The Rewrite

By Marc Lawrence
So thanks very much for having me in and here's my pitch.
This is a movie I've had in my head for a long time. It's a comedy. Hopefully.
Anyway...
Let's say Jack Nicholson decided that he wanted to know what people truly thought of him.
Whether his life had actually amounted to anything.
So he fakes his death and stages his own funeral.
I just think the possibilities are pretty hilarious.
Ultimately, amid all the cliché eulogies and insincere expressions of grief, he discovers one grandson who truly misses him.
It could be very heartwarming.
I don't get this.
Just like I didn't get it when you pitched it to me six months ago.
I did? Where was that?
At the Red Sunset premiere.
Glad I left such an impression that night.
Oh, right, sorry, yeah, yeah.
I knew I knew you.
Sorry. Yes! Yes!
Yeah, you were between jobs and looking for a development position.
So, bravo! No, that was a great night.
Oh, of course, there's no reason why it couldn't be a woman.
You know, everyone loves Betty White.
Keith, we love you.
We're huge fans.
This is the studio that made your Paradise Misplaced 15 years ago, when Jenny over here was just an embryo. It's a fun idea, it's just not for us.
We're looking more for edgy comedies with a kick-ass-type woman.
Now if you have something like that,
we'd love to hear it.
You are a fantastic agent
as you have frequently told me.
I just wanted to ask, do you think
you could possibly find me just...
Just one job, you know? Just any job.
OK.
There is something.
You have to hear me out.
If it pays, I'll take it.
My brother-in-law is a chem professor at
Binghamton University in upstate New York,
and they're looking for a writer
in residence this semester,
cos the one they had died,
so I thought of you.
You thought of me for a teaching job?
Look, you're going to teach
a screenwriting class.
You're going to take some time
to figure out your life
and write something great.
And they're going to give you a car,
a house, a salary.
Yeah, a pitiful one I don't doubt.
Well, it's a lot more
than you're making now.
Yeah, but I can't teach
and I hate teachers, you know.
They're frustrated losers who haven't
done anything with their own lives
so they want to instruct other people.
Oh, forget it, I will just
write my script on spec and...
Keith?
OK. Where exactly is Binghamton?
The city of Binghamton is
2,754 miles from Los Angeles
and 172 miles northwest
of New York City.
IBM was founded there.
Sir, is this your bag?
- Yeah.
Well, we have to check it.
OK.
Rod Serling, creator of Twilight Zone
grew up and was raised there.
I admit there's a somewhat
ominous quality to that factoid.
What is this?
"Best Original Screenplay."
Dude, you wrote Paradise Misplaced?
I did. Yeah, yeah.
That's such a great flick.
- Thank you. Thanks very much.
- Yo, Kevin, Ali, come here.
This is Keith Michaels.
He wrote Paradise Misplaced.
- You wrote that?
- Yeah, yeah.
- A long time ago but I did, yeah.
- Oh, I love that movie, man.
- My kids love that movie.
- Thank you, thank you, I appreciate it.
- Nice to meet you.
- Nice to meet you, too.
Wow, look at this.
I could have brought a bomb on board
and no one would have minded.
Don't say that. That's not good.
Oh, you're so right. I'm sorry.
I apologise. I used to know what was funny.
Thank you. Thank you.
Binghamton is also the
birthplace of the Spiedie,
a sandwich consisting of cubes
of marinated beef, chicken, or pork
grilled over a charcoal pit.
Binghamton is amongst the top 10
most cloudy and rainy American cities.
On the plus side, it is considered
"the carousel capital of the world".
It has never been the
site of a major riot.
And from what I can tell so far,
it is the absolute end of civilisation.
It's impossible to know what
anyone could have to teach here except "get out".
Can I help you with something?
Oh, sorry. I'm just a bit jet-lagged.
I just flew in from LA.
- You came here from LA?
- Yeah. Yeah.
I have come to teach at the college.
- What are you teaching?
- Writing. Screenwriting.
You're Keith Michaels?
I submitted a screenplay for that class.
He wrote Paradise Misplaced.
Are you kidding me?
Come sit with us.
No, I don't want to impose...
Dude, you have to. It's only
my favourite movie of all time.
OK, I will... I will obey.
Thank you.
I'm Karen. This is Judy and Chloe.
Right. What are you
all majoring in then?
- I'm pre-med.
- Really?
And where do you
stand on full body scans?
Would you say helpful or would you say
cancer-causing cash conduits?
- Well, I mean...
- Nice alliteration.
I'm an English major.
I thought I recognised
a fellow sufferer.
And Chloe is majoring in...
Telepathy?
I can't believe you wrote that movie.
That's absolutely, truly cool.
Nice assonance.
- Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds.
- Vowel sounds.
Look at me. Teaching already.
I really want to take your course.
Well, that's good news.
I thought maybe no one would.
Fantastic.
Henry, no. Sorry. Henry's not used
to seeing people in the house.
I'm Jim.
Hi, Jim. Henry.
I've got to get ready for work.
Right. No problem.
Hey.
Good morning.
I unfortunately have to go. I'm supposed
to meet the head of the department.
Dr Lerner. I had him for Chaucer.
When you say you
"had him" for Chaucer...
- This was really fun.
- Yeah.
- See you later.
- Yeah.
I like being a teacher.
Harold Lerner. How was your trip?
It was nice. Thank you.
We could have had somebody
meet you at the airport.
I'm sure one of our nerdier English majors
would have been happy to do that.
Oh, no, no, that's fine.
Although I have actually met
some of the students,
and they're extremely generous
with their time.
Oh, sure, yeah, they're friendly.
Most of them are high.
US Marine Corps.
I... I like to follow the rules.
Well, Writers Guild of America.
I feel exactly the same.
Excellent.
Let me grab something
and I'll show you to your new digs.
Yeah, yeah.
Good use of their parents'
tuition money.
Well, here's your new home
away from home.
That's lovely. Yeah, thank you.
Oh, there's a little faculty get-together

