. Show them how you feel. All right! You guys are gonna need some serious prenatal action. Yes, Nurse Gretchen, please. Hey, wait, what are you doing? No no no. The show goes on. The show goes on. Show must go on. So I have some news. Imelda is not pregnant. Did you kill our baby? No, I didn't kill your baby.

You don't, do you?

There wasn't a baby.

how babies are made?

Do you guys know

Let's get you guys

back to class.

Come on.

Awesome.

Thank God you're back.

Okay, Laura, let's cut the crap.

The school's taking in water

and Billings is abandoning ship,

but not before

he's picked all our pockets.

We need Vice Principal Willoman.

Abernathy:

that's why we read.

Nurse Gretchen.

Mr. Abernathy, hi.

Uh, when is she due?

Mr. Abernathy, Imelda isn't pregnant.

And I'm not quite sure

that Zippy and Imelda

really understand

where babies come from.

Oh.

Well, maybe they could take

a sex ed class with you.

Well, I guess that couldn't hurt.

Maybe we could all go.

Well, I suppose.

- Oh, hell yes! Yes!

- Yeah!

Right? Yes!

I'll see you guys later.

Oh, I want to do her so bad.

I want to do it so hard.

She is it.

(door opens and closes)

(breathes deeply)

You smell that?

Asparagus. Putrid.

The way a man's piss

should smell, though.

Flush me.

No. Flush yourself.

I warned you, Tom.

I told you to stay out of my way, but you had to go the hero route, didn't you? Look, I'm not gonna stand by and watch the school get shut down, Harper. Yes, you are. Yes, you are. Because I'm the only one that can save you, Tom. You're just a bright-eyed little fluffer in this titty flick. But turns out you and I... we aren't so different. What are you getting at, Harper? We're both waiting for the same bus. And I can bequeath unto you the magic coins to ride on that bus. How would you like to be principal of Valley Hilltop Elementary? Principal? Yeah. This all ends right here and now, Tom. Just say the word. You'll never be the man your father was, Tom. Yeah yeah. I know what happened that day. Fact is, you don't have the guts to stand up to me and you know it. So take the bait and flush my goddamn urinal. No. No, I don't think so, Harper. I don't know what you're up to, but it's as crooked

No.

No, I don't think so, Harper.

I don't know what you're up to,
but it's as crooked
as Arianna Pollard.

The scoliosis girl.

Good one.

You're on fire today.

Well, you can't say

you didn't make your own bed, Tommy.

Now you gotta lie in it. The problem is, you sewed your sheets together out of moldy rainbows and day-old dreamy-dreams. I don't know what that means. It's poetry, Tom. You don't have to know what it means. It sounds good. You know what else sound good? (inhales) (playing out of tune) (door opens) You just don't listen to reason, do ya, Agnew? What are you guys gonna do, beat me up? No, we're gonna beat you down. Yoo-hoo. Are you ready for us? - Yeah, come on in. - Okay, cool. Come on, single file, guys. Remember your buddy. Let's go.

Announcer:

"Coital Danger 17:
Trouble at the Drive-In."
(dramatic music playing)
Kids, you already know by now
that sex is really bad for you,
but just how bad?
Well, here we see Dingles
on his way to a drive-in
motion picture
with his gal-pal Cassandra...
I have fruit.
To eat.
Oh, great.

Announcer:

what we call loose...

- Thank you.
- You're welcome.

Thank you for saying

"You're welcome."

You're welcome.

Thank you.

Announcer:

that question a little bit later,

but for now let's get back

to Dingles and Cassandra.

And there they are

on a fast ride

to their deplorable fate.

(loud fart)

(farting)

AJ?

AJ, is that you?

Yeah, it's me.

AJ, hey, buddy.

It's Vice Principal Willoman.

I need you to untie me.

No, you're a dirty stranger.

You want to touch my bathroom parts.

What? No, AJ.

AJ?

AJ, no, I want nothing to do

with your bathroom parts!

