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The Squid and the Whale

By Noah Baumbach

Mom and me versus you and Dad.

- Long.

- That looked pretty good.

- It was out.

- It did look good.

- Frank, it was out.

- It's my call. Out.

If you can, try and hit it
at your mother's backhand.

- It's pretty weak.

- Got it.

- Yes!

- Don't gloat, Walt.

Five games to three, us.

- Fuck! Come on, Bernard.

- Bernard, don't curse.

I'm cursing at myself.

- Nice shot.

- Thanks.

- Walt, watch out.

- It's part of the game.

Fifteen-love.

Joan, I'm sorry. It was an accident.

You gotta get a second serve.

Frank.

Did you just put that peanut up your nose?

Cashew. Yes.

Pickle, that is such
an idiotic, stupid thing to do.

No, it's out. I got it.

We're reading A Tale of Two Cities
in English. Is that any good?

It's minor Dickens.

Popular in schools.

But I think David Copperfield
or Great Expectations is much richer.

What is it about high school that you read...

...all the worst books

by good writers?

You should read it and see what you think of it.

I don't wanna waste my time.

What are you doing?

Just fixing up the couch.

- Did you sleep there?

- Yeah, our bed is hurting my back.
Isn't the couch worse
than the bed? For backs?
No. This is better.
When does Mom's story come out in the magazine?
It's not a magazine.
It's a literary journal.
Next month, I think.
It'll be weird having two writers as parents.
Yeah, well, Dad influenced her.
She never wrote before she met him.
I haven't read any of Dad's books.
I've looked at them. They're great.
Very dense.
He needs a new agent.
It's been too long.
The publishing world isn't receptive
always to real literary talent.
Maybe Mom will be famous instead.
- No, Dad's the writer.
- Maybe Mom's better.
That's way off base, Frank.
That's way off base.
Ivan hit with Arthur Ashe once.
Wasn't he ranked, like, 402 or something?
Ivan could've been a champ
if he hadn't hurt his knee.
Okay, my brother, let's see some groundstrokes.
You gotta ease up, my brother.
Jimmy Connors hits as hard as he can...
...but we can't all get away
with that, right?
All right, let's see the backhand.
Two hands. Two hands.
Hey, my brother.
Who taught you these junkyard strokes?
My Dad. He's self-taught.
I heard that. Hey, Bernard.
You teaching my brother here
these junkyard chip shots?
A one-handed backhand
is an elegant stroke.
My brother here doesn't want
a weak chip shot for a backhand.

- I don't care.
- It's McEnroe's stroke.
He's the master of the chip game.
- All right, fellas, that's it for today.
- Ivan, you wanna hit a little?
I got a few minutes.
Frank, you and Carl hang out.
Give me your racquet.
- Are you interested in any arts?
- I wouldn't mind being a pro.
It's very hard to be a professional player.
As good as even Ivan is, he's not in
a league with McEnroe or Connors.
Oh, I don't mean a pro like that.
I mean, like a pro
at the bubble. Like Ivan.
You don't wanna be a pro.
I'm sure I've lost my parking space.
We're gonna have to drive around.
- Can you drop me off?
- No.
I picked you up, the least you can do
is ride around with me.
Terrific, honeys.
- Walt, did you write that song?
- Yes.
- Frank had some good ideas too.
- Very dense. Very interesting.
Yeah. I signed up for the talent thing
they have at school.
Great. Just make sure
you practice a lot.
Mom, I'll be fine.
Remember, you'll be in front of a lot of people.
- Don't ruin the whole thing for me.
- You'll win.
If you don't, something's wrong with them.
Which is probably the case, actually.
People can be very stupid.
I'll get it.
Walt, you wanna come to my class
tomorrow after school?
- Yeah.
- Could I come?

You have tennis. You're gonna be doing that, which is its own thing.

- Look how young Dad looks.
- That's funny. Dad, can I have this?
- Okay.
- Would you write something in it?

Thanks.

"I absorb sex indiscriminately,
numb and impartial.

I suck men of their interiors.

A fuck that unites John, Dan, Scott, whomever...

...in the popular lust
and paternal hunt for my possession.

He was a large man, though his arms were thin.

The upper part soft, but not fleshy.

Like a young woman's.

He had long, delicate fingers and
plump palms similar to a raccoon's.

With finesse, he plied the meat
from a crab claw...

...and sucked oysters
from their shells."

She's a very risky writer, Lili.

Very racy.

I mean, exhibiting her cunt
in that fashion is very racy.

Lili has her influences in postmodern
literature, a bit derivative of Kafka.

But for a student, very racy.

- Did you get that it was her cunt?
- Oh, yeah.
- Did you like it?
- Yeah. A lot.

You'd like Kafka, one of my predecessors.

- Particularly The Metamorphosis.
- Metamorphosis?

No fucking spaces.

- I'll keep you company while we look.
- Thank you.

Dad, what were your wives like before Mom?

"Wife," really.

The first one was annulled.

- I was 19.
- What was she like?

