

A woman clothed in a bathrobe and slippers, walks to center stage and steps on a scale. She looks at it carefully, frowning. She sighs. She steps off the scale, removes her slippers and steps back on. She shakes her head and steps off the scale again. She takes off her watch, goes to step back on, thinks again, removes pierced earrings. Steps back on, decides she can't look. Steps off. Pulls razor blade out of pocket and does a thorough shaving of her legs. Sets razor blade aside. Steps on. Steps off. Fade out as she takes her robe off entirely and pulls her hair up in a pony tail. Pink light. Now a girl's room. She lies on the floor.

Mary Claire, a girl of eleven, is sitting in her room.

I hate you!

You can't fix it! It's too late!

You never do anything right! It was because of you, you! that Dad left in the first place, because you're horrible and stupid and this was my favorite thing to do ever and you knew it and now it's ruined.

I'm never coming out of this room. Ever. And I don't care.

(she lies down on the floor and begins punching a stuffed animal) I'm the only one who didn't get to go. The only one. And everyone's going to ask me about it on Monday. What happened Mary Claire? Where were you? Were you sick?

My mother got the time wrong! (she lies on the floor crying and then is spent from exhaustion; silence)

Mom? (she goes to the door and listens; she goes to the window and sees her mother in the car) I'm not coming out. So you can forget it.

(she sits) I want pierced ears.

(she talks to the mirror) I'm not waiting till I'm twelve. I was going to wait, but not now. And you have to do it. It's the only way that I'll ever be able to speak to you again. We have to go and get my ears pierced. Tomorrow. No, next week isn't good enough. Next week will be too late. We have to go the mall tomorrow. You'll have to call first to make sure the place is open. And we'll make an appointment. AND I'LL WRITE IT DOWN THIS TIME SO IT WON'T GET MESSED UP.

And I want two holes in each ear. Yes, I have to have two. I was going to do one first, but I now I need to have two because that's what I wanted in the first place all the time anyway and the only reason I was going to have one in each was because you weren't going to let me have two but now you have to as a way of making up.

And I want to get earrings that have my birthstone. Do you even know what they are? They're opals. And they're probably really expensive and you may have to ask Dad for some money. And it's not a birthday present. So you can't do that. It's a makeup present, it doesn't count for birthdays or Christmas. And I get to pick them out. To make sure that I get the ones I want, not just the ones you want me to get.

And after that we're going to get dinner at that Chinese restaurant that I like. YES WE ARE. I know you don't like Chinese that much. But I do. It's my favorite. And you have to eat with chopsticks. You can't cheat like you always do and use a fork.

(she goes to the door and opens it a crack) Mom? (she goes to the window) How long are you going to sit there like that? I'm not coming out. I already told you. You've been out there for almost a half hour. It's over by now. Why don't you just give up?

(she looks more and sees her mother crying) I'm the one who should be crying. I'm the one

who missed it. It was my thing. It wasn't your thing.

Mom?

(the daughter gets her jacket and exits; Cindy, a college freshman appears at the office doorway of her English professor.)

Cindy

Professor Nelson? Do you have a minute? (he looks) I'm sorry to, like, bother you, but I just got my English paper back and I'm really upset. Hmm? Cindy Devereaux. English 101. Your 8:30 class? (she blinks) All semester. Yeah, I'm sure. You know I missed a couple of classes at the beginning, 'cause I had, like this really bad sinus infection, so...(she listens) Back of the class usually, 'cause sometimes I'm running a little late...(he suddenly remembers) Right, the pierced navel. That's me! (she smiles)

Anywaaay...can I come in? Thanks. (she sits down) So, I got my paper back (she begins sifting through her backpack and pulls out in succession a walkman, a brush, a pack of gum, etc), God I just had it here (she continues sifting) and I was like really surprised and upset about the grade. I know it's here...(she pulls out a pack of cigarettes) and I thought maybe I missed something and...(she sifts) you know, like, I really was excited about my paper topic and I thought I did a pretty good job with it and all...oh, here it is...(she pulls out a wrinkled set of papers and sets it down on the desk) Sorry, it's kind of a mess. I went out for coffee, afterward and...my latte was filled a little high and well...but here it is..."Christian Myth in the Old Man and the Sea." D+. That was what really kind of got to me, Professor Nelson. You know? I mean, it just seemed really low. You know?