at 5:
Give you a chance to meet
the rest of the department.
Good. Great.
- All right. Give me a call if you need anything.
- Yep, yep, yep.
Thank you. Oh, Dr Lerner,
you forgot your box.
Oh, I'm sorry, no. That's yours.
That's the 30-page screenplays
submitted by all the students
who wanna take your course.
About 70 of them.
And you teach day after tomorrow,
so we're going to need
your selections right away.
You only have to pick 10.
We would have let you know sooner,
but we didn't know you were
taking the job until a couple days ago.
OK.
- Happy reading.
- Yeah.
Mr Michaels! Mr Michaels!
Hi.
Hi.
Oh, I'm glad I caught you
before the faculty reception.
I'm Holly Carpenter.
Hello. Hello.
And what do you teach, Holly?
What, teach? No, I don't teach.
I learn. I'm a sophomore.
Really?
Oh, you are? That's great. That's good. It's
wonderful going back to school at your...
- Height?
- Yes, exactly.
I thought that's what you meant.
It was, it was. We're very simpatico.
Holly, listen,
I'm a little late for this thing.
Am I going the right way
to the Susquehanna Lounge?
Yes, it's straight ahead.
OK, great. Thank you.
I'm actually a psych major.
And...
We have a lit requirement,
and I've written short stories
and I've written poems. I love writing.
I have an idea for a screenplay,
I know the class submission deadline
was yesterday...
But I stayed up last night and wrote this and
I hope that you would still consider me.
Thank you. Thank you.
Oh, I've got to tell you,
I love Paradise Misplaced.
I still watch it with my girls.
Oh, your girls? Are you a lesbian?
I wish. No, my daughters.
Of course. Well, of course.
Well, I hope you watch a DVD
and not one of those illegal web sites.
Oh, I didn't know that was an option.
I'll have to check that out.
A criminal. Now I will read this
with genuine interest.
OK, thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Yeah.
- I hope you like it.
- Oh, yeah.
Thank you very much.
- That is quite... Thank you. Yeah.
- You're welcome.
Hi, Jim Harper. My dog, Henry IV, and I
were peering in your window this morning.
Yes, wow. That was, that was...
That was unusual.
Yeah. Henry kind of walks me.
- Listen, I love your movie.
- Oh, thank you very much, thank you.
I've actually written three, and a co-writing credit on another. Oh, wow, I didn't know that. That's terrific. Jeez, I wish I could do what you do. Oh, so do I. And what do you do, Jim? I teach Shakespeare. Excuse me. Keith, I'd like you to meet some of our other English faculty. This is Ron Jenson, Medieval Literature. Pleasure. I really love your movie. Oh, thanks, the movies... Paul Prentiss, American Lit. Great to have you here. Great, thanks a lot. Hi, Naomi Watkins, African Literature. Nice to meet you, Naomi. I'm Keith. Clara Foss, fellow writer, resident poet. Welcome aboard. Well, that didn't rhyme at all. I doubt your credentials. And this is Professor Mary Weldon. Professor Weldon holds the Bainbridge Chair in Comparative Literature and she's about to publish what will prove to be the definitive work on Jane Austen. Oh, I'm so sorry. You don't like Jane Austen? No, no, she's obviously brilliant. It's just I find it all a bit trivial, you know? Really? That's fascinating. How so? Well, isn't it all, you know, "Who's going to the ball tonight? "My corset is askew. However will I curtsey?" I'd also like you to meet... In other words, why should a 21st century man care about the obstacles facing a 19th century woman? No, that makes me sound like a misogynist. I love and respect women. As long as they're not writing.
On the contrary, there are myriad women writers I adore.
- Can you name one?
- Elaine May.
I'm not familiar with her work.
Oh, she wrote A New Leaf, The Birdcage, she did an uncredited rewrite on Tootsie.
Movies?
We're talking about literature.
And while you may not think much of the women writers of that period, Austen, Woolf, and the Bronte sisters were artists who represented the female empowerment of their age.
Oh, well, forgive me, but I'm just a little bit tired of "female empowerment."
Whoa! Battle stations.
Dr Lerner, you must have an opinion on this?
I have a wife and four daughters.
I have no opinions.
What exactly is your opinion, Mr Michaels?
- Another glass?
- Thank you so much, that's nice.
It's just, honestly, everything seems to be about female empowerment nowadays.
You know, any meeting I go to in Hollywood, someone says, "You know what we need? A kick-ass girl. That would be a great twist."
Except every movie has a kick-ass girl.
You know, some martial-arts, CGI, slow-motion woman who kicks the crap out of every man in her path.
Can I tell you what would be truly innovative?
A movie without a kick-ass girl.
Or, better yet, a movie where a woman gets her ass kicked.
Perhaps you'd like to kick mine.
No, don't be silly.
I didn't mean literally.
Besides, not much of a target there.
Which I mean in a very nice way...
Cos you are in great shape.
You're... You're svelte.
This... I'm sure you'd like to meet...
Somebody.
Hey. So this worked out great, right?
Two of us living right
next door to each other.
- Yeah.
- I'll give you a lift in tomorrow.
Oh, thank you, Jim.
You know, you're a lovely man
with an unusual dog...
But I don't think I can do this.
I actually miss LA,
and I didn't think that was possible.
"O thou invisible spirit of wine,
"if thou hast no name to be
known by, let us call thee devil!"
When I was younger,
I thought having the perfect
Shakespeare quote for any situation
would make me beloved.
It's surprisingly unhelpful.
Yeah, it seems to really annoy people.
Sorry, hang on, hang on, hang on.
I'm going to have to take this.
I think I can find my house from here.
OK, sure, you go for it.
- Listen though...
- Hang on one second.
Give teaching a shot, OK?
It gets its hooks in you, you'll see.
With all respect, I don't believe
that anything worth knowing
can be taught in a classroom.
And I intend to do as little as possible
while carrying on with this charade.
Yeah, if I gave it any thought,
I'd probably feel the same way.
Yeah, hi.
Oh, hi. I'm stuck in traffic, I thought I'd check in. How's it going? I'm very, very, very, very cold, and, I have to read a huge box of scripts, and I just got into a fight with Professor McGonagall about Jane Austen. You know, it's interesting that you should bring that up. You know what J.K. Rowling said? "Where did I put that last billion dollars?" She said that failure was the best thing that ever happened to her cos it freed her from the inessential. It allowed her to concentrate on the thing that mattered most. Writing. Maybe the time has come for me to write that sequel to Paradise Misplaced that you've been hounding me for all these years. Hey, hey. I thought you weren't interested. You said the story was over, and if I remember correctly, continuing it would be creative suicide. Yeah, well, that was when I was young and believed in myself. So now is the perfect time. "Flo Bai."

Hello, Flo. Congratulations and welcome to the screenwriting class. "Dave Fenman."

You're a good-looking guy, Dave. Get your own screenwriting class. Not even close. Hello. Good morning. I'm Keith Michaels. Oh, thank you. Thanks very much. Thanks, yeah. Thank you. Well, now... Since it will be easier for me to evaluate your material if I read an entire script, and you've all turned in 30 pages
and the average screenplay is 120, 
that leaves roughly 90 to go. 
So if you write three pages a day, 
six days a week, 
you should all be done in about a month. 
Let's meet again then. 
Great. Looking forward to it. 
Hey. That's the way all classes 
should be. Five minutes. 
I had no intention of going that long, 
I am so sorry. 
- So maybe later, do you want to catch up... 
- Excuse me. Hi. Do you have a minute? 
Holly. 
Oh, yes. I work at the Campus Bookstore. 
So, Holly, this is Karen. 
- Yeah, we've taken some classes together. 
- Hi. 
So you didn't accept my screenplay 
but I was wondering if you could give me 
some constructive criticism. 
I thought that 
I could come during office hours. 
Yes. Yes. 
- I'll see you later, Mr Michaels. 
- Oh, Karen. 
Hi. I'm still here. 
Yes. Yes, you are. 
Well the thing is, Holly... 
I'm not entirely sure that I have anything 
very helpful to say regarding your screenplay. 
- Oh. That bad? 
- No, not at all. 
It's just that I don't really believe 
that writing can be taught. 
Oh, interesting position 
for a creative writing teacher to take. 
But true. You know, 
you can't teach talent. 
I think most people have talent, 
they just haven't been exposed 
to the right teachers. 
I beg to differ. 
You can get me the best music teacher
in the world
and I still wouldn't be able to
write songs like Paul McCartney.
How do you know? Have you tried?
No.
- Do you want to write songs?
- Not at all.
What are we talking about?
About the fact that the most idiotic
thing that anyone has ever said
is that if you just put your mind to it
and believe in yourself,
there is nothing you can't accomplish.
I say that! Does that make me an idiot?
No, no, not you. Other people.
How can I make my script better?
Right, well, it could be more...
Organised.
"More organised" how?
- Structurally.
- Structurally.
Yep.
Yeah. Structurally.
Did you like that part
where she looks in the mirror
and she sees herself as an old woman?
Honestly, I found that
a little heavy-handed.
So did I. Which is why I didn't write it.
You didn't read my screenplay, did you?
No. But I didn't read anyone's screenplay,
don't take it personally.
It's entirely personal.
I worked on it and
I would like to tell this story.
OK. You're in the class.
No. I want you to read my script
and tell me if I have any potential.
All right. I will read your screenplay.
Thanks. I think.
I'll let you eat in peace.
Oh, thank you, thank you.
It's a bit late for that.
Keith.
Dr Lerner.
Interesting wine
and cheese party last night.
I am so sorry.
Honestly, I was nervous meeting everyone
and you combine that
with the free-flowing wine
and it is just a recipe
for Austen-bashing.
Mary's a pretty powerful presence
around here, you know?
She's tenured, she's published.
She's also head of the Ethics Committee
which means
she can make your life miserable.
Even get you fired.
She wants me fired? Already?
She's not happy.
She did use words in her email
to me like "harassment".
That's a very bad word.
Yes, it is indeed. Here, walk with me.
Listen, I know you're a big Hollywood guy,
obviously you don't need this job.
Well, I wouldn't want to
let the students down, you know.
Well, then I'm afraid you're going
to have to kiss her svelte ass.
That sounds difficult.
I couldn't do it.
And I was in Desert Storm.
Should I bring her a gift
of appeasement, you know?
What does she like?
Jane Austen.
And the award for Best
Original Screenplay goes to...
Keith Michaels for Paradise Misplaced.
This is...
Well, it's tragic
how much I'm enjoying getting this.
And it's with tremendous ill-grace,
that I grudgingly acknowledge
the contribution of a few other people.
Our brilliant director, Niles Kelling, my very loud agent, Ellen Klein. My beautiful wife, Tina, who, frankly, could do much better. And our son, Alex, who I can honestly say is the only thing I've ever had a hand in producing not desperately in need of a rewrite. So, cheers, Alex, and go to bed. Thank you.

I'm not interested in your feelings about Persuasion, Miss Stein-Rosen, or anything else for that matter. I am interested in a well-thought out analysis corroborated with evidence from the text and only the text. Not Wikipedia. That's what I thought I was doing. What you thought you were doing is irrelevant. What you have done or in this case, not done, is what counts. Can I do some kind of extra credit? Like Habitat for Humanity? Who is it? Hello. Am I interrupting? I'm having office hours, Mr Michaels. Oh, OK. Hi, Mr Michaels. I'm in your screenwriting class. Andrea Stein-Rosen. Oh, yes, yes. Andrea. Great Neck High School. Likes Adele and Pinkberry. Yeah. I can come back. Oh, no, I think we're done. Right? Are we done? Ten minutes ago. Nice to see you. Good morning.