- The annulled one?
- No, the one you'd call a wife.
Difficult.
That's Mom.
Yeah, that's Mom.
What was she wearing?
No, I guess I've seen that before.
What are you writing?
I'm working on the Peugeot story.
Did you take my note about the ending?
- Some of it.
- Does he still die?
- Yeah.
- Then you didn't take my note.
Boys, make sure you come home
right after school.
- Why?
- We're having a family conference.
- What's that?
- A talk. Just come home.
- What about?
- We'll go over it tonight.
- Can't you give us a hint?
- No, just-- Tonight.
We'll go-- Everything--
We'll go over it tonight.
Just waiting for your mother.
- Mom.
- Sorry.
- Okay.
- Okay. All set?
Yes.
Okay.
Your mom and I....
Okay, yeah. Mom and I are going....
We're going to separate.
You're not gonna be leaving either of us.
We're gonna have joint custody.
Frank, it's okay.
I've got an elegant new house across the park.
Across the park?
- Is that even Brooklyn?
- It's only five stops on the subway.
It's an elegant block.

The fillet of the neighborhood.

- We'll have a Ping-Pong table.

- I don't play Ping-Pong.

- We'll both see you equally.

- How?

- We're splitting up the week.

- Why?

I love you. I wanna see you

as much as your mom does.

- But there's seven days.

- Right.

How will you split evenly with seven days?

I've got you Tuesday, Wednesday and

Saturday and every other Thursday.

- Every other?

- That's how we each have you equally.

That was your father's idea.

- Don't do this.

- How will we get to school?

There's a subway four blocks from the house.

Four or five.

No more than six blocks.

And what about the cat?

- Shit, the cat.

- We didn't discuss the cat.

Your father will pick him up on those

days when you switch houses.

I'll drive here two more times a week?

You got a place on the other side of the park.

If it was near here, it wouldn't be a problem.

This neighborhood

got expensive. It's painful...

...for me to stay in this neighborhood.

Don't be difficult. I feel banished.

Oh, Pickle.

- Dad, what will happen with the cat?

- We'll figure something out.

Is it because Dad isn't

as successful as he used to be?

Now that you're publishing

and he isn't, is that it?

- That's not nice to say.

- This is a great family.

Why are you screwing it up?

- If we could avoid it, I would.

- Why now?

- You've been together 16 years.

- Seventeen.

I can't imagine living like this.

Don't most of your friends
already have divorced parents?

Yeah, but I don't.

Well, now you do.

- I think you're doing a foolish thing.

- I understand how unhappy you are.

I'm unhappy too.

And I don't want you or Frank...

...to blame yourself for any of this.

It has nothing to do with you.

It's okay. Go back to sleep.

- Are those your books?

- Yes. These are my books.

Why are they going under my bed?

Because I bought them,

and I don't wanna lose them.

We'll put them back on the shelf
when your father leaves.

Until things are certain, we shouldn't
say anything to anyone yet.

- Why?

- Because we never know.

And I don't want people to know our business.

I told Carl.

- Already?

- I called him last night.

I also told Matt and Dale.

And Dale? Shit, now everyone
will know. Jesus, Frank.

- Mom says we should tell people.

- Mom doesn't go to school.

Stop crying.

- Joint custody blows.

- I was told it's better.

It's miserable. My parents didn't
wanna uproot me and Rebecca.

So we stayed in the house.

They took separate apartments...

...and switched off coming to us.

Then my mom met Dexter.

My dad freaked out.

And then they sold the house,
and I go back and forth anyway.

God, joint custody blows.

Thanks. Yeah, I forgot to take these.

She has a few of my books still.

She wrote her maiden name in them
when she knew we were splitting.

But these were mine.

- Are you and Walt stealing from Mom?

- These were mine, Frank.

Watch it! Jesus!

Hey, brother. Walt.

Bernard, Joan says you have a check for me.

She said that? No, tennis is hers.

Our separation agreement says
she handles tennis and winter coats.

- I do sneakers and camp.

- Okay. I'll take it up with her.

Walt.

Ivan's a bit of a half-wit, isn't he?

It was important to me

to have a place like your mother's.

I'm gonna cook and run the household
like you're used to.

- This is nothing like our house.

- You mean, your mother's house.

- What?

- This isn't like your mother's house.

- That's what I said.

- You said, "Our house."

That's your mother's house.

This is your house too.

- No, this is your house.

- It's our house.

I hate Nastase. You know that. Ivan met
Nastase and said he was an asshole.

- Well, I couldn't find Vitas Gerulaitis.

- I have a Vitas poster at home.

At Mom's. And all my turtles.

We can get some turtles.

I know you like amphibians.

Turtles are reptiles.

Here's a desk for you to do your homework.

Dad, this is for a lefty.

Dad got me a lefty desk.

Don't be difficult.

We need to be supportive of Dad.

- I hate it here.

- Don't be a chick.

- You can get a righty desk later.

- Why do I want a desk at home?

I don't want a chalkboard or a bell
going off every 45 minutes either.

- He likes being with us.

- He likes having us in the house.

You got books. I didn't get books.

Because these are the books Dad knows I like.

- I wanna go back to Mom's.

- Why? She caused this, chick.

- I'm not "chick."

- Yes, you are.

- Chick, this is Mom's doing.

- Stop calling me chick!

Mom told us they'd never get divorced.

So Mom's a liar.

