

John Proctor Is the Villain **by Kimberly Belflower**

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JOHN PROCTOR IS THE VILLAIN was commissioned by the Farm Theater's College Collaboration Project (Padraic Lillis, Artistic Director) and was developed with Centre College, Rollins College, and Furman University.

It was developed at Ojai Playwrights Conference (Robert Egan, Artistic Director/Producer)

PRODUCTION HISTORY

JOHN PROCTOR IS THE VILLAIN was first produced as a World Premiere at Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C. (David Muse, Artistic Director; Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg, Executive Director) in 2022. It was directed by Marti Lyons; the assistant director was Francesca Sabel. The dramaturg was Adrien-Alice Hansel. The production stage manager was Madison Bahr; the assistant stage manager was Stephen Bubniak. The set design was by Luciana Steconi; the costume design was by Moyenda Kulemaka; the lighting design was by Jesse Belsky; the sound designer/composer was Kathy Ruvuna; the fight and intimacy coach was Chelsea Pace; the props design was Deb Thomas; the dialect/vocal coach was Nancy Krebs; casting by The Telsey Office. The cast was as follows:

CARTER SMITH – Dave Register

BETH POWERLL – Miranda Rizzolo

NELL SHAW – Deidre Staples

IVY WATKINS – Resa Mishina

RAELYNN NIX – Jordan Slattery

MASON ADAMS* – Ignacio Diaz-Silverio

*Shawn Denegre-Vaught also played the role of Mason

LEE TURNER – Zachary Keller

BAILEY GALLAGHER – Lida Maria Benson

SHELBY HOLCOMB – Juliana Sass

understudies: Mollie Greenberg, Lauren Fraites, J. Bradley Bowers,
Bowen Fox, Martha Epstein, Tre'Mon Kentrell Mills, Julia Souza

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JOHN PROCTOR IS THE VILLAIN was subsequently produced at the Huntington Theatre in Boston, MA. (Loretta Greco, Artistic Director; Christopher Mannelli, Executive Director) in 2024. It was directed by Margot Bordelon; the assistant director was Carla Mirabal Rodríguez. The dramaturg was Lauren Halvorsen. The production stage manager was Emily F. McMullen; stage managers were Lucas Bryce Dixon and Ashley Pitchord; the production assistants were Kendyll Trott and Winnie Chiang. The set design was by Kristen Robinson; the costume design was by Zoë Sundra; the lighting design was by Aja M. Jackson; the sound designer/composer was Sinan Refik; the choreographer was Victoria L. Awkward; the fight and intimacy coach was Jessica Scout Malone; the dialect/vocal coach was Christine Hamel; the hair and wig design was by Rachel Padula-Shufelt; the line producer was Kevin Schlage; casting by Dale Brown. The cast was as follows:

CARTER SMITH – Japhet Balaban

BETH POWERLL – Jules Talbot

NELL SHAW – Victoria Omoregie

IVY WATKINS – Brianna Martinez

RAELYNN NIX – Haley Wong

MASON ADAMS – Maanav Aryan Goyal

LEE TURNER – Benjamin Izaak

BAILEY GALLAGHER – Olivia Hebert

SHELBY HOLCOMB – Isabel Van Natta

understudies: Jaime Jose Hernandez, Patrick O'Konis, Valyn Lyric Turner,
Jack Greenberg, Katherine Callaway, Zehava Younger, Jessica Golden

*Selections from The Crucible by Arthur Miller are included in the script
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time and place: spring semester, junior year, 2018

Helen County High, the only high school in a one-stoplight town, northeast Georgia
all scenes are in Mr. Smith's classroom unless noted

characters: 3M / 6W*

Carter Smith – teacher, mid-late 30s, M. a former golden boy, but one of those rare smart and sensitive ones. now he's a great teacher: charming, engaging, goofy.

Shelby Holcomb – student, 16, F. her brain works faster than her mouth, but her mouth works pretty dang fast. people have always underestimated her.

Beth Powell – student, 17, F. nervous and ambitious and enthusiastic. kind of like if Rory Gilmore and Paris Geller had a baby and raised her in the Deep South.

Nell Shaw – student, 16, F. from Atlanta. grounded and sincere. genuinely curious about things. a good judge of character, and a quick study.

Ivy Watkins – student, 17, F. fiercely loyal and always well-intentioned. from money. resist the urge to play her as a mean girl.

Raelynn Nix – student, 16, F. a cheerleader type who's always lived her life by other peoples' standards. she was paying careful attention and keeping score the whole time.

Mason Adams – student, 17, M. he's never really tried before, and he's surprised by how good it feels. earnest and affable.

Lee Turner – student, 16. M. a carhartt-wearing good ol' boy. deeply insecure and without the tools to deal with it. he's always been good at getting what he wants.

Bailey Gallagher – counselor, 24, F. sweet in all the ways Southern women are supposed to be. this is her first real job out of college. she's trying her best.

*(you can have as many other students present for the classroom scenes as you have room and resources for)

a note on casting: rural Georgia doesn't mean all white. never has.

the case can be made for any of these girls to be a person of color, but certain combinations lead to stereotypes and/or commentary I'm not trying to make. as such:

- Nell is Black, but if at all possible, she shouldn't be the only POC onstage.
- Nell and Shelby shouldn't be the only POC.
- Lee and Mr. Smith are white. full stop. I imagine Beth is white too, given the nature of her fumbles and oversights, but she can also be a non-Black POC.

a note on dialect: I'd rather have no dialect than a bad one. but if you go for it — Appalachian Southern is quite different than standard Southern. some characters probably have thicker accents than others, depending on their family and upbringing.

a note on dialogue, pace, and quiet: the page count might be high, but this play moves very very quickly. if it's over 1:45 you're going too slow. **NO INTERMISSION!!!**

a beat is a breath. but like, a *full* breath — inhale, exhale. a pause is 2-3 beats. a long pause is longer than that. a moment is even longer.

use line breaks, capitalization, and punctuation as clues for importance, pace, and shifts in thought. a slash ("/") indicates an overlap in speech. whenever a "/" appears, the next line of dialogue should immediately begin.