The thing is, I really like this class. That's what was so upsetting. It's really, really good, you know? And interesting. Not like I know some other classes are. I mean I'm taking World Cultural Geography, Pre-Calculus which is a huge drag, I don't even know what's going on in there and what else...oh, Dance, which is cool. I was kind of thinking partway through the class that maybe I would major in English. I mean you would have no way of knowing this, Professor Nelson but I like to read. And I write poetry that's pretty good. And sometimes

songs. In fact, I was even asked to read some of my poetry for this coffeehouse thing. I was going to invite you to it. It could be like a field trip for the class. So, anyway, English would be like perfect. And then this D+ kind of dashed my hopes, if you know what I mean.

I'm not saying that this is a perfect paper. No, I'm not saying that at all. I don't think it's an A. I know that. But you know I gave it to my roommate Sylvia before handing it in. Her father is a professor at Brandeis, you know? And she said that she thought it was good and that she felt pretty sure that her father wouldn't give it anything less than like a B+. She thought it was that good. (he answers) Well, I know...but, I, well that's what I was working from...I was going on that kind of thought that it was a B+...and I was pretty psyched when she said that 'cause she's pretty smart and all and...well I know that you probably have different values about papers and that's why I came to you.

What? Yeah. I really liked it. It was a really good book. (she considers) I mean, honestly, honestly? I didn't get to finish it the whole way. I wanted to, I really did. And I plan to finish it up over break. I just gotta kind of jammed with other things. Page 52. (explaining) But I liked what I read and I talked to this guy on my hall who had read it in high school. He went to this really good prep school and he told me what happened at the end. So I like totally, totally, knew this book. You know what I mean? Well, I know it's not a substitute for reading it myself. Believe me. And that's why I wouldn't give this paper an A. Not even an A- even.

What? H-E-M-I-N-G-W-A-Y. Didn't I spell it that way? (she is proud) I thought I had. Oh. Um. E-A-R-N-E-S-T. That's not right? (she considers) Well, I don't think that's my fault, Professor Nelson, I really don't. 'Cause I had it that way in the paper and then ran it through spell check and...it was wrong. And Hemingway wasn't even in the spell checker, if you want to know. I just had to guess on that one. Okay, alright. But I didn't have it at that point 'cause I had to give it back to the person I borrowed it from. What was I supposed to do? (she gets impatient) Well I would have, but the library isn't open at 5:00 a.m.. You know?

Okay, so what about like the body of the paper? How was that? (she points) Like right here. I mean, these are my own actual ideas, you know? I didn't even have to research that, it came up in my own head. (he answers) Could you tell? (he answers) Oh. Well, but what did you

think? (he answers) What exactly do you mean by run-on? (he points) Oh. (she is confused) Did you specifically tell us that we couldn't use them? Well...but if you didn't tell us **specifically** that we couldn't, how was I supposed to know? I was just like collecting ideas here and...I thought I was being graded on my thoughts not on the actual writing part, you know? That wasn't really clear to me Professor Nelson and I bet...(he interrupts)

(she gives up) Alright. Okay. What else? (she listens) You're kidding. He dies at the end? Ohmigod. Are you sure? Well, but that's not what that guy told me...not at all. No, he said that the old man caught the fish and then cooked it over an open flame with some of his friends. That's where I got my whole Last Supper thing from! That was like my whole theme. Well, how was I to know? It could of happened. It's not funny Professor Nelson. I can't believe it. That guy lied to me. That is really terrible. I mean don't you think he should be brought on honor code charges or something? Lying to me like that? I mean here I get a D+ and he gets off scott-free. I mean, why should I suffer? You know? Yeah, I know, I should have read it all the way and in a perfect world I would of...and actually, that's a pretty stupid ending when you think about it. I think the author made a bad choice there, personally...if he expects people to read his book, he ought to try and make it, like less depressing...I'm just telling you how I feel Professor Nelson and...I know a lot of people would agree with me. I mean it's an okay ending for older people I guess but...(he interrupts her, she is quiet) Okay, but I'm just saying...