Fuck! That hurt!

I'm not being a chick, you fucking ass man.

You're hurting me, really hurting me.

One turtle would've made a difference.

You live in Park Slope, right?

My mom does. And I do sometimes.

I live on the other side of the park
half the time.

- Prospect Heights?

- I'm not sure.

The street's Stratford Road.

My dad's moving there.

I hear it's the fillet of the neighborhood.

- You like Franz Kafka?

- I don't know him.

He's great. The Metamorphosis
is a masterpiece.

- Sounds good.

- Yeah, it is.

- Have you read This Side of Paradise?

- No, but it's minor Fitzgerald.

- Is it? I loved it.

- It's a minor work.

Gatsby is his masterpiece.

And Tender is the Night is dazzling.

Last Tycoon, had he finished it....

I hope you like it. Your notes
were awesome, Bernard.

I loved your idea for the change
in tense at the end.

It could be the coup of the story.

I reread A Hunger Artist on your
suggestion and stole a couple things.

- See if you can spot them.

- Good story to steal from.

- Fuck!

- Frank.

Sorry.

How long were you and Mom not getting along?

A couple of years.

I thought we would work it out.

I wanted to. I tried.

As you know, I tried very hard.

- Your mother wasn't interested in that.

- Why not?

- I think it has very little to do with me.

- Shit! Fucker!

- Frank!

- She could never make up her mind.

She'd pull away and then get angry
at me for not being more aggressive.

Her affair with Richard
made it difficult for me...

...to save the marriage.

It became a fait accompli.

- Affair?

- With Richard.

- Who's Richard?

- A man from the neighborhood.

I think she met him at one of Frank's
Little League games. A shrink.

Seems sort of like an ordinary guy.

Not an intellectual.

- How long was she having the affair?

- About four years.

- You're kidding.
- No. I thought you knew this.
No. No.
Fuck that cock shit!
Frank, you gotta relax, my brother.
- Hey, Mom.
- Hey, honeys.
- What are you doing?
- Just changing things around a bit.
I've come by to tell you
I'm not staying here anymore.
- Why?
- You know why.
- I don't.
- Frank, do you know why?
- No.
- Why don't you tell me?
Because you cheated on Dad.
How did you hear that?
- Your father told you.
- Yeah, he told me.
Why did you, Mom?
I was having a hard time.
Where were we during this?
Did you bring men home?
Not while-- Not....
Not when your father was in town.
You actually met Richard, both you boys.
He came over for takeout once.
You talked about the Stones.
Oh, God. Under our noses.
Like a brothel. Men coming in and out.
- Shut up.
- If you want me to explain, I will.
- I don't wanna hear it.
- I do.
Walt doesn't, so I won't say anything.
- Walt can leave.
- You disgust me.
You weren't even a writer until recently.
You bailed on Dad because he's not
successful and hasn't got recognition.
- You sound like your father.
- I'm glad. You disgust me.

You're being a shit, Walt.

- I'm taking the cat.

- You can't have him. It's his night here.

Okay, you can kiss me now.

No, the moment's ruined.

- I'll go sneak up and surprise Chrissy.

- It's not her birthday.

She also had an affair with some therapist.

- I don't wanna know.

- And Otto's father, Don.

- Otto's father?

- Yeah, but it's over.

She said the affairs

have been miserable for her.

She's dating now, but nothing serious.

She's crazy. She should keep

her affairs to herself.

- I'm not going back.

- You have to, joint custody.

Fuck joint custody.

- Is Mom letting you drink soda?

- Beer.

- Since when do you drink beer?

- Since recently.

You think Don and she did it?

- I don't wanna think about it.

- Imagine Don's dick in Mom's mouth.

- Who are you? Stop it.

- Do you think they do that?

- You think she gets anal sex from Don?

- Stop, okay.

It's disgusting.

Don't.

- We have the same bone structure.

- No.

You have your dad's features.

Really?

- Fuck it.

- Frank.

- I thought I had your bone structure.

- No.

You're ugly.

Pickle, why would you say that?

Because I think it's true.

I think Carl thinks you're ugly.
I'm not though, sweetie.
- I found out something last night.
- What's that?
That your dad was fucking my mom.
- What?
- You heard me.
Supposedly going on for a year
or so about two years ago.
- I'm so horrified by this.
- Thanks.
No, I don't mean by your mom.
She's very attractive.
It was just an affair. A fuck.
We're not gonna be brothers.
She said your dad's pretty fucked up with women.
Why'd she sleep with him then?
I don't know.
Because she's an asshole.
I read The Metamorphosis.
You were right, it's great.
Yeah. So bizarre. What do you think is
happening at the end, with the sister?
Yeah, I think she's....
- I mean, it's ambiguous, really.
- Yeah.
I mean, it's gross when he turns into a bug...
...but I love how matter-of-fact
everything is.
Yeah, it's very Kafkaesque.
- Because it's written by Franz Kafka.
- Right.
- No, I mean, clearly.
- It would have to be.
You're shoving the whole tongue in me.
No, it's okay. Just do it a little--
Like, little licks.
- Like this?
- Yeah.
I wish you didn't have
so many freckles on your face.
Not really, though.
I'm feeling kind of feverish.
- Do we have any Tylenol?