“I am trusting
well-adjusted
marked me dormant
I erupted.”

– Charly Bliss, “Chatroom”

“We have to be the witches they’ve always said we are, and counter their magic with our own. So fine, if you insist. This is a witch hunt. We’re witches, and we’re hunting you.”

– Lindy West, *The Witches Are Coming*

“The New England woman had no political rights. She neither voted nor served on juries. Officially voiceless, she nonetheless found plenty of ways to make herself heard and demonstrated a vaulting need to speak her mind. In legal records she hectors, shrieks, quarrels, scolds, rants, rails, tattles, and spits.”

– Stacy Schiff, *The Witches: Salem, 1692*

1.

a high school classroom
everyone has the same textbook open to the same spot

MR. SMITH

“sex”

THE ENTIRE CLASS

(in unison)

“the biologic character or quality that distinguishes male and female from one another as expressed by analysis of the person's gonadal, morphologic, chromosomal, and hormonal characteristics.”

MR. SMITH

or...

THE ENTIRE CLASS

(in unison)

“The physiologic and psychological processes within a person that prompt behavior related to procreation or erotic pleasure.”

MR. SMITH

Lee...

that's enough

any questions so far?

beat

I know it seems really lame, guys

believe me

I remember being exactly where you are

and feeling like “are you kidding me?”

but this is the curriculum

these are the facts

IVY

but I mean doesn't it make sense for sex ed to actually come like
before people know about sex?

NELL

yeah like

I had sex ed in fifth grade when I still lived in Atlanta

a scandalized beat

MR. SMITH

that's a good point, Ivy
and Nell's right –
many schools, especially in bigger cities,
believe in teaching these things much earlier
and I guess it just comes down to philosophy
I guess here
we believe you're not ready for big ideas like this when you're younger

Beth suddenly raises her hand

MR. SMITH

yes! Beth!

BETH

sorry!
for interrupting

MR. SMITH

not at all
go for it

BETH

okay
sorry
but like
I mean
why do you have to be the one to teach us about se-
this material
in the first place?
it just feels like we've wasted so much lit time
which is
I mean the syllabus is so good
I'm worried we won't have enough time to dig deep into the reading

MASON

dude
why are you freaking out
about doing less work

MR. SMITH

well, you know
we're almost finished
it's only a six week unit, ten minutes per class

not too bad in the scheme of things

BETH

no of course

I'm sorry

I didn't mean to sound like I was complaining

MR. SMITH

no no no

I didn't mean to sound like I was minimizing the way you feel
and honestly?

it has been kind of a bummer

that time adds up

and look

let's be real

I know you guys already know about sex...

but you know

I'm gonna level with you

there have been some uh

unfortunate cuts in the last few years

and we're all just pitching in as best we can

at the end of the day, it's now part of my job to make sure you hear this info
so let's just muscle through it together, yeah?

then we'll get to some stuff I actually like teaching

and that you actually like learning

at least I hope so

some laughter from the class

this next stretch of the semester is my favorite

we've got *The Crucible* up next, for the rest of the month!

we've got *Wuthering Heights* later on

very spooky, very romantic

Beth raises her hand again

BETH

also!

sorry!

just wondering

I mean speaking of *The Crucible*

I know on the syllabus it said the drama unit starts today
is that still true?

NELL

do you have the syllabus memorized?

IVY

she Absolutely does

some giggles

NELL

but honestly yeah same

like

are we gonna talk about this play or what

MR. SMITH

if we can make it through the rest of these definitions

we'll start the drama unit today as planned

some slight panic

a lot of people forgot to do the reading for the drama unit

I don't know what all these panicked looks are about
since I'm sure everyone already did the reading for today

BETH

yes!

MR. SMITH

anyone besides Beth?

act one of *The Crucible*?

right?

some other vague murmurs

okay look

this is a really important play

and it's on me for not reminding you about the reading

so

how about I give you until later this week to finish act one

a few small cheers

okay great we like that idea

and then today how about I just tell you why this play is so awesome

that way we can all be on the same page for our first discussion
sound good?

general murmurs of agreement
Mason raises his hand

MASON
so we're reading like
the Whole Play?

MR. SMITH
yes we are
the whole play
but come on, you guys!
we're gonna have a lot of fun
read some scenes out loud together...
were any of you in drama before it got cut?

Beth and Ivy raise their hands

nice
and! *The Crucible* is gonna be the basis for that infamous junior lit interpretive project
you'll get your partners next week

a couple of groans
Beth sits up straighter

anyway
so
The Crucible
lately we've heard the term "witch hunt" a lot
people love to use that phrase, right?
its usage has definitely become more casual over time,
but basically it's referring to this really dark period in history
that here in America, reached its peak during the Salem Witch Trials in 1692
over *two hundred people* in Salem, Massachusetts were accused of practicing witchcraft
and *twenty* of those people were executed
but later we found out that all those accusations were untrue
innocent people died
and why?
largely: mass hysteria, spurred on by various things we'll get into later
so when people say "witch hunt"
they're basically saying "a bunch of people are saying untrue things that could become
dangerous if left unchecked"

so

cut to: the 1950s

Arthur Miller, the guy who wrote *The Crucible*, was living through another time of widespread panic:

Senator Joseph McCarthy had terrified the entire country into thinking that communism had infiltrated the American government

he started having all these hearings with people he suspected

and even though a lot of people disagreed with him

they weren't really willing to cross him

they were afraid of being seen as disloyal or being accused themselves

so we saw this moment in time when a lot of innocent people got taken down

because a lot of other people got carried away

just like in Salem

so Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* as an allegory for McCarthyism

do we remember what an "allegory" / is?

Nell and Beth's hands fly up at the same time and they both start speaking before Mr. Smith finishes

NELL

a symbolic work / where characters and events represent other ideas

BETH

a symbolic work in which the characters and events represent other ideas, often political in nature

NELL

(friendly competition)

beat you!