You know what's so depressing? Here I am like this freshman trying to do my best. I mean it's a real adjustment you know coming here. And I've had a lot of problems that you don't even know about. And I don't get any support. I gotta tell you, I don't think very much of this college. I mean my father is spending like \$25,000 a year to send me here and I haven't learned a thing, really. I had this really great job this summer at The Limited and I could have just stayed there and done that and had some money. Instead I came back to school 'cause I wanted an EDUCATION and to LEARN and to GROW and because everyone said I had POTENTIAL if I could get my act together.

(she starts to weep) My father will kill me if I get a D in this class. I promised him that once I got out of high school, no more "D's". It's already going to be pretty tight in Pre-calc. And I'm

totally lost in Geography but I think I can bring that grade up. Maybe if I could just do an extra credit project or something, like sing some of my songs for class one day or...do a poetry reading...that would be really good. I was sort of counting on my English grade to bring up my cume, and...well...

(she is quiet a moment) So, do you think there's any chance you might change my grade? How come? Even if I came and talked to you about it? (he answers her) Well, I'm sorry, Professor Nelson, but what is the point of having office hours to talk to students if you aren't going to change their grades, you know? (he answers) You can't do that! I mean when I said change my grade, I didn't mean lower it! That is like totally bogus. God. (he replies)

You know I didn't want to say anything before Professor Nelson, but I have to tell you. Nobody really likes this class. NOBODY! It's true. Everybody says it's a boring as shit, excuse my language, and that you should be turned out to pasture. (she begins to exit and then turns. Nelson responds.)

I don't know what you're get all snotty at me for, Professor Nelson. It's not my fault your class is boring. God. Chill out! If this is the way you act toward conscientious students, I really hate to see how you treat the slackers! Just see if I come by and try to get help from you again.

Scene fades...

Second Interlude: A young woman in her bedroom. It's hot. She's bored. She scratches under her arm and yawns. Beat. She pulls out a magazine and begins thumbing through it. She throws the magazine down. She sighs. She goes to the mirror and sees the beginnings of a pimple and begins to play with it. She is hideous. She plops down on the floor. She picks up the magazine again. She spies a picture. She stands up. She looks at herself in the mirror, then at her picture, then at herself again. She picks at her skin. She thinks. She sits. She looks at the picture. She stands up. She walks in a sophisticated manner, her head held high. She shakes her head and starts again, this time with a more elegant sweeping motion. She looks at herself in the mirror; holds her stomach in, grins, smiles, then smiles elegantly. She walks again and waves excitedly to the crowd. She takes a hair brush, preparing to sing into it. Music.

Fade out.

3.

Emily prepares for her video-dating interview.

EMILY

(Emily enters a room) So, do I sit here? Great. Wow. That's a big camera. What? No, I'm fine. (she answers) No. Never done it before. Well, I've done personal ads, you know, in newspapers and magazines but I've never actually tried this. One of my best friends suggested I do it. She says that I come across so well in person that it would be a good idea for me. So, I thought, why not? What do I have to lose, right?

Tell me. Be honest. What do you think of this sweater? I love this color but I can wear a lot of different colors so if this doesn't photograph well or. (she pulls out her bag) I brought some other blouses to try if you think something else will work better. I mean, basically, I think the message of this sweater is the right one – fun, kind of sexy, intelligent, outgoing. But I've got a blouse here that says professional, insightful, good-listener. And this jacket says sincere, hardworking, independent, self-assured.—(the interviewer stops her) Sweater's fine? With or without these pearls do you think? I thought the pearls said conservative and slightly close-minded to tell you the truth. Either way? But which is better? (she sighs) Okay. I'll keep the pearls on.