- I don't know.
- I didn't see any.
- Then there isn't any.

Can we get some?

- Is this enough?
- Get a small one.

Three fifty-seven.

- I don't have enough money.
- Okay.
- I got it.

- You have any change?

Wanna play Ping-Pong?

- I'm gonna lie down.
- One game.
- Fucking shit.
- Nineteen-7.

Have you given more thought
to what you're interested in?

Come on.

You have to try.

It's no fun for me if you don't try.

- I wanna be a tennis pro like Ivan.
- You don't wanna be a tennis pro.
- Why not?
- It's not serious.

I mean, McEnroe.

Borg is an artist. It's like dance.

Connors has a brilliance.

But at Ivan's level....

Ivan is fine, but he's not a serious guy.

- He's a philistine.
- What's a philistine?

It's a guy who doesn't care about
books or interesting films and things.

Your mother's brother Ned is also a philistine.

- Then I'm a philistine.
- No.

You're interested in books and things.

Liked The Wild Child when we saw it.

Lots of people liked that movie.

No, I'm a philistine.

When am I going to meet the famous Sophie?

I don't know. She's not gorgeous,
but she's cute.

You have plenty of time
to sleep with gorgeous women.
Goddamn it!
They fell on the floor.
When my first novel came out,
I had a lot of opportunities.
I was with your mother, so I didn't partake.
I've never had an affair with a student,
though many have come on to me.
That's why you might not wanna be
attached at your age.
It sounds like Sophie's good for now.
- Why'd you yell, "Goddamn it"?
- I burned myself.
The cutlets are great.
Dad, did you hear from that agent?
- Not yet.
- But if he likes your novel...
- ...then you get it published.
- Basically.
What happened to your old agent, Fred?
He pissed me off.
Made a disparaging remark
about the Knicks at a party.
Said they played like thugs.
I found it offensive.
He's kind of a jerk.
It was important
to your mother that I achieve...
...some sort of commercial success.
And when I didn't meet
her expectations in that area....
You're going to witness
a Greenberg family tradition.
Friday night Chinese at Hunan Palace.
I hope you're prepared.
- Hey.
- Hey.
Why'd you let go of my hand?
- What?
- When we passed Wendy, you let go.
I didn't realize.
Walt, anything you'd like to order?
I'm happy to have the same amount

of dishes as people.

It's always one dish less the number of people.

That's our family tradition,

not ordering enough food.

- That's funny. Oh, he's funny, Sophie.

- I know.

- You're early.

- Hi, Joan.

- Don't feed him the generic stuff.

- What?

Frank says you're feeding the cat generic food.

Get Purina, it's what he likes.

- It's the same damn thing.

- It's not, but--

He's my cat too.

Remember when he got stuck in a wall
in New Hampshire and I rescued him?

- I know how to handle him.

- It was a radiator.

- What?

- He got stuck in a radiator.

You trimmed your beard.

Yeah, it was starting to get a little feral.

- You look well.

- Yeah?

- Thanks.

- Things are good here.

Teaching is going well.

And I'm playing the best tennis of my life.

Maybe that's an illusion...

...but it feels that way.

That's good.

I was thinking we should sit together
at Walt's performance next month.

- Okay.

- It'd be nice for him...

...if we're both there together.

Maybe we could all go out afterwards.

I don't know. Maybe.

Okay, maybe.

I think he's getting good at guitar.

I know.

The stuff he's writing is really wonderful.

- Have you met his girlfriend?

- No. He talks about her...
- ...with me, though.
- Good.
I'd appreciate it if you didn't...
...tell him about things like Richard.
My father told me you called him.
I did, yeah.
He said you....
- He said you were upset.
- Yeah.
I wanted to....
I like him.
You know that.
I just wanted to say--
I don't know.
I just wanted to say hello.
He called me right after. He said:
"Bernie, I think you can save
your marriage."
I told him...
...I didn't think there was anything else
I could do.
I did try everything.
Bye, Bernard.
Bernard?
I was wondering if you knew of any apartments.
I'm being kicked out of my sublet.
Unless I, I don't know,
blow the super, I'm out on my ass.
Oh, I don't. No.
I guess you don't know either, huh?
No.
I have an extra room in my house.
You could stay till you find something.
You wouldn't have to blow your super.
I guess....
- I'd hate to put you out.
- No, no.
- Or your kids.
- No. No.
The Mother and the Whore.
- Looks like a cool movie.
- A classic.
- I had it in my room.

- Bathroom is across the hall.

You'll share with the kids.

They can use mine.

I don't care. As long as Walt remembers to put the seat down.

Thank you, Bernard.

Thank you, Walt.

- Joan says you don't like your sheets.

- They're fine.

And you disapprove of the food I feed the cat.

You should tell me these things, not her.

- Fuck!

- Fifteen.

Fifteen-20.

- Motherfucker!

- My serve.

- I wasn't ready.

- Yes, you were.

Frank, I was not ready.

This is Mother Hubbard. There is nothing to eat or drink. No soda.

- We're not allowed soda.

- Goddamn it!

I guess there's two kinds of parents:

Those who allow soda and sugar cereal, and those who don't.