*Beth has never been bested in school before
it's a little horrible and a little exhilarating*

MR. SMITH

yes!

awesome! both of you!

he was like "hey guys we've been here before, and it didn't go too well"

we continue to repeat our history if we don't learn from it, right?

unless we speak truth in times of untruth

and the person in *The Crucible* who does this is John Proctor

one of the best characters ever

he had an affair with Abigail Williams, one of the other main characters, a while back –

no spoilers, you find out almost right away –

and Abigail is like really determined to get revenge

she becomes kind of a ringleader to everyone making these accusations
and it gets pre-tty crazy
anyway
I'm really excited to dig into this with y'all
I think it's a gift that we get to study material like this
I mean obviously what's going on out there in the world
and right here, where we live...
it's a really intense time
but that's what literature is for
that's what art is for
to make sense of moments in time like this one

Beth might clutch her heart

any questions?
awesome
okay
so let's power through these last definitions, yeah?
I bet if we really go for it, we can finish the rest of the unit today...
right where we left off
most important one
everybody ready?

he waits until everybody's ready

“abstinence”

THE ENTIRE CLASS
(*in unison*)

“the act or practice of choosing to refrain from having sex and the only method 100% guaranteed to prevent pregnancy or disease.”

MR. SMITH
awesome

2.

later the same day

after school, 4pm

Beth, Nell, Ivy, and Raelynn meet with the school counselor, Miss Gallagher
mid-argument

MISS GALLAGHER

it's just that some people feel like this will alienate the boys

BETH

but boys can be members

IVY

they *should* be members

NELL

also who even feels that way?

MISS GALLAGHER

I'm not

at liberty to say

BETH

but maybe if we were able to foster a meaningful dialogue with them

we could find common ground

that's like

the whole purpose of this club

that's why it's so important

MISS GALLAGHER

it's just

a tricky situation

with everything that's been going on in the community...

people are –

tensions

are high

you have to understand that

IVY

our tensions are high too!

we need an outlet!

NELL

yeah I don't understand why tension in the community means we have to suffer

MISS GALLAGHER

okay now
let's choose our words with care
y'all are hardly *suffering*

NELL

yeah but
suffering is subjective, so

MISS GALLAGHER

I'm going to have to ask you *all* to check your tone

NELL

oh my god??

MISS GALLAGHER

look
I know they must have done things different in Atlanta –
and I really wish I could help you /
I do, but

IVY

I think they “do things different” everywhere now
it's 2018

BETH

helping us is literally within your power as our counselor

MISS GALLAGHER

I think you're overestimating the amount of power I have here

NELL

you should be fighting for us

MISS GALLAGHER

I am

BETH

how?

MISS GALLAGHER

listen
this is a small town

BETH

that doesn't answer my question like at all

MISS GALLAGHER

we have to be aware of the effect our actions can have on / the –

Mr. Smith enters the classroom, just as Beth loses it

BETH

yeah we DO have to be aware of that
and I mean like it is literally your job to facilitate situations like this!!!
just do your job!!!!

MR. SMITH

whoa whoa whoa –
what's going on in here?

*Beth claps a hand over her mouth, horrified at herself
beat*

MISS GALLAGHER

these girls came to me to see why their club proposal got rejected
and I have been trying to explain to them
that it's a sensitive issue
with many complicated
things
and I empathize with them
I do
but they are not showing me the respect / I

BETH

Miss Gallagher I'm so so sorry
I didn't mean to snap at you like that I –
I'm so so sorry
I'm just really passionate about this
and I got / upset

MR. SMITH

I'm sure Miss Gallagher here knows what a good student you are, Beth
what a great girl
and I'm sure she knows it won't happen again

BETH
it won't
it absolutely won't

MISS GALLAGHER
it's
all right

MR. SMITH
could someone else fill me in on what's happening here?
what's this club?

beat

NELL
it's a feminism club

RAELYNN
yeah it's supposed to like –
Beth what's the way you said it?

BETH
spread awareness, foster dialogue, and ignite change

MR. SMITH
what a great idea
and a very well-worded mission, Beth, awesome work

Beth totally blooms

BETH
thank you

IVY
Nell had one at her school in Atlanta

MISS GALLAGHER
which is great
but
I was just explaining to the girls why
even though I am totally and completely on their side
feminism is just
people are sensitive right now
and maybe the girls can have these conversations on their own for the time being

then later
when the time is right
we can bring / it into the

BETH

but we need to start it before senior year
or it won't look like a long-term commitment for college
plus it's literally perfect for right now!
I mean Me Too stuff is like
all over the news

MR. SMITH

I wonder if there's another solution here
I'm just spitballing
but what if we frame it more like a lit thing?
get some other students involved, maybe some boys...
sneak the feminism in kind of under the radar
maybe we could find some reading to tie it all into our work with *The Crucible*
I could even be the faculty sponsor if you think that might help

the girls are thrilled

BETH

that's an AMAZING idea

MISS GALLAGHER

well hold on we don't want to get ahead of ourselves
but the curriculum tie is an interesting –
and it is possible that having a male sponsor would probably help some of / the

MR. SMITH

I'd be happy to take on any pushback
help the girls shape what they do here
make sure no feathers get ruffled
that don't need to get ruffled

MISS GALLAGHER

I think there might be a few things to discuss with Principal / David

MR. SMITH

oh of course of course
you just tell me what we should do next
can I put my name on any forms?

MISS GALLAGHER

why don't we go see if he's in his office
girls, you hold tight

BETH

thank you Miss Gallagher!!

*Miss Gallagher leaves
Mr. Smith prepares to follow
he stops at the door, turns back, and winks
he leaves*

IVY

yay!!!

NELL

he is so amazing
he's like
the teacher in an inspirational movie

BETH

I thought you were mad at him because of sex ed

NELL

I was never *mad*
and especially not at *him*
I was frustrated with the *system*
public schools are broken

IVY

he's
So Hot

BETH

(rolling her eyes)
oh my lord
here we go

RAELYNN

I know you think so too

BETH

I don't think about him like that
I told you

IVY
liar

BETH
I *don't*!!

NELL
well I most certainly do

IVY
his *shoulders* are just

NELL
were you watching when he dropped the chalk* last week?
when he bent over to get it? *or “eraser”

IVY
oh my god wait have you seen how big his feet are?