So, is that everything? What? Oh yes, I did. In the mail Tuesday. It was very helpful. I mean, basically, I'm going to give a brief intro and then you're going to ask me a series of questions, right? Oh, that's fine. It'll be fun. I tend to be better talking off the cuff anyway.

Alright. I guess I'm ready. (she listens) Right. Look straight into the camera. Relax. Okay. I can do that. I can relax. Count of five? And when the red light goes on. Okay. Alright.

(quietly to herself) Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

Hi. (she beams) Are you lonely? Craving companionship? Tired of popping lean cuisines into your microwave night after night after night and eating them alone in front of your television? Do you ever wish that you could find a mate and a confidante to nurture you and take care of your emotional and physical needs?

If you're a single-professional-slender-attractive-financially secure-emotionally stable-morally upright clean-heterosexual man; if you're looking for an honest and giving relationship, then I'm the woman you've been waiting for.

(she answers) My name is Emily Grace Mitchell. Everyone calls me Emily.

I was born in a small town in New Jersey. One of three, actually. I'm the middle child.

(she listens) Five foot seven. (she listens) Excuse me? Well, would it be alright if I just gave you a range? (with some hesitation, softly) 150. LEAN pounds. I'm very big-boned. My friends tell me that if I were to be any thinner, I'd look anorexic.

I'm blonde. Obviously. There have been some chemical enhancements over the years, but most of my hair has been naturally blonde at one time or another.

Thirty. Ish. (quickly) My reproductive organs are in excellent condition.

Yes. Absolutely. Having a career is very important to me. Well, actually, I'm in the middle of a career transition right now. For thirteen years, I worked as a manager for a branch of a national duplicating and reproduction company. And while it was a stimulating environment, I realized that the company could not offer me the advancement potential that I needed. So, presently, I'm working in marketing and sales for a large beauty products firm. I love it! There's some travel involved, I get to drive the pink company cadillac, and I'm interacting with customers every day. No. No pets. Well, I have allergies and.

Hobbies? (to the cameraman) What do you mean? Like? Skiing? God, no I don't ski. Let me

think for a minute. Hang on. (she smiles awkwardly).

Oh! I know. I read. Now I wouldn't say that I was a voracious reader, but I do read as much as I can when time permits. (she answers) Well, no. Not usually. Newspapers mostly. Mostly the back page of the Style section, which I find very informative. And it is not at all unusual to catch me in a grocery store skimming through a magazine. I'm one of those people who always has to be reading something.

(she looks at the camera) You want another one? Um. I, uh. Shop. Well, maybe that doesn't sound like a hobby to you, but I'm very good at it. I cut coupons and hunt for bargains. And I favor the small boutique and the large mall equally. (she smiles)

And, oh, I think. I try to think every day if possible.

One word to describe myself. One word, one word, one word. (she looks puzzled)
Adventuresome? No. Hm, no I'm not really the social butterfly type. Wait a minute. Stop. What was that word? That's perfect. Outdoorsy. Well. Uh, I almost always drive with the window down. I walk to the mailbox every morning and I love to eat at outdoor restaurants.

(she is being pushed) I don't know. Someone who is companionable. Someone who's decent. That's all. (he asks her again) Well, of course, I'd prefer someone younger than 75, obviously. Yes, I would date someone who had been married before, as long as he wasn't married now.

Look, I went on 107 dates last year. I'm not kidding. 107! That's eleven doctors, three chefs, seven professional athletes, a dozen weathermen, six investment bankers, eight janitors, thirteen teachers, twenty three salesmen, five hairdressers, fifteen truck drivers, and four men who were unemployed and not one of them called me BACK! A different kind of woman would have given up. Well, I'm not giving up.

I'm not looking for Mr. Perfect. I don't want a Mr. Perfect. I want a Mr. "Gosh, Emily, you're the best thing that's happened to me in a couple of months." A Mr. "Okay, Em, so, maybe

you've got a few dimples around your knees, maybe you could stand to lose a few pounds, I don't care, I love you anyway." A Mr. "Well, let's try to make a baby, but if we can't, that's okay, because we can always get a dog." That's not too much to ask, is it???

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Scene fades...