We're not supposed to use paper towels to wipe our hands. Cloth is for that.

You're cute.

Thanks.

I don't believe this shit.

- Shit!

- Good game.

It's hard to beat your father.

Hey!

- Watch it!

- Suck my dick, ass man.

- Where you going?

- The movies.

And then to a party with Sophie.

- What are you gonna do?

- I don't know.

Frank won't leave his room.

He's being difficult.

You wanna come to the movie?

Okay.

Not the party, but the movie.

So we were thinking Short Circuit.

Blue Velvet is supposed to be quite interesting.

I love you! Love me!

He put his disease in me.

Tell me it's all right.

I opened myself to you.

No.

Stop, Frank.

No.

A student of mine writes

very racy short stories you might like.

She has one that chronicles her vagina.

- Dad.

- That sounds interesting.

Very feminist, but very interesting.

Frank, I'm back.

Frank?

Frank?

- What were you doing?

- I was going to Mom's.

You don't do that on my night.

Ever. You hear me?

- Yes.

- I'm your father.

You listen to what I say.

- But you were out.

- It's still my night, damn it.

Okay, okay.

Shit! Someone's taken my space.

- Goddamn it. Son of a bitch.

- Sorry.

Frank!

Hello?

Hello?

Frank, what are you doing here?

It's not your night with me.

- I don't wanna look like Dad.

- Looks aren't everything.

It's not your night with me, sweetie.

- Did you have a party?

- I celebrated.

Knopf is publishing my novel.
Pickle, you should be at your dad's.
- Yeah?
- Yeah.
I need some nights without you guys sometimes.
What's up, brother?
Nothing.
Hello?
He just took off and went to your
mother's. It's my night, he knows that.
You think we could ease up
on whose night is whose?
I wanna see you guys. I love you.
Did you like Sophie?
Yeah. I think she's fine.
Is she a Knicks fan?
I don't know.
- You think she's pretty?
- Sure, yeah.
But she's not the type I go for.
You just have to decide
if you wanna be attached.
It's good to play the field at your age.
Lili is pretty.
Would you go ring the bell?
I hate walking up those steps.
It's very uncomfortable for me.
Very painful.
I used to live in this house.
As you know.
Your dad and Walt are here. They're
gonna take you back to Bernard's.
- I'll be right out.
- I'm sorry about--
I'm sorry about your seeing Ivan like this.
I would've liked to have told you
before you saw him.
Your mother.
I wanted to talk about Ivan
so you don't hear it from anyone else.
Frank may have already said something.
Yeah, he did.
I've been seeing him a short time.
But I like him.

And I thought you guys should know that.

- And do you have any questions?

- No.

There was something else I was gonna say.

I ran into Celia, Lance's mother,
on the street...

...and she was telling me
how wonderful she thinks you are.

How polite and funny and....

She said you did something
with the salt and pepper shakers.

- A little play or something?

- Yeah. It was kind of stupid.

I said, "I already know all those things
about him. But it's nice to hear it."

I remember what else I was gonna say.

I wanted to know if you'd be interested...

...in coming to dinner Saturday.

I'm having the Dicksteins over--

No. I'm going to a party on Saturday.

I'm sleeping at Jeffrey's.

- That's okay.

- I'm gonna go to bed.

Okay. Good night, Chicken.

Night.

- You think she likes you?

- I get a feeling, yeah.

- What about Sophie?

- If I can lose it to Lili, I'll do it.

I mean, I bet she's great in bed.

She can probably move

her pussy muscles the right way...

- ...so you blow your load in seconds.

- Yeah. It'd be pretty great.

Maybe do them both. Why not?

Hey, brother.

How's the grip?

- Do you think you and I are philistines?

- Frank.

What's a philistine?

Someone who doesn't like books
or interesting movies or things.

- You're still here. It's my night.

- I know.

I just thought I'd watch him hit.

You married?

No.

The whole thing's very complicated.

Mom's dating Ivan.

Really?

- Ivan, back there Ivan?

- Yeah.

Are you sure?

Why didn't you say something?

Why is your mother dating all these jocks?

- Very uninteresting men.

- Ivan is very interesting.

Ivan's not a serious possibility
for your mother.

I think he is.

I don't wanna badmouth Ivan.

But I don't know what Joan is thinking.

- I think Ivan--

- Frank.

- Sorry. Is that too hard?

- Yeah, a bit. A bit.

Okay.

Is that better?

Yeah.

Yeah. That's good. That's--

I guess....

I don't know what....

- Why that happened.

- Oh, it's okay. Yeah.

- It's okay.

- Okay.

- Shit. Sorry.

- Don't be sorry.

I don't know why I didn't last.

I usually go longer.

It's okay. I guess

I can take it as a compliment.

Did you take your shirt off for Nelson Barton?

- I don't wanna talk about it, Walt.

- It's important.

- Why is it important?

- I need to know what happened.

Well, he felt me up, and I touched him.

- Down his pants?

- Walt, yeah.

I just....

From what I could tell, not an intellectual.

I'm a virgin.

So am I.

- When's your next book coming out?

- Soon, I hope. Soon.

- Who's publishing it?

- Well, I'm looking for a new agent first.