It could be said that we got off to a poor start at the wine and cheese event.
"We" did?
I did. I did.
Bit too much wine,
not quite enough cheese.
Which is why I brought these
few small peace offerings.
These are DVDs of every
Jane Austen novel
including my favourite,
Clueless with Alicia Silverstone.
What is Clueless?
Oh, I think you'll like it.
It's based on Emma.
Bit hit. Spun off into
a mildly successful series.
Also, a gift certificate from Amazon
covering all the following items.
My personal favourite is
the "What Would Jane Do?" tote bag.
Mr Michaels...
Thank you.
This is the finest public university
in the Northeast.
Yes. I understand.
We expect a degree of professionalism
even from a non-professional.
Yes, of course.
Which means that you
behave at faculty events.
You read the material
that has been submitted to you.
You do not dismiss your
class for a month.
- Oh.
- Yes, I heard about that.
But I want to be fair,
and act without pride or prejudice,
if you'll forgive the reference...
No, I very much enjoyed it. It was good.
So I'll give you one more opportunity
to conduct yourself like a teacher.
Absolutely. I will watch
Dead Poets Society to prepare.
It's a film. It's about teaching...
I'll get to it right after... Clueless.
- Clueless? Great.
- Yes.

Good afternoon.
- Oh, Mr Michaels.
- Please, call me Keith.

Sorry, my youngest was throwing up all night.
Oh, had she been drinking?
She's nine. But maybe,
I'm a really permissive mother.
How can I help you?

Well, by thanking me for reading your script.
- Really?
- You want to test me?

It is called Local Girl, and it is about a perky Binghamton lass called Peggy, who dreams big dreams about being a dancer and is attracted to the wrong boys and her father is a police officer and her mother is a beautician and opera singer.

Wow, you really did read it.
So, what did you think?

I think that your characters are quite interesting, but that it's a little randomly structured.

Anyway, I have sent an email telling everyone that we have class today and I would like you to attend.

Great.

Congratulations.
I just have a question.
I would expect no less.
If you don't believe writing can be taught, what are we going to be doing in class?
Well, we're going to...
So...

Why don't we deal with attendance, you know?
Get that out of the way.
Rachel Anslow.
Now am I pronouncing that right?
Is that "Ans-low" or is it "An-slow"?
"Ans-low."
- Sorry, I didn't quite catch that.
- "Ans-low!"
OK. OK, OK. That's fine. Tick.
And another tricky one.
Flo Bai? Or should I say "bay", "bai"?
It's "bay". But I could go either way.
Good. I appreciate your flexibility.
Could be either, or indeed, "eye-ther".
Let's call the whole thing off.
I'm sorry, Miss Stein-Rosen,
but you will have to wait for the "S's".
Or is it the "R's"?
Interesting question.
I was just going to say,
I think everyone is here.
There were 10 of us last time,
there's 10 today, plus...
Oh, yes, yes, yes.
Everyone, welcome the new student
to our class. Holly Carpenter.
Holly, perhaps you'd like to tell us
a little bit about yourself.
No, I'm good, good.
Thanks, thanks for asking.
I see.
So, the consensus is that
we're all here, yeah?
Yeah.
All right, all right, if you think so.
Seems a little rash to me, but...
Mr Michaels?
Maybe you could tell us
a little bit about
why you decided to come
to Binghamton and teach?
I certainly could, Miss Carpenter.
The truth is that...
I...
The truth is that I'm going
to be writing a movie
about a teacher
and this is all research.
Who's going to be in it?
I'm afraid I'm not at liberty
to discuss that.
You know, Matt hasn't committed yet...
Matt Damon? Oh, my God!
- Oh, my God!
- I did not say that, no.
No, the point is that, you know,
I have to learn who
my protagonist really...
Protagonist, protagonist, protagonist.
Pro-tag-on-nist
is all about, you know,
what he aspires to be,
what goal he wishes to achieve.
You mean like how in A New Hope,
Luke wants to become a Jedi Knight?
Yeah, perfect example, Mr...
Frazier. Billy Frazier.
Yeah. Billy, good, yes.
A goal has been established and
the story consists of trying to overcome
the obstacles in the way of that goal.
Feel free to write that down.
And, I bet that if you all thought
of your favourite movie
you could identify the hero or heroine
and what their goal was.
Dirty Dancing.
Are you serious?
That's not even a movie.
It's a wack Cinderella fantasy
that's totally devoid of reality.
Just excuse me one second.
You know, Hollywood never rests.
- Yeah, hi.
- Hey. Are you OK?
You sounded like you were going to kill
yourself last night.
I was, but it was
far too cold and rainy.
Listen, I am actually
teaching at the moment.
OK, good, good.
Well, I'm just checking in.
You hang in there
and I'll talk to you soon, OK?
Yeah, I will do, will do.
And just one other thing.
Tell them if Matt wants a meeting
he's going to have to come here.
Matt? Who is Matt?
Because, you know, there's always Ryan.
Gosling or Reynolds?
- OK. Talk to you soon. Yeah, ciao.
- Ciao.
I'm so sorry about that.
They never leave me alone.
So, any other favourite movies?
Hey.
You made it through. Sort of.
I couldn't have done it without
your probing and annoying question.
I'm always here for you.
Mr Ronson.
Your pages were excellent.
- Really?
- Yeah.
Thanks, Mr Michaels.
- Sorry.
- Oh!
I think I might be coming down
with something.
Do you have any idea
where you might be going with the story?
Yes. I have more pages.
All of them, actually.
Sorry, why did you only hand in 30?
That's all they asked for.
I didn't want to impose.
Well, I'd love to see the rest, if and
when you're comfortable sending them.
And assuming you live that long.
Dismissed.
Henry, let go.
It's garbage.
Evening, Jim.
Evening.
Henry, how are you?
Hey, boy.
You know, Karen,
I want to have a quick chat with Jim
about the correct schedule
for garbage pickups for a moment,
so why don't you go on in and I'll catch up.
OK.
OK, don't be too long. You want it hot.
Take care, Professor Harper.
I'll put on some music.
OK, all right, Henry.
Quiet, Henry.
Sorry about Henry here.
I think he's why my wife left me.
Your wife? I didn't realise
you were married.
Yeah. She's with some visiting professor
in the Physics Department.
One of the guys that helped discover
that whole Higgs boson thing.
The glue to the universe.
She's impressed with that kind of stuff.
Listen...
About Karen...
You know, we've been spending
some time together.
Yeah, I think I may have seen that.
Right.
You know, she's been
very welcoming, very friendly.
- Lot of school spirit.
- Right, right.
And she's actually
also taking my course.
OK. I gotcha.
Right. So I was just wondering
if there's any kind of, you know,
university policy or official position
on that kind of thing.
Yeah, it's totally against the rules.
- Is that right?
- Yeah, no, big time.
People get fired for that.
Wow, I didn't realise, so...
Don't worry. Your secret's safe with me.
- Thank you very much, Jim.
- Sure.
- Gentlemen.
- Well, hey.
Just coming back from a grocery run.
What are we talking about?
I was just trying to remember
which Shakespeare play, the line
"Tomorrow and tomorrow,
creeps in this petty pace" comes from
and Jim was assisting me.
Macbeth. Act V, Scene V.
- Very impressive, very impressive.
- Wow.
- That is why he's Department Chairman.
- Right.
Actually, I'm Department Chairman
because it pays more
and I have four daughters
who spend so much time at the mall,
the mannequins call them by name.
Wow. So it's just you in the house
with five women?
Yup. Me and the girls.
Well, I'm going to go
and brush up on my classics,
so I will see you gentlemen later.
And, I'm just going to go ahead
and walk my friend here.
"Once more unto the breach".
Thank you. Here you are.
Good timing. Last umbrella.
Yeah, I'm quite excited.
I haven't actually owned one of these
since I left England
about 100 years ago.
But your horrendous weather
has forced my hand.
No, you're looking
at it all the wrong way.
First of all, think about how much you save in suntan lotion. Yes, I see that. And sunglasses. And convertibles. And bikinis. I'm now very glad I did not bring mine. I can lend you one when it gets sunny. Oh, you're saying there actually will be a sunny day? Oh, yeah. It gets sunny, and it is worth the wait. The lawn is filled with Frisbees and guitars. Professors teach outside and it's just, you just... You soak it all in, you absorb it, like the best scoop of ice cream you ever had. What a sad, pathetic story. Too randomly structured? Bit clich. Saying "a bit clich" is a bit clich. Mark Twain said that, "The difference between the almost right word and the right word was the difference between the lightning bug and lightning." I love it. This is the kind of stuff I want to learn. Yes, and this is exactly what can't be taught, so... I know, I know. No one can learn anything. It's all set in stone, let's just all kill ourselves. This is what I'm talking about. Late Bloomers. Looks like one of those Victorian plays where many people say, "arse". Well, it is about people who find their true talents later in life. Sylvester Stallone, he was a deli counter attendant. Rodney Dangerfield gave up selling aluminium siding to go on to become one of the most famous comedians ever.
Alan Rickman, a fellow countryman, didn't get a movie role until he was 48.