AJ! AJ.

(children playing)

Hey.

Fondue?

I still love her, Dougray.

I'm still mad about that woman.

Look at my life.

What a dump.

My great grandfather invented

the two-point conversion, Dougray.

What the f...?

What the fuck have I ever done?

It's probably suicide time, huh?

Yeah.

Damn it.

Tom's been missing

for the last hour.

Keep it together.

There's only one person
who can help us find him.

Yes, Laura,
you know it as well as I do.

He's the only one of us
who's trained to kill.

That's true.

He once had a fire in his heart...

- (screaming)
...a fire that saved people
by killing other people.

(Jesse screaming)

Laura:

that fire.

I'm such a cunt.

Frankie:

This big outhouse you call an elementary school is about to go down, and I'm not about to be bussed to Roosevelt County so I can be sodomized every day for my lunch money. This isn't about your marriage and it's not about your pride. It's about our future. You're right, Frankie. You're right. Jesse is the only chance we've got. Or, you know, he's the only chance we've got to find Tom who is really the only chance we've got. Then make it happen, lady. Make it happen. (phone ringing) Yello. Bueno bueno. It's me, Jesse. Laura,

my lover, my everything. Listen, there's no time for pillow talk, sweet nuts. You've got to be the man I've never let you be, the man you've always been, mostly always. Jesse, we've got to find Tom. If we don't, the school's a goner, and us and the kids along with it. Now you keep this as quiet as a fairy fart, but we need to break Tom free. And then we've got to take Billings down!

Announcer:

that filthy movies and television programs influence your young mind, causing you to do things that will lead to ghastly physical and emotional scars. Dingles, watch out! Oh, wowzers. That kiss just cost him a lifetime of itchy sores, low self-esteem and crippling... Is that all true? Yeah. Hey, you. Yes? I was thinking... I was thinking maybe we should go for a walk. Right now? What about the kids? The kids... they're just as happy as pot pies watching that video. And we, just the two of us, we're just sitting back here,

yapping and talking, talking and yapping. So I was just thinking, you know, maybe we... maybe a stroll would do us good. Okay. Yeah? - Sure, yeah. - Yeah. But we gotta make it quick, 'cause last time I left the kids they made a Slip-N-Slide out of KY and dental dams. Okay, yeah. No, we'll be quick. - It's Harper. Leave a message. - (machine beeps) That is my number. Stop being a dick. Sagosky, have the special-ed kids form a perimeter. Where's that piece-of-ass inspector? - (can hisses) - (inhales) Easy does it there. (inhales) Easy does it like Miss Muffet on her fat little tuffet. (muffles screams) (playing out of tune) (children playing) I never meant to have sex with that dolphin trainer. You're a liar, but I forgive you. Come here, Big Daddy. Wrong again, Quincy. Who the hell are you supposed to be? (grunting) Somebody here knows where Vice Principal Willoman is, and if that somebody doesn't speak up, that somebody is gonna be squealing louder than a pig

that's not only had its throat sliced but also had both its balls tucked up its ass before they were cut off first. And let me tell you, if you're curious how painful that is, listen up... very! I'm gonna count to one. One. (screaming) Holy shit. Vice principal is in the boys' bathroom. He wants to touch my chub-chub. What the hell is that bullshit? Get back to work. Agh! This is fucking impossible! Damn it. It's trying on everyone. Hold on, Tommy. Okay, here we go. Keep going, keep going. Don't peek. Okay, don't look. Okay? Okay?

Gretchen:

Okay, we're here.

Turner:

I just thought we could...
you know, or whatever,
just, you know...
just connect or something,
just talk,
whatever you want to do.
You really like turtles, huh?
Yeah. That's Marzipan.
And that one down there
is Halifax, yeah.
Did you know that after

the dinosaurs died out there was an age of turtles?

No, I didn't know that.

I didn't think so.

- This one here is ticklish.
- Really?