A friend of mine's an agent with Binky Urban.

- If you like, I'll show it to him.

- Oh, that'd be great.

Hello?

- Could I stay the night at Sophie's?

- Thanks for doing that.

Okay, I'll see you tomorrow.

Or Tuesday. I'll see you Tuesday.

- You don't need me home for anything?

- No. Everything's fine.

If you're interested,

Walt and I are taking a road trip...

...to SUNY Binghamton

in a couple of weekends.

I'm giving a reading. And an

ex-student of mine, now friend...

...Jeb Gelber, is feting me

with a dinner.

Excellent.

You should read the cathedral scene

from Underwater.

I've done that one a lot.

I thought I'd do something new.

But okay, well, maybe.

Sorry, my nose is running.

I'm your teacher.

I've wondered for a long time

what it'd be like to fuck you.

I think we should wait.

Really?

Yeah. Yeah, let's wait.

Okay, up next, Walt Berkman...

...who is going to play us a song.

Thank you.

I'm going to play lead guitar
and do vocals on a song I wrote.

- That song was so good!
- Thank you.

Oh, Dad, you remember Sophie.

- And Lili.
- Hi.
- How much did you win?

- Hundred bucks.

Come by my room tonight before you go to bed.

- I wanna show you something.
- Okay.

And this is my mom and Frank and Ivan.

Hi.

- Some song, brother.
- Thanks.

Hey, Bernard.

I thought we'd have dinner.

Ivan suggested Gage & Tollner. We'd
celebrate my book and your song.

- I'm gonna go with Dad.
- Well, your dad and I...
- ...talked about all of us going.
- I don't wanna do that. See you.

Ivan and I came to see your show.

Don't treat us that way.

You think you hate me, but I know you don't.

Where'd you come up with those lyrics?

They were very dreamlike.

Reminds me of my second novel, End of the Line.

- A rock-star character in that.
- I love that novel.

Classic. Scenes with the baby in the
middle are based on me as a baby.

Right. It's Mailer's favorite
of my books.

And I loved your wife's piece in The New Yorker.

Really? In The New Yorker?

- Did you know about this?
- I guess I did.
- How'd that happen?
- It's an excerpt.
- She's getting a novel published.
- Really?

Walt showed it to me.

It was kind of sad, but really good.

The portions are very big here.

You only need half an order.

Okay.

Jesus, \$1 5 for parking.

What do you think I should do about Sophie?

You'll make the right decision.

I regret sometimes I wasn't more
of a free agent when I was younger.

A woman approached me at a party at
George Plimpton's after my first book.

She was very sexy.

I could've gone home with her.

Why didn't you?

- I was with your mother.

- Oh, right, of course.

You should've probably done it.

It didn't stop her.

Maybe you should sleep

with her once. See if you like it.

It doesn't mean you can't see other women too.

I don't know if Sophie will go for that.

Well, after your performance tonight,
things might change for you.

- Wanna go to my house? We could--

- Jesus!

- You really wanna do it, don't you?

- I don't know.

- What's the obsession with sex?

- It's not an obsession.

I'm not so sure I wanna do it either.

I'm scared too.

Scared is not the issue.

Everything is so serious suddenly.

- We're not getting married.

- What are you saying?

Nothing. I don't wanna feel
this pressure.

Do you like someone else?

Your dad's girlfriend?

No. No. Why...?

No. And she's not his girlfriend.

My dad said you had a weak

handshake, a sign of indecision.
His hands are huge, I can't get a good grip.
My mom said you don't have
a good model for relationships...
- ...because of your parents.
- What?
Your mother doesn't know anything.
I thought it went well.
You told me she said I was hilarious.
Don't be difficult. Please.
You want a beer?
I couldn't take relying on your dad's
shopping habits anymore.
You can have anything you want whenever.
Thanks.
I'm gonna read you a draft of my new story.
I wanna hear your thoughts first.
Then I'm gonna show it to your dad.
You like Pink Floyd, huh?
- What?
- Don't worry.
I used to hand in Lou Reed lyrics
in my poetry class...
...and pass them off as my own.
Although I hope you don't get caught.
I always did.
Do you--?
- Fuck!
- Sorry.
- Shit!
- Lili, sorry.
It's okay. It's just a....
- It's just a bloody nose.
- I'm sorry.
- I might take a bath, okay?
- Oh, okay.
- Okay.
- Good night.
- Hey.
- Hey.
- When's Bernard coming to get you?
- In an hour.
Plan on 30 minutes.
He's always early to get you.

And late to bring you back.

- I wish I could come with you guys.

- I heard that.

I know. But Dad's got you
on Saturdays.

- Do you like his girlfriend?

- Is she his girlfriend?

I thought so. She lives with you.

- He doesn't say?

- No.

I think Walt loves her.

- So they like the same women now too.

- What?

It's nothing. You got our number
in Maine. Remember to lock up.

I will.

- See you next week, Pickle-oo.

- Just Pickle, please.

I'll see you next week, just Pickle.

- Good grip, brother.

- You too, brother.

Dad, it's me.

Are you there?

Pick up.

- How are you?

- Good to see you.

"It has been a long, emotionally
draining day and night.

'Who is that boy?'

someone in the pub asks.