Wow.

Susan Boyle was 46.

Laura Ingalls Wilder didn't write Little House on the Prairie until she was 65.

Incredible. And look at that.

Jesus didn't give up carpentry until he was 30.

Yeah, and now he's, like, a top guy in his field.

The thing is, you see, I would argue late bloomers may have had talent all along.

It was just unrecognised.

There's a difference.

I disagree. I think it's just about focusing.

Right.

I wish you'd focused on my umbrella.

Oh, it's a good thing I don't work on commission.

Hat?

Yes, all right.

Yeah, come in.

Clem, hello.

- Are you all right?

- I noticed this discolouration on my arm.

I thought it was the flesh-eating virus, but the infirmary says it's just a dry patch.

Well, better luck next time.

But the good news is, I have now finished your completed script, and...

It's brilliant.

- Wow, really?

- Yeah.

It's unbelievable. It's annoying, actually.

Have you always written?

Pretty much. Especially in high school.

It gave me something to do in between getting beaten up.

Yeah well, most good writers spend a lot of their time getting beaten up.
And I'll tell you something wonderful about Hollywood.
Nerds can rule.
Not that you're a nerd, I mean...
Are you kidding? I aspire to nerd.
OK, so, what I'd like to do is just give you my few, inane notes which if you've seen my last few movies, you will know to ignore and then, I'd like to show this to my agent.
Are you kidding? Thank you.
I don't have a Kleenex, but I have this. It's as good as.
Let's ask the Rabbi what he thinks.
Suddenly, they see Rabbi Stein eat some food.
Alicia says, "Oh, no, he's allergic to nuts!"
And the Rabbi grabs for his heart.
End of Act 1.
It's completely contrived.
Your lead character resembles no one who's ever walked the planet.
She's based on me.
Maybe you need a villain.
He could wear a mask that covers his face.
You could hear his breathing.
I thought it had some really nice touches.
Me too. I really enjoyed it.
Very quick read.
You start with two pages describing clouds.
If it was a movie about a meteorologist, fine, but it's a story about a Bat Mitzvah gone wrong.
Ok, Andrea, good.
Let me just ask you this question. Sit down.
Why did you write this?
- What do you mean?
- Well,
what was the thing that made you
want to write this story?
- I don't know.
- OK.

Your favourite film, Dirty Dancing,
what's that about?
A girl who learns to dance
and falls in love.
Yes. But isn't it about more than that?
Isn't it about a girl named Baby
who discovers that she is in fact
becoming a woman?
Isn't it about lost innocence?
Yes, I guess so.

See, the thing is,
writing a movie is so hard,
it's like jumping into the sea.
And you need a life raft.
And that raft is the impulse
behind the movie.
It's the thing that made you want to
write the story in the first place.
You've got to figure that out
and then cling on for dear life.
So why did you write Paradise Misplaced?
- We don't want to talk about my stuff.
- Yeah, why did you tell that story,
- Mr Michaels?
- How did you come up with that?
- Yeah, what was your life raft?
- Did you have a near-death experience?
Well, it was a...
I used to tell my son stories at night.
You have a son?
Yeah, yeah, Alex.
He's 18 now
and he is a freshman
at Stanford University.
Wow. So, he's really smart.
Well, his mother was quite clever.
Smart enough to divorce me anyway.
But, while we were still together,
my dad died and...
Suddenly Alex, at age five,
became frightened of the dark and obsessed with death. 
So I invented a story about heaven to comfort him. 
He didn't really buy it, you know? 
He had so many brilliant and detailed questions 
that I had to refine my answers every night. 
That turned into the story of two angels who botch a mission to take a soul to heaven and have to go to hell to get her back. Paradise Misplaced. 
Yeah, yeah. 
It was a fairy tale, you know, designed to make a five-year-old boy go to sleep. 
And that's the thing, you know. Just having that idea, however big or small, is an enormous help when you're drifting to sea somewhere in the middle of your second act. 
I mean, let's say, for instance, that I was going to write a sequel to Paradise Misplaced. Are you going to do that? I ask the question purely academically, but you know, what could be the spine to that story? Well, I always thought Paradise Misplaced was about second chances and how it's never too late to redeem yourself and to start over again. 
Interesting, Miss Carpenter, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm sorry, I just had an unrelated thought. - Yeah, Billy? - Maybe instead of going to Hell this time, they go into space. OK, yeah. I think I see where you're going with that one.
It needs a love story.
It should be in 3-D.
One of the angels
from the original movie
could have been captured
and brought down to Hell
so two younger angels
have to try and get him back.
Jonah Hill. And Channing Tatum.
We know that works.
Good, good, good, good.
Yes. Well, I hope you're
learning something here.
Hey. Hey!
That was an incredible story
you told about your son today.
Yeah. I shouldn't have really
gotten caught up in all that.
No, it was really moving.
I was just surprised
you hadn't mentioned it before.
Hey, let's go someplace and talk.
Really talk.
There's this restaurant called Number 5.
You know, that would be lovely,
but I had not realised
that there's this school policy.
Discouraging teachers and students
from having "romantic and
extracurricular relationships".
- Yeah, exactly.
- But it happens all the time.
I've had relationships with three of
my professors and teaching assistants.
Wow. Three.
And I just think trying to tell adults
what they can or can't do
with their personal lives is ridiculous.
I agree with that, but in our case,
one of us is so much more adult
than the other.
I don't mean emotionally,
because obviously that would be you...
Age is just a number.
I care about who a person is.
And you're an amazing man.
- Well, fair enough...
- Listen to me.
Do you know Steven Spielberg?
Know him? No, not really. We've met.
If you bumped into him in the street,
would he recognise you?
Well, if I bumped into him really hard
and, you know, reintroduced myself
when he was lying on the sidewalk,
I suppose.
What about George Clooney?
We had a lunch.
I pitched him something he really hated.
Do you realise how amazing this is?
These people are the gods of our time.
Yeah, I'm not sure anyone
in the Screen Actors Guild
should really be called a god.
Every society back to
ancient times had gods.
I'm minoring in anthropology.
First it was the stars and the sun,
then the Greeks and Romans
anthropomorphised them.
Then, we had monotheism,
and in today's culture
our gods are celebrities.
And you know them personally.
I suppose that makes me
a kind of demi-god.
Quite a morale-booster.
Besides, what if you meet
your soulmate this way?
What if you meet the person
you're going to marry?
Is that something to be discouraged?
No, I suppose not. No.
Then let's go to dinner.
Unless, you just want it to be about sex.
And I'm fine with that.
Just say that you only
want it to be about sex.
I certainly don't want that.
I...
Let's talk about it at dinner.
That's a good idea.
Great.

Calm down. No one's going to see us
and who cares if they did.
Yup. You're absolutely right.
Silly of me to be worried.
So your son? What is he majoring in?
Well, you know...
I'm not absolutely certain.

Welcome to... Oh.
- Oh, Lord.
- Hi.
- Mr Michaels and Karen.
- Hello, Holly.
Wow, so you work here?
No, I just walk around with a pad
and I find out what people like to eat.
- I'd like the ahi tuna.
- OK.

Excellent choice.
Great. And a glass of Chardonnay.
OK. Just need to see an ID.

Seriously?
That's just restaurant policy.
Oh, I'm sorry. That doesn't look real.
Yes, it is.
I can take it to the manager.
I'll tell you what.
Why don't I order a Chardonnay
and we can share it.
OK. Are we going to get straws?
Am I three years old?
Well, we don't really know,
because your ID is fake.