Yeah. Watch this.

Uh, I think you're hurting him.

- No, he likes it.
- I don't think so.
- Yeah, he does.
- Turner, stop.

Okay, I think I'm gonna...

I'm qonna qo.

What? No no no, you can't go.

I planned the whole afternoon.

I-I-I have this for you.

Bear with it

'cause it's not totally done, but...

I didn't have a whole lot of time during free period.

"4 Ever or Never,"

and then there's you and me

and Halifax and Marzipan.

And then there's that.

Um, does that say sweatheart?

No, it says sweetheart.

I'm kinda sure is says sweatheart.

Well, that's awkward.

I'm just gonna come out

and say it, okay?

I have major fucking feelings

for you

deep down in my loins,

in the places that matter.

And I want to go there.

I want to take it there with you.

I want to take it

to that next level

where we're feeling each other

and we're rubbing

and we explode.

So I don't know

if you feel the same way,

but I am fucking awesomely

in love with you, Gretchen.

Oh, no, Turner, you're not.

Yes, I am.

No, you're not.

Yeah, I don't think I would have

said all those things if I wasn't, okay?

I'm pretty sure I am.

I'm pretty sure you're not.

I don't know

how more clear I can be. I am.

You are sweet,

but I gotta get back to class now.

Okay?

I should have put

more hearts on it.

That was so stupid.

Billings has to be stopped, Tom.

- Stopped.
- Worse than we thought.

What is this?

- The balance sheet?
- Yeah, for the district.
- The district balance sheet.
- Notice the total budget,
- then notice how much each school gets.
- There.

The numbers don't add up.

And guess which school

isn't even included in the total?

Take a fucking guess.

Take it. Shoot.

Ours.

But I don't get it.

The total is millions more

than the sum of all the schools' budgets.

Millions more than the sum.

And that difference is the exact budget of Geraldine Ferraro.

This motherfucker!

- Can you stop?
- Yes.

Someone in the district goofed.

And Billings saw that we have

no paper trail.

- The money is just waiting to be plucked.
- Plucked like fruit.

So the school gets closed;

nobody knows the money is missing.

Close the doors,

and Principal Hershey Squirts

stuffs the moolah

in his fanny pack.

- What are you doing?
- What the fuck are you doing?

I'm calling the local news.

We have to get the word out now.

Fucking smarter than you know.

Uh, relax.

They're just blanks.

- (gunshot)
- Jesus!
- What the fuck?!
- Are you crazy?
- I'm really fucking psyched.
- God.
- Holy shit.
- (machine beeps)

- Female voice:

- Billings' voice: Harper Billings.

- Female voice:

No.

Oh, fuck.

Hello?

Wonderful. Thank you.

Thank you.

Local news is on the way.

Yeah.

Wait, where's Rebecca?

We're all set, sir.

Oh, no.

(exhales) Tom.

(over P.A.)

Tommy.

I know you can hear me, Tom.

It's useless to go on.

I'm just too strong. I'm not a bad guy, Tom. This is just a bad situation. This isn't cowboys versus the Indians. This is cowboys versus cowboys. No one wants that, Tom... cowboys fighting cowboys. It's un-American. I've got the girl, Tom. Turn yourself in. Stop all this hullabaloo. You fought a good fight. Today's lunch is beef stroganoff and creamed spinach. Happy birthdays go out to Carolina Brushhair and Tom-Tom O'Leary. Soccer's canceled today. (clicks) Don't you listen to him, Tom. It's a trap. Tommy, we'll storm the office, okay? They'll be totally defenseless, like a bunch of 10-year-olds in there. No, guys, Billings is right. We can't win. It's impossible. Listen, remember what you said to me when I thought I'd never beat that painful case of the clap? Tommy, what did you say to her, Tommy? - What did you say?

- I said...

You said, "Nothing's

Nothing is impossible.

(sirens wailing)

im-fucking-possible, man.

I said, "Nothing's impossible."