Pitchum climbs into his rented VW...

...and drives off past the cliffs of Dover
into the muted English sunrise...

...another chapter of his life
behind him."

I'm sorry about the turnout.

Kids go home early for Passover.

They seemed to like it.

I mean, masturbating is his own issue.

But Hector witnessed the locker incident...

...and then later,

semen was found in the library.

Who's Hector?

How do you know they were both Frank's?

Well, I suppose it's possible
other kids are masturbating...
...and spreading their semen
around the school as well.
It's possible, but somewhat unlikely.
Oh, it happens, I'm sure, more than we know.
Bernard, have you ever done anything like this?
I'm not going to answer that.
Has anything been going on at home
that might've provoked this behavior?
Well, Bernard left him behind
for three days last week.
Of course, Frank's mother
divorced me earlier this year.
Which also might have something to do with it.
Ms. Berkman, I read your story
in The New Yorker.
- I thought it was quite moving.
- Thanks.
Thanks a lot.
You're living with a 20-year-old.
- It's none of your business.
- It is when you have our kids.
It's confusing for them.
Frank says Walt's in love with her.
Walt has a girlfriend.
Fuck off, Joan.
I don't ask about you and Ivan.
Stay out of my life.
I can't believe you'd talk to me like this.
You left all those fucking ticket stubs
and letters lying around.
You wanted me to know.
It was fucking torture, Joan.
Fucking torture.
He made his own interpretation.
He's still gonna have to
give the prize money back.
But obviously it's a bigger problem.
He isn't doing his schoolwork either.
His paper on Gatsby
was quite brilliant, I thought.
It's one of his favorite books.
That may be, but I don't believe he's read it.

You both should talk to him.

I think Bernard has to do it.

He wants you to see a therapist.

- I don't need that.

- That's what I said.

Does Simic know both your parents
have Ph.D.'s in literature?

- I mentioned it.

- I think he's full of shit.

These public schools tend to hire
well-meaning but ultimately...

- ...unsophisticated bureaucrats.

- Yeah. I don't like him.

But you might have to do it.

Just to please the school.

- I don't need it.

- I know.

And unfortunately, probably a guy
with a BA in psychology.

Not a real shrink.

I have an MA in developmental psychology...

- ...from the Yale Child Studies program.

- Did you get a Ph.D.?

No, an MA is a Master's.

Right.

- Any thoughts about why you're here?

- Not really.

You said you wrote the song
you played in assembly.

- Why?

- I don't know.

Did you have a reason?

- I felt I could've written it.

- Okay.

But you didn't.

It was written by Roger Waters of Pink Floyd.

- I think you know that.

- But I felt I could've.

So the fact that it was already written
was kind of a technicality.

I see.

I can imagine this is a little
uncomfortable for you to talk about.

- I guess. It's hard to explain.

- I wonder how you're feeling right now.

I don't know.

Why don't you tell me about something less uncomfortable.

Like a nice memory, maybe.

Isn't that a stock question for a shrink?

Yes. That's more or less

how this works.

- I can't think of anything right now.

- Just think.

- Come on.

- Just something.

Meet me halfway here.

All right, let's see.

Okay.

When I was around 6, my Mom and I...

...ducked out of Julie Glynn's birthday party...

...to watch Robin Hood together on our TV.

That sounds like a nice memory.

- I liked Errol Flynn.

- Errol Flynn.

- That's all?

- And...

...I was glad she let me leave the party to watch the movie.

She and I loved that movie.

It's like....

It's like we were pals then, and we'd do things together.

We'd look at the knight armor at the Met.

The scary fish at the Natural History museum.

I was always afraid of the squid and the whale fighting.

I could only look at it with my hands in front of my face.

When we'd get home, after my bath, she'd go through...

...all the different things we saw that day at the museum. And....

And we'd get to the squid and the whale, and she'd describe it for me.

Which was--

It was still scary...
...but it was less scary.
Anyway, it was fun.
It was fun to hear about it.
Did your dad live at home back then?
- Yeah, why?
- You didn't mention him.
Where was he during all of this?
He was....
I don't know exactly. He was....
He was downstairs, maybe.
He didn't ever come to the museum.
This was before my brother was born.
It was before....
It was earlier.
Hello?
Hello?
- Not now, Bernard.
- Why not?
I'm just not, okay?
- Put me in your mouth.
- Walt!
- Hi.
- Hey, Walt.
Hi.
I'll be right out. We can hang out.
- Hi. Is Walt here?
- No.
I'd like you to come to my house.
- Isn't it Mom's night?
- Yeah, but I'd like you to come over.
I have to put on my shoes.
Come in, I guess.
- Place looks different.
- She got some new furniture in Maine.
That was my TV. I bought that TV.
That's my Jude the Obscure.
- Wanna take it?
- No.
She still has some of the books you wrote.
Dad, why are you taking me
to your house on Mom's night?
Just a minute.
Hi.