Sorry.
I'm going to change my order, it's fine.
I'll have a beef enchilada
and a margarita
at Caf Mexico with Judy and Chloe.
Karen.
Karen.
Don't make a big thing about this.  
She's being totally rude  
and it'd be nice if you stood up for me.  
Either you take me  
seriously or you don't.  
No, I do.  
I just think it's probably her job  
to ask that question  
- and she...  
- Good night.  
Daughters.  
It might have been real,  
we just have to check.  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.  
So, the ahi tuna actually  
sounded delicious.  
And I will have a glass of Chardonnay.  
Thank you.  
Would you like to see ID?  
Hey, I'm driving you home.  
Wow, this is a full-service restaurant.  
Well, you had two glasses  
and you had two at the bar  
and if you die, I don't get  
to take your course  
and it's going to screw up  
my whole schedule.  
What about my car?  
It's a Hyundai.  
It'll be there in the morning.  
The girls are doing a disco performance.  
I'm helping. You know, I used to dance.  
No, I know. You danced modern.  
It's in your script.  
Peggy goes all the way to the big city  
to dance before coming back  
and marrying Ted,  
the hot, but quite thick  
minor league baseball player.  
I didn't write "big city".  
I said "New York".  
You think we're all rubes up here?  
Very much so, yes, yes, yes.  
That true, did you really dance
in an off-Broadway show?
Yes, until I blew my ankle out.
Must have been tough, coming back
here after being in the big...
Manhattan.
Why?
Binghamton rocks.
Oh, I know. I know.
How does it rock?
Gorgeous.
One of the oldest antique carousels
in the United States.
Rod Serling used it as the model
for one of the most famous episodes
of The Twilight Zone ever.
Do you know it?
I was always too scared
to watch The Twilight Zone
because of that music.
You mean...
Yup, that's it. Yup.
You're very good.
You can stop now. Please.
Please, seriously, stop, stop.
It's the story of a middle-aged man
who's lost his way
and goes back in time
to the park he used to play in.
This park.
And, he rides the merry-go-round
and he sees his father
and his father tells him
that he has to move on with his life
because he's been looking behind him
and he has to try looking ahead.
All right, well, thank you
for the history lesson.
Folks, closing in a minute.
And thanks for being so
understanding tonight about Karen.
It's not what it seems.
Seems like you're sleeping with her.
Then it is what it seems.
I mean, I realise I shouldn't
be leading her on, but...
- Oh!
- I mean, it takes...
You think it's about you? It's about her father.
What do you mean, it's about her father? The whole subtext of her script is about a young girl trying to get her distant, powerful father's love.
You're just a substitute for the attention she never got from an older male figure. That's rather disturbing. What's disturbing is what does it say about you? You trying to fill a spiritual vacancy with alcohol and young women? Yes. Well.
Thank you very much.
No problem.
- Good.
- Yes.
That was very nice of you to show me the sights of Binghamton.
Oh, the sight. That was about it. Well it was surprisingly lovely and... You're very easy to talk to even though you did do most of the talking. Thank you. I think. And you look very nice in your waitress uniform. But, I've always had a yen for uniforms. I think Kim Jong-Eun looks pretty sexy. Well, I am flattered by the competition. Yeah.
OK. Good night.
Good night.
Character. Character is everything. Fortunately, not in life, but in storytelling. Make sure that your characters drive the plot
and not the other way around.
Yes, questions? Anyone else?
Karen, yeah?
I'm just wondering,
given that besides Paradise Misplaced
all your other films were critical
and commercial failures,
why should we take this
or any advice from you?
Well, you shouldn't. Because...
When it comes to writing,
there are no rules, you know?
Except be true to the story you're telling.
Just make it your own unique voice.
So thank you for pointing that out, Karen.
That's very helpful.
Well, I enjoyed your pages, Sara,
but, why is it subtitled
when the film is in English?
To demonstrate the vast gulf between
what we say and what we mean.
No one's ever done that before.
Yeah, I think Woody Allen
did it in Annie Hall.
That was a comedy.
I'm not interested in comedy.
No, no, I do see that. Yes.
- Thanks, Mr Michaels.
- Thank you, Rosa.
- Thank you, Mr Michaels.
- Thank you, Andrea, Clem, Billy...
Maya. At last, thank you.
Andrea, this is vastly improved.
Really? I'm going to cry.
No, really, you've done a good job
of foreshadowing by starting the script
with the Bat Mitzvah video,
giving us a hint of the horror to come.
But, I still think maybe you just need
to define the larger theme of your story.
What about the idea that you really
have to do everything yourself?
Because you can never trust caterers.
Yeah. That might be a tad close
Did you think you could maybe dig a little deeper? I don't think I go that deep. That's what everybody keeps telling me anyways. Well, let's prove everybody wrong. OK, well here's my thought, Billy, and I know how much you love Star Wars, but I'm just not sure it's really going to pass muster to just retell those stories and change some names around. I didn't. Well, you have a small, wise, greenish character called Zoda. - That's not the same. - Yes, but I just think maybe it'd be good to let go of your obsessions. Do you have other ideas? I was thinking about trying to join a frat. Well, that would take care of your social life, I suppose. Anything we could do, writing-wise? They're kind of the same thing. A lot of nights when I'm sitting home alone, Star Wars is what I look forward to. And sometimes I wish it was real and I could go live in that world. So, that's what I write about. It's just that somebody already wrote it. Yeah, no, it's bad timing. So you think I should do the frat thing? Yeah, why not? Expand your horizons. Go forth like Luke Skywalker and find new worlds to conquer. - Mr Michaels. - Rosa. Sorry to bother, but... That was an awesome class on character
development the other day. Thanks.
Oh, well, my pleasure, Rosa.
You know, I've been
teaching for 25 years,
nobody's ever thanked me.
Thank you.
You're welcome. Ooh, that felt good.
I've been hearing really good buzz
from the kids on your course, Keith.
I know Hollywood is calling, but if you
could stay, we'd love to have you.
Well, I appreciate that,
it's very flattering. Thanks.
I don't think students should
even be allowed to attend these events.
Oh, you look good doing that.
Watch the hair.
- Yes, hello, Ellen.
- Hey.
- Got the outline. Looks good.
- Excellent.
I think even an agent of your calibre
should be able to sell it.
And, I have a script I'd like you to take
a look at by a young man in my class.
Oh, yeah?
Yeah. It's called Veronica, Out of Time
and it's about a kick-ass girl
who gets sucked into a time machine
and has to fight her way back
through various periods of history.
Imagine The Matrix meets Gossip Girl.
- Oh. Hold that. I like that.
- Yeah, me too.
And if anything happens with it,
I would like to produce.
Email me the pages.
In the meantime, stay out of trouble.
I'm in Binghamton.
What trouble could I get into?
Oh, hang on.
I think I just discovered how the
rhetorical question was invented.
- I'll talk to you later.
Bye.
Hi.
I want to discuss our relationship, if you can call it that.
Well, exactly,
I am not sure that you can, because if your script is any kind of guide, it could be said that any interest you have in me is just a misplaced attempt to earn the attention that you never received from a remote father figure.
Jesus.
I mean, I don't mean to offend.
That's unbelievably insightful.
Well, it was very obvious to me from your pages.
And, can I tell you what I think is the most significant problem with your otherwise very promising script?
Fine. OK, sure, tell me.
All right. So your father character is rich, narcissistic, selfish, womanising...
Yeah, I know. Too unlikeable.
No, no, no, I loved him. He's fantastic.
You loved him? That's perverse.
Well, he's an incredibly well-drawn character.
The problem is with the daughter, she's sort of paper-thin, you know?
She's a good daughter, she's a good student.
There's no flaws, nothing needs to be fixed.
So? The father needs to be fixed.
Which is what makes him an interesting character.
And in reaction to that, I think that maybe the daughter should be... Libidinous, spoiled, sexually manipulative, you know, more like...
So many interesting characters.
Like me? You were going to say me.
- Not at all.
- You were looking right at me.
I was looking in that direction.
Karen, Karen.
Listen, listen. I did not mean you.
I did not mean you
and I really do think that your script
has enormous potential.
And I really do think
you should go fuck yourself.
Oh, and bring my weed in.
I left it your house.
Because after this relationship,
I really need to get baked.
Office hours.
There's nothing like one-on-one time
with a student, is there?
How are you today?
Hey, are you OK, buddy?
I'm not sure.
Maybe I should go home
and eat the rest of Karen's pot.
I know what you need.
Right?
Incredible.
All we need is a good wine
and this is Paris.
Well, since my four daughters
and my wife became vegetarians,
I'm not allowed to have any meat
in the house, so,
I'm going to get some pork Spiedies
to go and store them in my office.
- That's a little bit sad, isn't it?
- What?
Well, you know,
being henpecked to death like that.
Are you kidding me?
He's the happiest guy I know.
At faculty meetings, we bet on how long
it will take him to cry
when he talks about his family.
Twenty-five seconds is the record.
Seriously? Dr Lerner?
I'm telling you. In a perfect world,
I should be that happy.
I started seeing this woman, Joan.
She's an insurance agent
with State Farm.
She specialises in collision.
Don't let her go.
I'm trying not to.
What's the secret?
You're asking me?
I've been divorced for 10 years
and you just caught me in the hall
being severely berated
by an undergraduate.
I don't know, my only thought
is that you be yourself.
- No, that's not going to work.
- No, you're obviously right.
But in an ideal world,
that's what you hope for, isn't it?
That you find someone
you can be yourself with, you know?
Some smart, funny woman
full of fire and honesty,
who looks great dancing barefoot
and can obviously
see straight through you.
Why barefoot?
I enjoy feet.
Hey.
So, Harold, you don't happen to have
any pictures of your family, do you?
Oh, I don't know, maybe. I might.
A-ha, Look at that.
My wife, Helen.
And that's Kate, Rosalind, Olivia
and the little one is Beatrice.
That Beatrice.
She's got a mischievous glint
in her eye, doesn't she?
Yeah. Unbelievable.
I forgot napkins.
OK, 33 seconds. Solid time.
So, this is funny.
It's engaging.
My only thing is I'm just a
little confused about Jack,
this conservative, older banker
who is now dating Peggy.