Man:

to sell delicious ice creams to you.

Man #2:

I got some demands! I want a picture of Walter Cronkite in a boat where he's kind of still, and \$10,000 in Indian-Head nickels in non-sequential unmarked baggies! I want to be part of "The Family Ties." What are you gonna do, Daddy? I'm gonna save that man, son. And I'm gonna live with Mallory and we're gonna get bunk beds. - That's impossible. - I'm gonna kill this guy! Let the man go, son. I have pizza and a 747 on stand-by with your name on it. Yeah. Yeah, okay. That sounds good. You lied to me! - See, Tommy?

- Criminal:

Nothing is impossible.

(cheering and applause)

I got some demands!

I want a magical elf

and I want a special bag

to put him in,

so he can't use

his black magic on me.

Vendor:

No, please don't kill me.

- Crowd:

- Nothing's impossible.

Criminal: "Dragonheart." - No, nothing's impossible. - If dragons are real, I want one now. And its fire-breathing mouth is gonna burn all your shit. - Nothing's impossible. - Now if dragons are real, I want a Komodo dragon. And I'm gonna ride on its back out of here. I want to get one of the Olsen twins down here and I want a ring. And I'm gonna make her my bride. Which twin? The good-dressed one or the funky-vintage-cool, hip chick? I know you. You were a child. Your father... he's a hero. I am safe! - I have a... - (megaphone squeaking) I have a bean-and-cheese burrito and a Greyhound bus. Yeah? Horseshit. (cocks gun) - (gunshot) - (crowd screaming) No. No! No! Those were just words, guys. Everything I've ever done has ended in failure.

I'm sorry.

Rebecca:

What? I'm a little nervous.

I don't know why I thought this would be any different.

This helps me relax. What, is this Gitmo or something? Are you gonna waterboard me? (spits)

I gave you the benefit of the doubt,

don't know why.

All right, Billings, you win.

What?

What, is that the best

you can do, Tom?

Just give me the girl

and we'll walk away.

You're born and bred

for this kind of situation.

The least you could do is offer me

a burrito and a bus ticket.

Oh.

You've been a bad boy, Tommy.

You know what happens

to bad boys.

They get detention.

They get detent...

- They get detention.
- They get detention.

They get detention.

They get

detention.

Okay, we get it.

Thank you both.

Okay.

They get detention.

Don't say that again.

- They get detention.
- He's right, they get detention.

They get detention.

Shut up! Shut up!

Shut your fat mouth!

They get detention.

(both screaming)

You guys won't get away with this!

- We already did, Tommy.
- Yeah, we already did, Tommy.

(bell rings)

Hey, how long till more coconuts?

Thank you.

Can I sit here?

Sure.

Beef stroganoff looks good.

Ugh.

Frankie, this is ridiculous.

Come back to me.

Come on home to mama.

My nights are so lonely.

Maybe you should have

thought of that

before you went poking around

in Bartlett's pup tent.

It was only numbers, Frankie.

You still love me?

That's the thing, Carlotta,

I still love you as much

as I've ever loved an eight-year-old.

I'm in for a life of hurt with you,

I just know it,

but that's a hurt I need

like a cowboy craves coffee

and sunsets.

(sighs)

Sorry, kids, not red balls today.

Do you really still have

that click in your knees?

(clicks)

You know,

I don't understand, Tom.

Vice principal

of an elementary school?

You always wanted to follow

in your dad's footsteps.

I did.

I did follow him.

And a man is dead because of it.

He's not dead.

The bullet grazed his scalp. He's fine.

Well, he's dead to me.

Well, no one ever blamed you for it.

You're the only one

that cares anymore.

I'm a failed hostage negotiator

that just got kidnapped twice.

- (can hisses)
- I'm washed up, Rebecca.

I've been washed up

my whole life.

Well, that's not how I see it.

I see you as this huge success.

You know I always wanted

to be a principal,

vice or otherwise?

No, I didn't know that.