Frank let me in.
I didn't realize you were here.
- I'm here. It's Monday.
- I'd like to take him for just tonight.
I'll give you two Thursdays in a row
or something.
- Mom.
- It's my night. He wants to stay.
Be careful. That's an antique.
- Where's Walt?
- I don't know where Walt is.
He's not up there. Bernard!
He doesn't come here.
You should go.
You'll see him tomorrow.
Tell Walt to call me.
I dunked my head in that pond in the park.
The one near the zoo?
Oh, sweetie, that's filthy.
I hope you didn't drink any of it.
Some may have gotten in my mouth.
I tried not to swallow.
I shouldn't have broken up with Sophie.
- Why did you?
- I thought I could do better.
Better how?
I don't know.
That's good. You miss her.
But I don't see myself as a person
who is in this situation. I just don't.
I don't see myself this way.
Well, this is how it is.
Did you ever love Dad?
Because if you didn't,
why did you ever marry him?
If you were gonna leave,
why put us through this?
It wasn't planned. When we first met,
he was unlike anyone.
In Columbus, there was no one like your dad.
I had had an affair with a man
before your father.
He worked at the bookstore.
We made love in the stockroom.

Mom, I don't wanna hear
about your affairs, please.
I'm sorry.
I don't know what I can say to you.
You say things in a way
that I don't wanna hear them.
I know, Chicken.
It's something I do. It's a bad habit.
Do you remember when we watched Robin Hood?
- He knocked on my window.
- Bernard, what are you doing?
Joan, let me ask you something.
The work I did at the end of our marriage...
...making dinners, being attentive.
It never was gonna make a difference.
- You were leaving.
- You never made a dinner.
I made burgers when you had pneumonia.
- Only after I insisted.
- If I had made more dinners...
- ...would that have made a difference?
- I was ready to leave long ago.
I just didn't know it then.
I've been giving it some thought.
You called my father at the last minute.
Whatever you said,
he thought I could save the marriage.
You felt I wasn't aggressive enough.
I'll make more of an effort to do stuff.
I've been cooking and doing chores at my house.
I make veal cutlets, which the boys love.
Why don't we all have dinner
and talk more about this?
I'm sorry.
It's just....
Burgers.
I'll sue you, Joan. You know I will.
You had an affair for four years
with that fucking shrink...
...that ruined our marriage.
I can get the kids.
Eddie Goodman works on these cases.
And I have an open-and-shut case.
- Frank, Walt, get in the car.

- Sue me?

That's-- I can't--

You only wanted joint custody because
you pay less child support that way.

Because it's cheaper for you.

Walt, Frank!

- I don't wanna go.

- I don't give a shit! Get in the car.

- Frank!

- Let him stay. Let him stay.

- I'm just asking this one thing.

- He wants to stay.

- Let him. I'll go.

- Fine.

Hold on.

You want him tonight?

Okay. Thanks.

That's all right, my brother.

The cat!

I got him. Joan, I got him.

I got him.

Goddamn it.

- Dad! You see him go--?

- I'm moving it!

Fuck off.

Whoa, Bernard! You all right?

- I had him.

- Joan, call an ambulance!

Walt, get in the car.

What?

It means "bitch."

Don't you remember?

You're calling me a bitch?

No, don't you remember the last line
of Godard's A bout de souffle?

Belmondo calls Seberg a bitch.

We saw it at the Thalia with the Dicksteins.

I got you in for the children's price.

You were pregnant with Walt.

Like six weeks.

I still got you in for a children's ticket.

You told me you didn't like Godard.

You thought the jump cuts were--

I'd check for the cat behind the ashcans...

- ... under the Golodners' stoop!

- Okay.

I didn't write it.

- I know.

- Pink Floyd did.

Do you think we'll find him?

I hope so.

Do you think one day

we could go to the Galapagos?

I don't know, Pickle.

Ivan and I could take you to the
country on Saturday to see real turtles.

Saturday is Dad's day.

- There's my son.

- Hey.

- Are you okay?

- I'm fine.

Thought it was a heart attack,
but I think I'm just exhausted.

Doctor said I'm exhausted.

- Too many veal cutlets?

- Maybe.

That a good book?

Oh, this is pulp. It's not serious.

It's hard to read a good book in the
hospital, but this isn't bad of its kind.

Leonard is the fillet of the crime genre.

I'd like you to stay here for the day.

I need the company.

Okay.

Lili moved out.

Do me a favor, go out in the hall,
get me another pillow.

My neck is hurting.

Maybe we could even things out,
and I could stay at Mom's a few nights.

- I've been staying more at yours.

- It's not a good time.

I'm not gonna be 100 percent
for a while. I'd like you around.

- I don't wanna come for a while.

- It's not up to you.

You're a minor. You're in my custody.

My home is your home too.

I'm not coming.

Why?

That hurts my feelings.

Don't be difficult.

If you like, we can get you some
more posters, make your room better.

Paint it a different color.

I can lend you my first edition
of *The Naked and the Dead*.

As a present.

Let me get you a pillow.

You used to be very emotional
when you were younger.

Did I look pretty silly out there,
falling on the concrete?

Yeah.

What? What are you laughing at?

That was funny how you said,

"Yeah."

- Good comic timing.

- Thanks.

Why don't we get some breakfast.

See if you can find a nurse out there.

Try to get the blond.

She looks like a young Monica Vitti.

Oh, excuse me.

The man in that room

wants to order some breakfast.

Okay.