NELL
big feet don't necessarily mean anything about like
the size of other things

IVY
yeah but
he wore these sweatpants to relay for life last year and like...

laughter

BETH
you guys stop!
he's like
my friend

IVY
oh Beth

BETH
I know it sounds weird but he is!
my mom says I'm an old soul!

IVY
(to Nell)

thank god you're here now
little miss old soul never talks about sweatpant dick with me

BETH
IVY!!

IVY
(to Nell, re: Raelynn)
neither does little miss preacher's daughter

RAELYNN
he's not my type
(to Nell) it's really cool though, all the honors lit classes go to his house for dinner at the
end of the year

NELL
shut up
I bet his house is like
impeccably decorated

RAELYNN
and his wife doesn't even do most of the cooking
he does

IVY
he's like
the only adult I know who doesn't treat us like elementary schoolers

BETH
yeah he really respects us

NELL
not like Miss Gallagher
"I know they must do things different in Atlanta"
that was some bullshit

IVY
it's SO WEIRD to think she's only like
eight years older than us

NELL
wait
really?

BETH

I think that's a big part of it
she's like trying to be a Real Adult

IVY

yeah my sister's 20 and Miss Gallagher was a senior when she was a freshman

RAELYNN

she was a cheerleader
me and Ivy used to go to cheer camp when we were little and like learn dances from her

IVY

then she went to college for counseling or whatever
and Ms. Cole was retiring when she graduated so now she's back here

BETH

I can't believe I yelled at her

RAELYNN

it's fine
you're fine

BETH

I just
do you think any of this will mess with college?
like is she gonna write down in my file that I was disrespectful?

IVY

oh my god that's not a thing

NELL

it could actually like *help* with college
everywhere worth going would love that you spoke truth to power

IVY

also why are you so worried about college all the time
the lowest grade you've ever gotten was like a 96

BETH

grades here are different though
we live in a one-stoplight town in Georgia

IVY

oh!

my dad says we're getting another stoplight!

BETH

it doesn't matter!!

when colleges look at my application they're either gonna feel sorry for me
or think I'm like
a horse

IVY

Beth what

RAELYNN

I love horses

IVY

well yeah they're perfect
remember I did horse therapy that one summer

NELL

oh so you're like *rich*

IVY

I love that that's your takeaway
not like, "oh dang what did you need horse therapy for, are you okay?"

NELL

I mean
does anybody *need* horse therapy?

IVY

yeah!
they do!
it's really beneficial and it helped me a lot!!!

Beth puts her arm around Ivy

BETH

Ivy wants to be a large animal vet

NELL

okay Beth
let's get down to business
feminism club
what's first on the agenda

BETH

I mean

I don't want to get ahead of ourselves
what if we still don't get approved?

NELL

fuck that

we'll like

go to buzzfeed or something

make this ish go viral

(*very buzzfeed voice*) "forbidden feminism in Appalachia – 1900s or now?"

IVY

"the answer might surprise you!"

BETH

I guess we *could* start planning, just for fun...

I have a lot of ideas already, but I would love to hear your suggestions

RAELYNN

I think we should read Twilight

BETH

no

IVY

Raelynn, why are you so obsessed with Twilight?

it came out when we were like seven

BETH

there are so many other books

RAELYNN

yeah but you know my dad won't let me read anything he hasn't read first

so he can like make sure it's appropriate

but in Twilight they save themselves for marriage so

NELL

ohhh right isn't there something crazy with vampire sex or whatever

BETH

it's just not very feminist

RAELYNN
why not?

NELL
because Bella's just obsessed with a guy, right?

RAELYNN
yeah but she does a lot of other stuff too
plus I mean Edward's like a mega-feminist
which is so weird because he's actually from like the gilded age or whatever

BETH
Victorian

RAELYNN
but like
we can be obsessed with guys and still be feminists, right?

IVY
I thought you broke up with him

RAELYNN
this is not about Lee like at all
this is about Twilight

NELL
I like The Craft

RAELYNN
I don't know what that is

IVY
is that the old movie about witches?
isn't it like really dark?

NELL
I like dark stuff
female rage

RAELYNN
I do love witches

IVY
since when?

RAELYNN

um since forever??

remember fifth grade?

I did that project on the Salem Witch Trials and wrote in my diary as one of the girls like in character or whatever?

IVY

oh riiiiight oh my god I forgot about that

BETH

wait didn't you name one of your dolls Tituba

RAELYNN

it's a really pretty name

NELL

I saw a production of *The Crucible* where a white girl played Tituba so that was a choice

RAELYNN

but my dad was Not like

happy about doll-Tituba

because of the devil

so I told him I changed her name to Mary

but her real name is still Tituba

it's just a secret now

beat

BETH

we could talk about Taylor Swift

NELL

jesus Beth

BETH

there is a LOT to unpack!

we can fully address her past mistakes and problematic aspects

and how far she's come

by like

talking about intersectional feminism and stuff

also if we're gonna talk about Me Too, her trial was pretty major

NELL
pass

IVY
I liked her before her music got all sexual

RAELYNN
you were just talking about Mr. Smith's feet, you perv

BETH
and his *sweatpants*

IVY
I'm not flaunting that to the world through my music!

NELL
okay so Beth, it sounds like we should add sex positivity to the list of ideas

RAELYNN
also speak now came out in 2010 and had lyrics that were very sexually charged
so it's not really a new thing for her

IVY
what
were the sexual lyrics in speak now

RAELYNN
it's like you've never even listened to "sparks fly"

NELL
I do kinda like that song she wrote about John Mayer

IVY
(*singing and clutching her heart*)
"I took your matches before fire could catch me"

IVY and RAELYNN
(*also singing*)
"so don't look now"

ALL
(*singing*)
"I'm shining like fireworks OVER YOUR SAD EMPTY TOWN"

BETH

I think about that part all the time

I cannot wait to shine like fireworks over this sad empty town

RAELYNN

I kind of hope she murders john mayer one day

BETH

what??