It's true.

So you should be proud of yourself.

You're a good man

when you're not acting like a total pussy.

You know, I had the biggest

crush on you in high school.

Why didn't you ever say anything?

Why didn't you?

Did you just inhale

spray-paint fumes?

Yeah.

Rebecca, why?

I guess I'm running away

from my own failures,

from myself.

Well, maybe you should start

running towards something

for a change.

What, is this The Haque?

Is this some sort of

international tribunal court?

Is this The Hague?

The school's totally

gonna get shut down.

Billings will give you \$3

if you join his side.

They're passing out

pitchforks and napalm.

There's some sort of dirty bomb

in the teachers' lounge.

The principal's gonna put us

on lockdown.

My father's gonna go crazy

if I get killed or maimed. This is so stupid. Where's the goddamn locksmith? "Save Tom. I need you to be the man." Why don't you be the man? Fuck this noise! Come on, Jesse, you don't fool me. I know those things are just blanks. Remember we used to scare the shit out of the kid with a leaky bladder with that thing? Oh, you are gonna shoot me? You're gonna shoot me? What, are you gonna blow me away? You're gonna waste me? Okay, come on. Put it right here, asshole. A real man could shoot this shit. You can't. (gunshot) - Oh, shit. Jesse. - (teacher screaming) Oh, God. What the fuck, man? You shot me! Dude, it's just rock salt. How bad is it? How bad is it? Bro, come on. Minor surgery... you're good as new. It's a total outpatient thing. (whimpering) (teacher whimpering) Give me one. Give me one.

Maurice:

Nothing to see here, guys.

Just a non-event, seriously,
a non-event.

You guys can just

be on your way and we'll be good to go, unless you want to grab

some pizza or something,

go bowling.

Yeah, get out of here.

You've got stuff to do.

Bingo.

Hey, Jesse.

A man has been shot.

Sir, we're losing men out there.

- Sound it.
- Sound the alarm.
- (gasps)
- Sound the alarm. Sound the alarm.

(alarm blaring)

No. No no no no,

the news vans haven't gotten here yet.

Come on, come on, come on.

That's lockdown, people.

Three more hours

to wait these assholes out.

(kids screaming)

We'll never get out alive!

You guys are over there

and we're over here.

- Quiet!
- (all quiet down)

So this is what it's come to, huh?

Look at you all.

You traitors.

You freaks.

I built this school

with my own hands.

I pounded nails like Jesus.

I built stairways for our youth

to vibrant and rewarding lives.

And this is how you repay me?

You're welcome.

You're welcome.

Now let's stop this donnybrook

before it can start.

Lay down your weapons,

join me

and we can all break bread as men.

or suffer wrath at my hands.

- (crowd exclaims)
- My flute!

My flute!

(spits) Stupid.

You broke that kid's flute.

That kid could play the hell

out of the flute.

What the fuck is wrong with you?

Asshole.

Everybody, Billings is right.

Let's stop this

before it starts, okay?

But I want to tell

all of you teachers a story first.

This morning a little girl came to me

with gravy all over her head.

Hey there, Adelle.

She came to me for help.

And you know what?

I saw her as a burden.

Yeah.

And that sort of thing

is happening too much around here,

from me, from the rest of you,

and yes, from our principal.

Have we forgotten about

our school namesake,

Miss Geraldine Ferraro,

one-time female

vice-presidential candidate

for America?

There's a lesson there, I think.

Too many of us have forgotten

why we got into teaching in the first place.

Too many of us are focused

on our pensions and our tenures

instead of the most important thing...

the kids.

Don't we want to fight

for anything anymore?