Oh, what's wrong with him?
Well, he's a bit dull
for Peggy, isn't he?
No, Jack's steady.
He's from Peggy's hometown.
He'd be a great stepfather.
Yeah, but Peggy doesn't love Jack.
Maybe not, but Peggy can learn to.
Yes, of course,
if Peggy puts her mind to it.
Stupid of me, yes.
And, you know,
Jerry's not such a bad egg.
Wait, wait, stop, stop, stop.
Who's Jerry?
Does Jack know about Jerry?
No. Jack is Jerry.
- Jack is Jerry.
- Jack is Jerry.
Oh, so Jerry is a man you are seeing.
Yes. And that's why the character
should work.
Because I'm writing from real life.
I'm writing what I know.
Isn't that what you're supposed to do?
Not at all, no, no. That's absurd.
I mean, for a start, what if you're like
me, what if you don't know anything?
But, you're writing your Matt Damon movie
about being a teacher now
and you wrote about your son
and that worked out.
Yeah, that's debatable seeing as we
haven't actually spoken in over a year.
But Jack, or should I say Jerry...
You haven't spoken
to your son in a year?
Well it's not a big deal, it's just
that after his mother remarried,
we sort of saw less and less
of each other, so...
Cos when you spoke about him in class,
your whole face lit up.
Yeah, well, I was very fond of him.
And now you're not?
There is no adulation
like Hollywood adulation, you know?
People that you have only seen in magazines
tell you that they love you
and they want to be your friend.
And it's magical.
Until your next film is not as good
and the one after that even less so.
And suddenly,
your confidence is shattered
and your wife leaves you for the man
who directed your one hit.
The guy who directed Paradise Misplaced?
- Niles Kelling.
- Oh, God.
He's big. Hit after hit.
Yeah, thank you very much.
And, as I was drinking a bit too much
and dating actresses
young enough to believe
that a writer could get them a job,
I sort of stopped calling Alex.
Because you think he feels about you
the way you feel about you?
Yup, yup, yup.
And really, why wouldn't he?
You know, cos he's with his mother
and stepfather
flying to Hawaii on a private jet
while Dad is being rejected
for a rewrite of Piranha 3D.
And is not being a great dad anyway.
"As long as you're alive,
you can forgive and be forgiven.
"Once you're dead,
it gets significantly harder."
That's from Paradise Misplaced.
My favourite movie.
One of them anyway. Top five.
Definitely top 10.
I'm very worried about your taste.
Top 20.
Call your son.
Really?
Really.
Is it so bad, where you're from?
I thought so, Pop.
I've been living at a dead run
and I was tired.
And one day I knew
I had to come back here.
Had to come back
and get on the merry-go-round
and eat cotton candy
and listen to a band concert.
Had to stop and breathe.
Maybe when you go back, Martin,
you'll find that there are merry-go-rounds
and band concerts where you are.
Maybe you haven't been looking
in the right place.
You've been looking behind you, Martin.
Try looking ahead.
Hey, this is Alex.
Leave a message and I'll call you back.
Hello, there.
I'm not sure if you recognise
this voice any more, but...
It's me...
Your father. Wanting to say hi.
Wanting to check up on you,
make sure you're OK.
Wanting to say...
I love you and I miss you...
And, it would be great
if you had the inclination to call me.
I'm on the same number.
That's probably it.
OK. OK. It's your dad.
- Hey, Keith.
- Hey.
Keith, here's why I texted you.
Professor Weldon claims that based on what she witnessed, you have been carrying on "an inappropriate relationship with a female student."
Now, if you just go away quietly, it'll be fine. Otherwise, she'll take it to the Ethics Committee and there will be a hearing. And would that be a public hearing?
- Behind closed doors.
- Well, thank God for that.
But they usually wind up on the Internet. What is wrong with that woman? Weldon? She's elitist, lonely, miserable...
And in this case, right. My oldest daughter is going off to college this fall. And if this happened to her, I'd come after you. And I'd be armed.
I was sort of hoping you were pro-gun control. Well, I was a Marine, so I could kill you with my bare hands. A sharp blow to the Adam's apple. Knuckle heart punch. Malaysian choke hold. I wouldn't, you know, because I like you.
- Thank you.
- Yeah.
But, Keith, you made a mistake here. Yeah.
Hey, there. Any news on the outline? It has been a few days. Listen, Keith.
The studio is planning to do Paradise Misplaced Two. But, they want those guys Furman and Lesser to write it. Why, what...
Wait, wait, wait. Maybe, maybe they just want to hire these guys
because they think I'm not interested?
No, no, no. I told them
that you were interested.
But they said they're looking
for a fresh perspective. A new voice...
You know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.
But look, you do have a roof over your head
and you have some money coming in...
And you must be teaching
those kids something
because I love that script you sent me
from that boy in your class.
That's good. You should call him.
You should call him and tell him.
You sure that's OK?
Yeah. I'm glad someone's
career is alive.
Your career is alive.
It's just, you know, dormant right now.
Just hang in. All right?
Yeah. OK. Yeah.
Bye.
Walt Disney?
I actually think he is a genius.
- I agree.
- I love The Little Mermaid.
The music, the songs, the bubbles?
And Prince Eric was totally hot.
Please. Stop.
Why do there have to be
all these distinctions?
Why can't you like 101 Dalmatians
and Reservoir Dogs?
Exactly. Fantastic point, Rosa.
Mr Michaels, do you think you can
mention Disney in the same breath
as Tarantino, Kurosawa or Bergman?
Well, you just did, Sara. So, yes.
- And what's the difference?
- Sorry?
Well, Disney, Kurosawa, they're dead.
I mean, great art didn't save them, did it?
They're gone. They're forgotten.
Does anyone still watch Bambi?
Kurosawa. I think most people would say that's sushi.
Bergman. I will give you $100 if anyone here can name three of his movies.
  - Wild Strawberries.
  - The Seventh Seal, Persona.
Yeah, well. Apart from you two.
You know, it all fades.
It all turns to dust.
It's very hard to know why any of you would want to do this in the first place, because you will be rewritten, discarded, fired, forgotten. That's if you're lucky enough to work in the first place.
So don't be under any illusion that this will bring you immortality. Or happiness. Perhaps it's better not to even try.
Try not. Do or do not.
There is no "try".
Thank you, Billy. Thank you.
Excellent shirt, by the way.
I think that may be my favourite so far.
So one Scotch, and one...
Hi.
  - Hey.
  - Hey. You here for dinner?
  - No. No, I had a Spiedie earlier.
  - Sorry to hear that.
No. I just wanted to tell you something and I didn't want you to hear it in front of the whole class.
Weldon knows about Karen.
She's gonna put me in front of the Ethics Committee, unless I leave.
Whoa.
  - What are you going to do?
  - I don't think I have a choice.
There'd be a hearing, it would inevitably go public and everyone in LA would know.
  - Not that they care, but then...
  - And then your son would find out.
Exactly. Yeah.
Well, do you want to stay?
The issue is whether I can stay.
Yes.
First, you gotta go to Weldon.
And say what?
I've already bought her every Jane Austen gift short of a "Hello, Mr Darcy" thong.
You tell her that you did an incredibly stupid thing. Which it was.
Yes, yes. I think we've already covered that ground very well.
And then you tell her that you didn't know that it was against school rules and that she was over 21, according to her fake ID.
Yes, fair point. Yes.
And then you tell her how sorry you are.
Do you think that's really going to work with a woman who practically wears a bonnet?
I think it's worth a shot.
Here you are. I'll be right back for your dinner order.
I think I should just go quietly.
OK. Whatever you want.
I guess that it will give you more time to work on your Matt Damon movie.
Oh, Lord, no.
Look, there is no Matt Damon movie.
What? So, all that was just...
It was a lie. It was a lie.
Yeah. I'm sorry.
There's no movie at all.
As a matter of fact, the only reason I'm here is because I can't get a job.
But you do have a job.
You mean teaching? Well, yeah.
Number one, I'm no good at it, and number two,
I don't have it any more, so...
But you don't know that until you go to Weldon.
Holly, I wish I shared your faith that if you just push yourself hard enough, everything will work out. It's very American, like country music, or,
I don't know, obesity. But it's not true. You know, it won't make anyone talented, it won't get me a job, and it won't make my son call me. I don't understand. Why are you reducing me to some kind of optimism machine? You think I wake up in a motivational video? This is what I believe. I believe what I believe. This is what I'm teaching my girls. Oh, really, and how are you teaching them that? By contemplating marrying someone because he's steady and secure? I don't understand. So now, you're giving me parenting advice?
- If you like to dish it out...
- I thought you wanted to talk this through. I don't understand. What is going on with you?
- Miss? We're ready to order now.
- I'm just saying...
Be right there.
Watch it!
Well, listen. You've got to get me something. Anything. A rewrite... I'll work on reality TV as a writer or a contestant. Keith, I'm really sorry. It's hard times out here. It's not just you, either. It's... Wait a minute. There's some kind of riot going on. I'll call you back. Dude, not cool, man.
Is the party over?
- Mr Michaels.
- Sara, what's all the ruckus? I don't know. I was coming to the party and I saw cops and paramedics... I wasn't going to drink. Oh, It's fine, Sara. If anyone needs one, it's you.
- All right, people! Clear the way!
- Oh, my God!
- Is he gonna be OK?
- It's Billy.
Excuse me. What's going on?
Some hazing thing, made him
drink a half a bottle of vodka.
- He'll probably be OK.
- He should join a sorority.
All right, there are easier ways to get out
of finishing your third act, you know.
Mr Michaels.
Hey.
Those guys just kept saying
"One more, Obi-Wan, one more."
They didn't want me in the frat.
I'm such an idiot.
No, you are not an idiot, Billy.
You're, you know, you're weird.
But half the successful people
in Hollywood are weird.
Talking of which, I was thinking
about your screenplay, and I think
if you love Star Wars, write Star Wars.
But just give it a little twist, you know?
For example, bad version...
College guy who's obsessed with Star Wars
meets a similarly-obsessed Star Wars girl.
Did you ever see a film called Marty?
OK, I think you could
write a story like that.
- In fact, I think that could be...
- Billy, honey?
Mom, Dad.
Hi. I'm Keith Michaels.
I'm a teacher. I teach Billy.
- And I'll give you your privacy. Yeah?
- Thank you.
- Billy...
- Are you OK?
- Yeah, I'm fine, Mom.
- I'm so happy you're OK.
You really had your mother worried,
I'll tell you that much.
Sorry about that.
Afternoon. Hello.
So...