RAELYNN

but like

in a very very sneaky way

like no one will know it's her

but I'll know

he'll just turn up dead one day from like "natural causes"

and I'll be like

yeah girl

yes

you did it

beat

IVY

so wait

have you or have you not been talking to Lee?

RAELYNN

I genuinely want Taylor Swift to murder john mayer

and I don't have anything to say to Lee

so no

IVY

okay

beat

have you talked to Shelby?

RAELYNN

who?

BETH

Raelynn

RAELYNN

I don't know a Shelby

beat

NELL

I also don't know a Shelby?

but from the vibe in here I feel like maybe mine is different...

RAELYNN

if this is feminism club

why are we talking about something that's like
the opposite of feminism?

IVY

I was just asking

I'm kind of like worried about her

BETH

same

RAELYNN

well I'm not

IVY

I texted her like ten times before I gave up

BETH

Nell, Raelynn's boyfriend cheated on her with this girl Shelby –

RAELYNN

BETH!

BETH

she's our friend now!

she should know what's going on!

RAELYNN

we've gotten through this much of the frickin semester without telling her!
why do we have to start now??

BETH

fine

I'm sorry

NELL

I won't like
tell anybody

RAELYNN

I mean everybody already knows
I wasn't like keeping it from you
it was just nice to know that one person wasn't talking about it

pause

fine

so like

(rapid-fire, she wants to get this over with)

Shelby used to be my best friend in the whole world like since we were little kids but last semester she started acting different and then she like seduced my boyfriend and I'm not just letting him get away with it either don't worry but it sucked a lot I mean obviously and then she stopped coming to school and now she's been gone for like three months or like four I guess since November anyway we don't know where she is or if she's coming back and that's what you missed on Glee

3.

*one week later
morning, before first bell
Lee is alone, sitting at a desk, waiting
Raelynn enters*

LEE
hey

*Raelynn immediately turns around to leave
Lee jumps up and blocks her exit*

hey hey hey
no no no
c'mon baby please just listen to me –

RAELYNN
I'll scream

*Lee covers her mouth with his hand
they stand there like that for a moment
it's a little charged
Lee takes his hand away and kisses Raelynn, hard
she tries to squirm away*

RAELYNN
stop it

Lee keeps kissing her

Lee
I'm serious

Lee keeps kissing her

STOP

she smacks him, hard

LEE
jesus

RAELYNN
I told you

LEE
you were kissing me back

RAELYNN
for like a second

*she starts to go out the door again
Lee grabs her hand and yanks her back*

LEE
Raelynn
please
I just wanna talk to you

Lee still has her hand in his

RAELYNN
what are you even doing here
you're never early

LEE
yeah but you are
you used to hang out in the lunchroom
I've been waitin there for like a week

RAELYNN
Mr. Smith says this is a safe space for whoever needs it
I haven't felt like being around everybody

LEE
I'm not everybody

RAELYNN
will you let me have my hand back please

LEE
I don't want to

beat

RAELYNN
honestly Lee maybe
I don't know

it might be good that this happened?
you know?
like I think maybe it was supposed to?
like maybe it's actually better this way?

Lee lets go of her hand

LEE
why
why are you saying that?
why are you acting like this?
I just / don't

RAELYNN
we've been together for seven years
Lee that's not normal
we're only sixteen
we've been going out since fourth grade
it's so weird

LEE
I don't think it's weird

RAELYNN
I like
...
...
I think I'm starting to realize like
I don't really um
I have no idea who I am without you?
I mean
being your girlfriend has been like
the main thing in my life, like it's been everything?
and I just
I'm not sure that's the way it should be

LEE
that used to be okay
you used to like that

RAELYNN
I don't know if I did
I think maybe I just didn't think about it

LEE

you don't have to think about every single thing
you know?
sometimes things can just be whatever they are

RAELYNN

I like thinking about things
I wanna think about more things
I wanna try more stuff

LEE

like what
kissing other guys?

RAELYNN

no!
I mean maybe
one day
but that's not even in like
the top five

LEE

what is?

RAELYNN

I don't know!
that's the point!
I don't even know what I wanna try!
I don't know anything!

LEE

you obviously have Something in mind
or Someone

RAELYNN

you're not listening to me you never listen to me

LEE

I am listening, you're just not telling the truth

RAELYNN

I don't know!
I wanna dress different maybe!

LEE
right
to get attention from different guys

RAELYNN
no!
god!
why are You mad at Me for hypothetically wanting to kiss other guys
when you did way more than kiss with my BEST FRIEND

LEE
I made a mistake
and jesus
I wanna make up for it
but you're not giving me a chance
I miss you
okay?
I love you
baby, you're my whole world

RAELYNN
the world is really big
I'm just one person

LEE
...
this isn't you
all this stuff you're saying
it's like
fuckin Beth
and that new Atlanta girl
and that club

RAELYNN
we only started the club like
last week
and it's / not like

LEE
look

beat

I was frustrated

I mean like
it's different for guys

RAELYNN
no I get that

LEE
we'd been together for *seven years*

RAELYNN
we've covered that yeah

LEE
like
is it your dad?
I thought all that stuff from church wasn't really
I mean what are you waiting for?

RAELYNN
I'm not waiting *for* anything
I don't know

LEE
do you not trust me?

RAELYNN
I mean
obviously I don't *now*

beat
Lee shakes his head to himself
then he pushes over a desk kinda violently
like, he throws it a little
not directly at Raelynn or anything
he doesn't like hulk out or go crazy
it's just a moment of casual violence
it makes you wonder how many times Lee's done stuff like this
it makes you think about all the casual violence you've witnessed and excused
it makes you think about that time in college acting class when a guy punched a hole
through the wall right next to his female scene partner and your professor praised
him for being "truthful"
it makes you think about how many times you've heard "boys will be boys"
Raelynn jumps back

RAELYNN

Lee!!!

beat

LEE

sorry

beat

sorry

I just

long pause

RAELYNN

I'm gonna go like
get breakfast or something
before the bell

Raelynn starts to leave

LEE

hey

why are you wearing so much stuff on your eyes lately?

beat

RAELYNN

I like it

I like the way it looks

LEE

why?