Are we just gonna

sit back and watch while other people use fear and money as a weapon? I say we stand up for the most important weapon there is... knowledge. Knowledge? How is knowledge better than fear and money? Knowledge is power! Oh, really, little boy? Well, what if I took a gun and I shot your dad in the face? Hmm? Where's the power then? Is the quadratic equation gonna save him? No no, I doubt it, because you know what? His brains are splattered all over your mom, who... guess what... I could also shoot if I wanted to. You can all do your peacenik beret-wearing, hippie bullshit dance if you want, but soon you're gonna realize how the real world works. Hey! Get back here! Get back here! Don't slide away from me. Hey, let's rally. Let's rally, huh? Buddy up, come on. Buddy up. Melody. You never supported us, Harper. And you squashed my dreams. I wanted to be a novelist. Oh.

Oh.
Oh, well, that's a novel idea.
Why don't you sell some novelties
while you're at it?
That's not mine.
Look, I don't agree with anything

that asshole was saying, but it seems kind of gay if it's just the two of us. I gotta go. (bicycle bell dings)

Woman:

(all cheering) So now what? The school's still gonna get shut down. What in God's name is going on here? Chairman Parpadelle. Chairwoman, thank you. Why is everyone standing around? Thank God you're here. Principal Billings has been stealing money from this school. Stealing? Really? And where is Principal Billings? He went to his office. Like a whiny little bitch! - Okay. - Oh... Look, Mrs. Parpadelle, ma'am, we know you want to close our school, but we have shown more spirit in the last few hours than we have in the last few years. Spirit and a dollar will get you a diet Sprite and a smile, son. I've heard what you've said. I'll speak to Principal Billings. Something isn't right. I can feel it. Vice Principal, I know someone who can help. The past is the past, Bartlett. We don't need to put it behind us. It's already there. (whispers)

Go go go.
Okay,
out of my way.
Would you please just step to the...?
- Out of my way!
- (buzzes)
Who the hell are you guys?
(buzzes)
I don't understand that move.
Aren't you guys on the same team?
All right, if you're gonna shock me with the cattle prod, do it now.
If not, get out the goddamn way, all right?

As of 3:

Geraldine Ferraro Elementary will cease to be part of the school district.

- What?
- That's final. Good day.

Wait wait wait,

you can't do that.

I just did.

This school will no longer be a cancer on our fine county.

I'd watch what you say

when you leave here.

Slander's a serious crime, Tom.

You've already screwed up

one career.

Don't make a habit of it.

Forget about this dump.

Give it up. Go home.

(tape rewinds)

- Billings's voice: \$30,000.
- Parpadelle's voice: \$50,000,

Harper, dear.

In light of this here disaster it's a bargain to get me

to be quiet.

Shut that off this instant.

- Billings's voice: 40 thou.
- 45,
- and I get to see that big hog of yours.

- I'm on it.

(unzipping sound)

Billings's voice: Your hands

are so rough.

Okay, now let me see your vag.

(squishy sounds)

- (people groaning)

- Old Curt:

It's gross.

- (Billings moaning)
- Parpadelle's voice: We got a deal.

That's enough.

Yeah, it sure is.

You disgust me, Miss Parpadelle.

Me too.

But you should really get that checked out.

I mean, that sounds horrible.

That's no way to talk

to the chairwoman of the school board.

Oh, I don't think you are

in any position to tell us

what to do, Miss Parpadelle.

Here's what's gonna happen:

You're going back to the board.

You're gonna tell them

that we are headed

in the right direction

and as of tomorrow we will be

under new management.

You're in

way over your head, Tom.

- Shut up, Harper.
- Okay.

And the tape?

You do all that

and I'll destroy the tape.

I'll take the tape.

The failed negotiator

learns to negotiate.

Touching.

And I'm assuming

you'll want the principal job?

Actually, no,

not even if you doubled my miserable excuse for a salary. No no, I think we need someone from the outside, someone who is smart, passionate, and has just been waiting for the chance to stand up and prove themselves, someone like you, Rebecca. Me? She's just some drug-addled... agh! Agh! Is that all? And show us your vag. (all groan) Okay, maybe that's... no, we don't need to do that at all. And your butthole!