Sara told us what you did for Billy.
Oh, I didn't do anything.
The guys at that frat are such jerks.
We're all gonna go visit Billy
this afternoon, if you'd like to come.
I would, Rosa. But...
I actually have to leave town today.
As it turns out, unfortunately...
I am not gonna be able
to finish the rest of this semester.
But...
I've spoken to Dr Lerner, and Clara Foss,
the renowned poet, will be taking over.
So you'll be in good hands.
Well, what about our screenplays?
I am sorry, not to be able to finish
your third acts with you.
And I owe you an apology
for our last meeting. You know...
What I was saying about
writing being meaningless...
In a movie that I wrote
many years ago...
An 11-year-old girl finds herself
an angel in Heaven, and she's...
Understandably bereaved,
missing her family and her friends
and all the life she'll never have.
But an older angel tells her that 11 is
actually a wonderful age to be in Heaven.
Because at 11, everything you
love and hate really stays true
while mortal life is a long, losing
struggle not to compromise those feelings.
I think that's a bit the case with writing.
It's our 11-year-old selves saying,
"Yes, that's funny",
or "no, that's stupid".
You know, Sara may come at it from
one direction, Andrea, from another.
But it's real.
And true.
Anyway, I wanted to say thank you all.
It's been an honour and a privilege.
I can't wait to see
the Matt Damon movie.
Thanks. Yeah. Thank you, Flo.
I really enjoyed your class.
Thank you, Rosa. Thanks.
I've really enjoyed the class.
- She enjoyed the class.
- That was nice. Thank you, Rachel.
And thank you, Maya, for translating.
You helped me find my voice.
I'll never forgive you.
Here's your rewrite. Read it in hell.
Mr Michaels...
I don't know how to thank you.
Thank you, Clem.
You've made me quite jealous.
Brilliant. Brilliant.
So...
- Now, listen...
- Good luck.
Write.
No, I definitely will. Or email.
I meant a script.
I need something to watch with my girls.
Right.
I loved the class.
And you can teach, because I got better.
Yeah. Look, just... Sorry.
Hold on, one...
I have a class.
I meant to tell you never to call again
unless it was good news.
Wish granted.
Paragon wants to buy Clem's script.
I spoke to Jenny Glick
and Greg Nathan this morning.
The same people who love me
and are huge, huge fans
and rejected me from the sequel
to my own movie?
I know. But they love this. And I told
them if they want it, you're producing.
And they said?
Well, they want David Shore to executive produce, but they're going to give you a credit and enough money to get you back home. Greg is...
I'm sorry. Greg and Jenny are going to be at a premiere in Manhattan tonight, and they want to meet Clem. And you. Get back to LA as soon as you can so that we can ride this credit, set up some meetings. Right? I'll...
- Congratulations.
- Yeah.
Fantastic.
I hope you have a good trip.
Thanks. And thanks again for everything.
Well, hold on.
You're not getting away that easy.
Get over here.
Oh, God.
So, Clem, tell us how this happened. There was a screenwriting seminar, so I submitted some pages. You had already written the whole thing? Well, I had a draft and Mr Michaels asked to see it. He brought the script to a whole other level.
- I'm sure. We love Keith.
- Huge, huge, fans.
So tell us a little bit about how this idea came into being. I don't know where the ideas come from, usually. And, I wanted to write something fresh, something different that...
- It is fresh. It is different.
- It's just a fresh voice.
It's a fresh voice.
And if we can get a Fanning sister...
- Do they have a young sister?
- Excuse me. Can I get the butter?
It started a few years ago now, already, I think.
- Nice.
- Almost three years ago. Yeah.
So I was watching the History Channel
and there's a special
on the history of the world,
or modern civilisation...
And I was watching it
and I just found it so interesting
how, you know, the natural progression
of things, and how everything just seemed
to link perfectly together.
Because we like this story,
we like the protagonist.
A female protagonist?
It's exactly what
we've both been looking...
- It's exactly what we need.
- It's what the world needs.
Edgy comedies with
a kick-ass-type woman.
- Huge, huge fans.
- We love Keith.
Or into time, sure. Other time periods.
- Huge, huge fans.
- Technology.
It's really incredible...
Sorry, guys, excuse me.
Can I have a quick moment with Clem?
- Little story conference?
- Excuse me.
- Sure.
You're doing brilliantly.
So brilliantly that I am going to leave you
to finish the meeting on your own.
What? No, my Imodium
hasn't even completely kicked in.
Listen to me. You've probably
missed the last plane.
So I'm gonna give you money for the bus.
No, no, I'm staying
with my parents in the city.
- OK, that's fine...
- Mr Michaels,
I can't go back in there without you.
Clem, listen to me.
Do not grow a tumour.
They are going to make your movie,
and you'll be feted and rich,
and surrounded by women.
Can you handle that?
I don't want to be feted.
And the money would be fine.
- But the only woman I really want is Rosa.
- Rosa from our class?
Really? Good choice. She's gorgeous.
Not of course that I notice
women of that age.
- Mr Michaels, I don't feel comfortable.
- OK, listen to me.
A thousand years ago
I was in your position. And you know,
just enjoy it. It's glorious fun.
And remember, they need you
more than you need them.
This is your ride. It's not mine, OK?
- Hey, he's back.
- Hey. Thanks.
- Sans glasses.
- Yeah.
You look mighty handsome.
Thank you.
So this is what we're
thinking about, we're discussing this...
We don't want to get ahead of ourselves,
but, franchise.
Yeah. We're really excited about it.
There's actually so much that we can do...
- Hi.
- Keith.
I'm so sorry to bother you
this late. I just...
- I did try to call, but there was no answer.
- That's OK.
Just sitting around with the family,
watching Eat Pray Love.
I'll be right back. Go on without me.
You sure, honey?
Yeah. You can tell me what I missed.
OK.
Listen, I did not expect
to see you again.
No, well, I have decided to take my chances
at the hearing, if it's not too late.
Really?
May I ask why?
Yes. I'm not quite sure.
Well, I'm glad
you've thought it through.
And I was wondering if you could get me
a meeting with Professor Weldon,
cos I'd rather not just
show up at her door.
- No, I think that would be dangerous.
- Yeah.
Sure. I can arrange that.
Thank you. Thank you.
And I wanted to say
I'm sorry for what happened
and for putting you
in an awkward position.
Honey, you've got to see this.
OK, just keep talking
and do not make me go back in there.
Well, they obviously want to share
the experience with you, you know.
It must be wonderful
to have a family like that.
It's a pain.
Every week, movie night.
Yeah.
- Always a chick flick.
- Yeah.
And my daughters usually
bake these sugar cookies.
Oh, yeah.
- Which they will not let me have...
- Yeah.
Because...
They're concerned about my, cholesterol.
So they give me,
non-fat popcorn.
That's great.
I was not formally aware that these relationships were prohibited.
I did almost immediately break it off
and I deeply regret the entire incident.
You arrived on campus,
became inebriated,
insulted members of the faculty.
You dismissed your class with the intention
of not having them return for a month.
And that class bears a suspicious resemblance to a beauty pageant.
Not the men.
Which leads me to wonder if they weren't assembled for your own viewing pleasure
evidenced by the fact that you carried on an inappropriate relationship with one of them.
And even if you were not aware of our policy on that matter,
it strains credulity that you didn't have the good sense to know that it was wrong.
So unless my information is faulty, this Ethics Hearing is a foregone conclusion.
Professor Weldon,
you're entirely correct.
I behaved unprofessionally
and I can present no good reason why you should extend me the privilege of staying here.
Except to say, that when I was at the Binghamton Airport yesterday...
I was pulled aside by a charming geriatric TSA officer who needed to inspect my award.
And she started telling me that her security post was the perfect setting for a movie, but she couldn't write because, as she put it, "Either you're born with it or you're not".
You see, a few months ago, I would have agreed with that.
But suddenly, I found myself explaining the three-act structure and the basics of outlining until she had to go and pat down a suspicious man
who kept readjusting his shorts.
And I realised I was trying to teach her.
Me, the person who did nothing but mock teaching as an absurd profession practised only by desperate failures.
I mean, obviously not at the university level.
But it has, as a new friend told me it might...
Got its hooks into me.
So, I ask for your leniency, because I think that, you know, with a little effort, I could possibly be quite good at this job and actually worthy of your esteem.
And because these kids have actually reminded me why I wanted to write in the first place.
But, mostly, because I can't bear the thought of anyone else getting to help my class with their third acts.
Mr Michaels, I am not popular.
My students don't like me. And it is because they assume I am an Elinor.
An Elinor? From Sense and Sensibility.
Oh, yes, yes. That Elinor. Yes. Prudent, cautious, conservative. And I do have that side of me.
But there's another side as well. Well, that's nice. It's always nice when people have so many sides. It's like a Rubik's Cube.
I have a Marianne side.
- Unpredictable, impetuous...
- Yes. ...irrational sometimes.
You have appealed to that side and I will indulge it this one last time, because...
As Miss Austen said...
"Selfishness must always be forgiven, you know, because there is no hope for a cure."
Did she say that? That's quite clever.
Mansfield Park.
The key to good teaching, Mr Michaels is the willingness to always learn something new.
I will remember that.
I want you to see something.
Open it.
- Screenplay?
- Don't be idiotic. A memoir.
Based on my experience of a lifetime teaching literature.
I'd like an unbiased honest appraisal.
I'd be honoured.
But if it were to become a movie, Meryl Streep should play me.
Yes, I will read it with that in mind.
But don't take it.
That's my personal copy.
- Sorry.
- I'll email you.
Now, I have to prepare for a class...
Yes, yes, yes.
So if you don't mind...
Nice bag.
- Please leave.
- Yes.
Hello?
What, you walked out on the meeting?
I did. How'd it go otherwise?
Well they loved Clem, and they're making the deal.
Fantastic. Listen, I will be very happy to work with him on the script, but only as his teacher.
So now you want to stay in Binghamton?
Well, I've been thinking.
Maybe I will write a screenplay about a washed-up writer who goes to teach at an out-of-the-way university.
You know what?
That is a great idea for Matt Damon.
I'm going to call his producing partner,
and I'm going to call you back.
Excellent. But not between