RAELYNN

I don't know

I just do

I think I maybe

I wanna start dressing like
kinda goth?

or like

kinda like Billie Eilish?

she wears those really

she says she wants
I don't know

beat

LEE
what are you even talking about

RAELYNN
I don't know

LEE
that's not you

RAELYNN
no but
yeah
I think I might want it to be

LEE
but you look so pretty without makeup
you don't need it
I hate that shit anyway

RAELYNN
...
you literally haven't seen me without makeup since we were twelve
you know that, right?
like
my mom taught me how to do my face before she taught me about my period

4.

*later the same day
after school
feminism club
Raelynn, Beth, and Nell sit in silence for a moment*

NELL

I mean
should we maybe go ahead and get started?

BETH

I just kind of feel like we should wait for Mr. Smith

RAELYNN

he's only the sponsor
he doesn't have to be a part of everything
Ms. Lerner is like never there for Key Club

BETH

yeah but he's really excited about being involved
and he took a pretty big chance on us
I don't want him to feel like we don't value that

Raelynn rolls her eyes

I'm serious!

RAELYNN

yeah no I don't really ever like
doubt your seriousness

BETH

did Ivy text you back?

RAELYNN

nope

BETH

me either
it's so weird
we were both trying for perfect attendance this year and she was *just* sick so it's not that

RAELYNN

yeah

BETH
(to Raelynn)
are you okay?

RAELYNN
yeah

beat

BETH
you sure?

RAELYNN
yeah!
why!

NELL
you've just been
off
today
like in class you seemed / like

RAELYNN
I mean you barely know me
so I don't know if you know when I'm off

NELL
wow
okay
sorry I guess

beat

RAELYNN
sorry
I didn't mean that
I'm tired

NELL
k

beat

RAELYNN

do you think I should have sex with Lee?

beat

NELL

I just think like

no

right?

yeah

no

BETH

I mean like have you even been listening to Mr. Smith? and your DAD?
about abstinence?

NELL

Beth you are so confusing sometimes

BETH

what?

NELL

this is a feminism club
our bodies, our choices, right?

BETH

well yeah

but in my head it's also kind of a Christian feminist club

NELL

I don't really remember that being written into the mission

BETH

I mean we all go to church together
and that definitely makes us see things in a different –
wait

(to Nell) where do you go to church?

NELL

sometimes I go with my dad down in Atlanta
but my mom's not so into it since we moved up here

BETH

you can come with us to first baptist if you want!
Rae's dad is the preacher
and Mr. Smith goes there too
he and his wife are like
they're so amazing
(to Raelynn) remember when they did their joint testimony?

RAELYNN

yeah no it was really amazing
I mean
(she holds up her hand to show a promise ring on her finger)
I took the Purity Pledge and not just because of my dad
I know people do it and then they change their minds and it's like
whatever for them
but I don't know
I feel really intense and weird about it
maybe I'm being
I mean it had been seven years
that's like almost half our lives

NELL

whoa
time is crazy

RAELYNN

exactly!
so yeah!
I still just
I don't know
I feel like maybe I've been overthinking stuff
maybe I should just do it
I don't know

beat

NELL

do you
want to?

RAELYNN

yeah!
yeah
of course

yes
but I
I mean yeah!
it's just
it's complicated
I don't know why

BETH
because it's *sex*

RAELYNN
(to Nell) have you had sex?

NELL
not yet
some makeouts
some hand stuff

RAELYNN
yeah I mean Lee and I have done *some* stuff

BETH
Ivy's done stuff too

RAELYNN
more stuff than me

BETH
especially when we were in drama oh my god
and Shelby —

...
sorry

...
I haven't had my first kiss yet but I'm okay with it

NELL
but also?
you answered the question like I asked you
“are you *willing* to have sex with him”
but the question is actually like
do you *want* to have sex with him?

RAELYNN
the answer is still yes

NELL
Beth

BETH
...yes?

NELL
do you want to have sex with Harry Styles?

*Beth immediately starts laughing in this really loud, unhinged way
her hands do Not know what to do*

BETH
I don't know!!!
I mean that's just totally unrealistic to even think about!!!!

NELL
see?
that's what it looks like to want sex

BETH
what?????
no!!!!
that's not
I am saving myself for marriage!!!

NELL
what's that?
you can't stop thinking about Harry's dreamy British dick?

BETH
ohmygodSTOP
that is disgusting

Beth covers her ears

NELL
I think maybe
another follow-up question I have
is do you want to have sex with *Lee*?
because it's really two different questions:
do you want to have sex?
and do you want to have sex with *Lee*?

RAELYNN

who else would I want to have sex with?

NELL

like literally anyone in the world

Harry Styles

Taylor Swift...

RAELYNN

I mean if I was going to with any pop star it would be Selena Gomez but this is dumb
we should get started

Beth looks at Raelynn like Wait a Minute

BETH

any pop star?

RAELYNN

any *female* pop star you know what I mean I mean like if I *had* to I thought that was/ the
question

BETH

wait is that why you don't want to with Lee?
because you want to with Selena Gomez?

RAELYNN

I don't *want* to I was just *saying*
it was just an example
I don't want to talk about this anymore!!
if we're gonna meet, let's frickin meet!

a moment

*then Beth takes out an enormous binder
she is Very Prepared*

BETH

well I was thinking for today / we could –

*Beth is interrupted by the classroom door opening
they all look up
Shelby walks in*

SHELBY

oh

*they all stare at her
she stares back
a very long silence*

SHELBY

surprise bitch

RAELYNN

...??

what??

is that all you can say?

SHELBY

no!

I was trying to be Emma Roberts in Coven!

you know

American Horror Story season whatever?

we watched it together?

it's when she comes back from the dead?

it's like

"surprise!"

and now it's that gif?

she's in the red dress?

anyway

it was the first thing I thought of

I don't know why

it's stupid

don't look at me

...

so I'm looking for Principal David

the secretary said to check hall C

he's gotta sign a form since I'm coming back

because yeah so fyi

I'm coming back

beat

BETH

we signed out the room

he must be somewhere else

RAELYNN

we started a feminism club

SHELBY

weird

RAELYNN

what's that supposed to mean?