Tom: And your titties! I'm so sorry. I don't know what's happening. We don't need to see any of that. It's all inappropriate. - We don't want to see... - You have a deal, young man. The school remains open. (cheering) Everybody shut up. Good on you. Are my eyes closed? Are my eyes closed? There are styrofoam peanuts in this. Shit. I think I'm ready for that beer now. I think I'll buy it for you. Come on, let's get out of here.

Radio announcer:

back in handicapped. And breaking word on the story we told you about this morning: A scandal is unfolding at Geraldine Ferraro Elementary involving millions of dollars of embezzled district money. Police raided Principal Harper Billings's condo late this afternoon. Students and faculty were victorious in their fight to save the school from closure and they celebrated with a dance in the school cafeteria. - One... - Two... Three! (sighs) Hey. You were really great out there, Frankie. I know, but that's how you separate a man from a second-grader, right? I have no idea, but it turns me on. Say it slower, girl. Hello, Nurse Gretchen. Hi, Mr. Abernathy. May I have this dance? Sure. Oh, shit. Fuck, yes. Oh. Oh, fuck me, yes. I thought you'd be totally creeped out by me now, so I wasn't sure. Yeah, well, Turner, you are intense, but you've got a lot of heart and your students really love you. I also love my turtles. I know. I love my turtles so much. Okay, why don't we slow it up a bit, take it one step at a time?

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- Yeah.
- Okay.
Whew.
Um...
Oh. Okay.
There.
(Gretchen chuckles)
(fast song playing)
# I was once a young man,
smart and patient #
# Went to work,
took an average vacation #
# Now I'm into booze and procrastination
'cause I'm in education #
# Look at me now,
barely paying my rent #
# Got 100 grand in gambling debt #
# Got a bottle of Jack
stashed in my desk #
# Yes, I'm in education #
# I'm an educator, baby,
a teacher of young minds #
# We're gonna watch "Big Lebowski"
today, kids #
# Suzie, shut the blinds #
# I phone in my lesson plan #
# I take three months of vacation #
# Yeah, I'm in education #
# Well, I teach my kids
to avoid drugs #
# But I got a closet
full of nugs #
# Got arrested for giving
a young girls a hug #
# Yep, I'm in education #
# Been divorced twice
for sleeping around #
# I'm wanted in two other towns #
# Just had sex
in the teachers' lounge #
# Yep, I'm in education #
# I'm an educator, baby,
a molder of young minds #
# I think we'll watch
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"Three Amigos" #
# So, Suzie, shut the blinds #
# I'm completely underqualified #
# For this job I'm dead wrong #
# I phone in my lesson plan #
# And get drunk all summer long #
# Well, I organize field trips #
# To the beach #
# Sell kids cigarettes
for 25 each #
# They say, those who can't do well,
we teach #
# I said, yeah, I'm in education #
# Where every day I come in drunk #
# The kids' parents think
I'm a monk #
# If I took my own class
I'd probably flunk #
# Yep, I'm in education #
# Make 10 Gs a year,
I'm full of sorrow #
# My school's named after
Geraldine Ferraro #
# I know I owe you cash, kid,
I'll pay you tomorrow #
# I'm in education #
# I'm an educator, baby #
# A teacher of young minds #
# We're gonna watch
"Animal House," kids #
# Suzie, shut the blinds #
# I phone in my lesson plan #
# And get three months of vacation #
# Yeah, I'm in education #
# Well, our principal takes himself
chocolate baths #
# Let's blow off science
for some arts and crafts #
# Got a 9 on my SATs,
but I teach math #
# I'm in education #
# The day goes faster
when I'm on speed #
# 28, and I can barely read #
```

```
# But I'll give your kids
what they need #
# 'Cause I'm in education #
# Well, I'm off
to the teachers' lounge #
# For some masturbation #
# Yeah, I'm in education... #
E-D-U-K-A-S-H-U-N,
or something like that
How many years
till my tenure?
What?
God damn it.
```