12:
I have class and will not be
picking up the phone.
Thanks.
$16.98.
Dumb. Buy an umbrella
on the first sunny day.
- It's raining.
- It's going to clear up.
I see.
So, it appears that I'm going
to stay here and teach for a bit.
And I would also like to buy this book.
- $24.95.
- Yeah, complete rip-off. OK, forget the book.
- Will there be anything else?
- Yes.
I don't think you're an
optimism machine.
I know how hard you work at being a mum
and a student and I'm in awe.
I'm completely in awe. And...
Although I was only gone for a few hours,
I found myself missing you.
Now it's quite possible that
if I'd stayed away a few more hours
I'd have just completely got over that,
but now we'll never know.
So the answer is yes, I'm hoping
that there will be something else.
Much more else.
Right. Well, then,
I will see you in class.
But, in looking over my script,
I did see what you meant
about the random structuring.
And I'm not so sure where the
Jerry character fits in any more.
Well, that's very encouraging to hear.  
I mean, not for Jerry, obviously.  
And it makes me think that if I just try as hard  
as I can and really, really believe in myself,  
I can make my dreams come true.  
You know, when you say it,  
it really does sound ridiculous.  
Maybe it's the accent.  
What? Yes, I'm sorry. Go ahead.  
That can't be right.  
Oh, it's right.  
What'd I tell you? Worth the wait.  
OK, I just want you to know...  
I will respect the fact that you are my  
student until the end of the semester.  
OK. Thank you.  
When is the end of the semester?  
Oh, you'll know.  
No, no, no. Thank you.  
Thanks, that's truly...  
Oh, Billy! Yes, welcome back!  
Welcome back, Billy.  
And for those of you who were looking forward  
to the poetic charms of Clara Foss...  
I apologise. I'm back.  
Back from New York,  
where if you don't know already.  
Clem has just sold his  
first script to Hollywood.  
You deserve it.  
Your writing's brilliant.  
I would also like to say that today  
we will be taking a look  
at some new and truly exciting pages  
from Karen Gabney.  
With regard to my premature departure  
from our last class...  
I'm sorry. The truth is...  
Somewhat complicated.  
Well it's my third act, I suppose,  
and I will let you see it  
when I have finished my teacher script.  
And I will want your complete  
and honest opinions.
Though I will vastly prefer
the people who love it.
Good, let's get back to work.
I think we were on... Hey, hang on.
There will be no more of that.
You have my full attention
from here on in.
OK, third acts.
Andrea, tell us what happens during
the dessert phase of the Bat Mitzvah.
OK. So they bring the cake out and they
find out that the cake isn't kosher.
But Alicia's parents start fighting
and accusing each other
of getting the wrong caterer because
there are also pigs in a blanket.
And Alicia starts crying
because she realises
that she doesn't care about the cake.
She just wants her parents to be happy.
And she insists on doing her Torah
and her Haftarah portions over again
and it just gets so crazy.
A-ha! "How dost thou, sweet lord?"
Keith! You're back!
May I introduce Joan from State Farm.
Yes. Hello Joan.
He's quite a catch, isn't he?
He's low-risk, dependable,
limited-liability.
"Thank Heaven, fasting,
for a good man's love."
As You Like It. Act III, Scene V.
It just gets me when he does that.
"Ken's dead. He's dead now.
"He'll be dead in two hours,
and then he'll be dead forever.

"TOM:

"MAURA:
"You can't see the darkness
that surrounds you.
"TOM:

"MAURA:

"CAROL:
I'm sleeping with your business partner."
The other day, she comes
and climbs up on my lap
with a book and she says, "Daddy, will you
read me this book in your scary voice?"
Oh, Sara.
OK. I admit I never watched it before.
- But when Johnny lifts her at the end...
- No, I know, it's very moving.
If you tell anyone, I'll kill you.
Yeah, understood. Yeah, 100%.