SHELBY

I mean not weird

unexpected?

I don't know

I just

said it

beat

NELL

I'm Nell

SHELBY

hey

Shelby

NELL

ohhhhh

SHELBY

yeah

That Shelby

BETH

Nell moved from Atlanta

SHELBY

oh cool I was just in Atlanta

it's like we switched places

NELL

what were you doing there?

SHELBY

taking a sabbatical

that's what my Aunt Susan called it

RAELYNN

what does that even mean?
you're not jewish

SHELBY

um
I think you're thinking of the Sabbath
sabbatical is different
it means like I took a break
basically

RAELYNN

there was already Christmas break built in
how many breaks do you need?

BETH

sabbaticals are actually for college professors to pursue their research

NELL

oh Beth

BETH

well they are!!

*Beth's phone dings
she unlocks it and reads
she covers her mouth*

RAELYNN

we were just about to get started
so
yeah

BETH

(still looking at her phone)
oh no

NELL

what

BETH

oh my god

you guys
oh my god

they all crowd around her to look at the phone, except Shelby
beat

NELL
holy shit

SHELBY
what?

RAELYNN
oh my god

BETH
what do I even say?

Raelynn grabs her own phone and texts

SHELBY
what??
tell me!
my parents took away my phone

NELL
it's a text from Ivy

BETH
her dad is like
his secretary or I guess she's not his secretary anymore
she's saying that like
stuff
happened
between them
I mean
not good stuff
in like
a not good way

beat

RAELYNN
this is insane

NELL
did y'all know his secretary?

RAELYNN
kind of

BETH
she's Addi's cousin, right?

SHELBY
no she used to go out with Addi's brother

RAELYNN
she's not from here

BETH
that's right
she's from Hewitt

NELL
isn't that just like
10 minutes away, though?
where the walmart is?

BETH
we should do something for Ivy
make sure she knows we're like
there for her family

NELL
so you think it's not true?

beat
they all look at Nell

I just mean you know
I don't know her dad
so I wasn't / sure if

SHELBY
I mean
I'm not really like
Surprised by it

Raelynn and Beth look at Shelby in shock

RAELYNN

what
is your problem

SHELBY

no it's just like
he always does those weird massages
right?
like at sleepovers?
you know what I'm talking about

NELL

jesus

BETH

no, it's not –
he's just being nice

RAELYNN

he's affectionate

BETH

he's a *dad*

SHELBY

yeah
a gross dad who stands behind us
and frickin rubs our shoulders while we're in pajamas

RAELYNN

don't make this into something it's not

SHELBY

Rae
come on
we had this whole conversation about it when we were like thirteen
it's weird

RAELYNN

we talked about a lot of things when we were thirteen
we're not thirteen anymore

beat

SHELBY
whatever
I bet his secretary isn't the only one
like I'd actually bet
I'd put money on it

RAELYNN
this is Ivy's *life*
you're being such a dick

SHELBY
yeah
probably

RAELYNN
weren't you gonna go find Principal David?

BETH
Mr. Smith might know where he is
he should be back soon
he's our sponsor

SHELBY
why are you in this room instead of his?

BETH
yeah they actually switched some of the rooms over Christmas
so Mr. Smith's in here now

Shelby looks around the room

SHELBY
weird

*Beth takes something from Mr. Smith's desk – a framed picture
she hands it to Shelby*

BETH
and look!!
they're gonna have a baby!
isn't that the best news ever??

RAELYNN
they found out while you were gone

SHELBY
nice
“like sands through the hourglass”

RAELYNN
what?

SHELBY
nothing
...
well
Principal David awaits

then she leaves
beat

BETH
(to Raelynn)
you okay?

RAELYNN
yeah
no
I mean
...
...
that was so weird
like
she walked in
and for a minute I was just
really happy to see her

BETH
yeah

NELL
wait so
did she go to Atlanta because of you and Lee?
like
was that the only reason?

BETH
no one really knows
my mom thinks she must've like
had a breakdown
like
gone crazy or something

RAELYNN
maybe she didn't "go" crazy
because she's always been crazy

BETH
she's just intense

RAELYNN
you literally just said she went crazy

BETH
my *mom* said that

NELL
you did like
repeat it though

BETH
well sorry

NELL
I mean
she does seem
I dunno

RAELYNN
she's a Lot

BETH
yeah...
she kind of always has been

beat

NELL
that's funny

my family says stuff like that about me all the time
like my mom says it to my aunt on the phone like I can't hear, she's like
"Nell's just a lot"
"Nell is so dramatic these days"
"Nell is too much for me right now"
I dunno like
I think it's just
when people say stuff like that
they always kinda mean the same thing
you know?
like what they really mean is just
"Nell's a girl"

beat

BETH
whoa

NELL
I dunno

BETH
we should come back to this idea
I'll put it in the minutes

RAELYNN
are you the secretary too?
on top of being president?

BETH
do you wanna take notes?

RAELYNN
not / really

BETH
yeah
so
yeah

*Beth takes some notes
then all of a sudden, Nell has a Major Realization*

NELL
wait
you guys
wait

BETH
what??

NELL
I just thought of something and maybe it's crazy but maybe it's not and I just
okay...
do you think something
Happened
with Shelby and Ivy's dad...?

beat

BETH
what do you mean?

NELL
I mean like
the way she was just acting? when we all found out?
she literally said she wasn't surprised
and she kinda seemed to get upset??
and then she said that thing like "I bet the secretary isn't the only one" I mean
I don't know I just
I know I don't know her

BETH
oh
my god

*the classroom door opens again
Mr. Smith comes in with Mason
Beth stands up for some reason and immediately feels so dumb and weird about it*

MR. SMITH
ladies
I got a new recruit for ya!

MASON
hey

BETH
hi!!!

MR. SMITH
so Mason
these girls are changing the world
the future is female

NELL
actually, that's kind of problematic

BETH
the future exists outside of binaries

RAELYNN
the future is intersectional

MR. SMITH
see?
I learn something new in here every meeting
I'm running to a quick faculty meeting now
but when I get back, hit me with everything you got

*he leaves
a long pause
Mason chooses a desk
he kind of puts his head down*

RAELYNN
has um
do you not have basketball practice?

MASON
what?
oh
yeah I'm just kind of failing some stuff
so Mr. Smith is helping me get extra credit
he said y'all are gonna make this about that play
and we didn't make playoffs anyway so it's whatever

beat

RAELYNN
cool

MASON
yeah y'all don't mind me
I'm just
here

SO-00000817673

5.

two days later
before school
Miss Gallagher and Mr. Smith

MISS GALLAGHER
thank you for doing this
I know it's early

MR. SMITH
of course

MISS GALLAGHER
I just really want to set her up for success
you know?
from her file at least it seems like she's always been one of the tricky ones

MR. SMITH
there's a lot going on in there
I really think she's got potential

MISS GALLAGHER
I think so too!
and just so you know what you're walking into
this was not a prolonged absence that went through any um proper channels
we don't know a lot about why she was gone, but her parents thought this was their only
option, based on some of Shelby's um concerning behavior

MR. SMITH
right

MISS GALLAGHER
so we're approaching the reentry very delicately
everything's just so crazy lately —
you know, with the mayor
and now Ivy Watkins's father
all these stories
I just want to make her feel supported and safe

MR. SMITH
I love that you're actually trying to do your job

MISS GALLAGHER
well I

of course

MR. SMITH

it's not "of course"

it's really not

you know?

I've seen other people in your position just keep their heads down

and fill out whatever paperwork it takes to get half our seniors into college

MISS GALLAGHER

I just want to be

I don't know

better than that

I guess

MR. SMITH

well I think that's just so great

MISS GALLAGHER

well thanks

*they smile at each other
beat*

MR. SMITH

hold on

sorry

my memory is terrible

we weren't in school at the same time, right?

MISS GALLAGHER

no

no I'm

I think I'm like eight years? younger than you?

somethin like that

MR. SMITH

right

MISS GALLAGHER

my brother was a couple years below you, though

y'all played basketball together

MR. SMITH

right!

Chip!

I can't believe I don't remember hanging around you more
ol Chip and I were thick as thieves there for a while

MISS GALLAGHER

yeah I guess he

well he's uh mellowed out a little

but he was always real overprotective back then
with me and boys

MR. SMITH

classic big brother

MISS GALLAGHER

yeah plus you were older

you know

it doesn't make a big difference now, but
it did then

MR. SMITH

for sure

MISS GALLAGHER

I guess it didn't help that I always kind of had a little bit of a crush on you

MR. SMITH

is that right

MISS GALLAGHER

back when I was in middle school

forever ago

not anymore

a loaded beat

MR. SMITH

so you're doin okay?

first year and all?

it's a doozy

MISS GALLAGHER

oh

yeah
no
it's fine

MR. SMITH

I mean ten years in and I feel like I'm definitely still figuring it out too
but I can help
if you want
you can always come to me

MISS GALLAGHER

that's really really nice
thank you
I will

a knock at the door
Shelby peeks her head in

SHELBY

hey
sorry I'm late

MISS GALLAGHER

Shelby!
come on in!

MR. SMITH

Shelby, it's good to have you back

SHELBY

it's good to be back

MISS GALLAGHER

thanks so much for takin the time before school
I know you're a busy girl

SHELBY

yeah no it's
yeah it's no problem

MISS GALLAGHER

I just think it's good to start back on the same page after a prolonged absence
see how you're doing

SHELBY

I'm good

MISS GALLAGHER

good

good

and you know

make sure you had a chance to check in with all your teachers individually

ask any questions before your first day

SHELBY

yeah def

mos def mos def

not the rapper mos def

no offense to him he's great

he's an actor too

very compelling presence

sorry

I'm a little nervous

MISS GALLAGHER

oh no!

SHELBY

no no it's fine!

it's not for any like

particular reason

it's just weird being back

I feel like I

I dunno

I mean I hardly ever leave here?

my family doesn't even like go to the beach or whatever so

I went with Ivy's family one summer to their house in Destin but I never went back

beat

MISS GALLAGHER

I know exactly what you mean

have you had a chance to reconnect with your friends?

SHELBY

oh yeah

saw 'em all the other day

the whole gang

plus the new girl
well Ivy wasn't there because of her
yeah

MISS GALLAGHER

oh
oh yes that's a very
it's
well
I'm sure they were happy to see you

beat

I gave Mr. Smith your makeup work

MR. SMITH

I haven't had a chance to look at it yet
but I'm not worried
you've always done great work in my classes

SHELBY

okay cool
thank you

MR. SMITH

and you're all caught up on *The Crucible*?

SHELBY

yeah I actually finished the whole thing, I couldn't put it down

MR. SMITH

you're back just in time, we'll assign partners for the interpretive project today

SHELBY

the movie came on tv like a million years ago and Daniel Day-Lewis was super hot as the
main guy

...

so um
is there anything
is everything else good?

MISS GALLAGHER

if you're good, we're good

SHELBY

I'm good

MR. SMITH

and if you have any problems, Shelby
getting back in the rhythm of things
we can pair you with a student-tutor, find you some extra credit
whatever you need

SHELBY

oh! Mr. Smith!
sorry, I forgot I –
Beth told me the good news!
congratulations!
on your baby!

MR. SMITH

oh thank you!
that's so sweet of you to mention

SHELBY

you're gonna be such great parents
you must be really excited

MR. SMITH

we really are
thank you so much

SHELBY

when is she due?

MR. SMITH

this summer
july

SHELBY

cancer or leo
pretty big gamble
but I'm partial to fire signs myself
aries aries sag*
triple fire
huge surprise

*soft g (short for sagittarius)

MR. SMITH
we missed you, Shelby
welcome back

SO-00000817673

6.

later the same day, class
Ivy's back
they're reading from The Crucible
Shelby's a great reader – she's not afraid to really Go There

IVY

(as Betty)

"You drank blood, Abby! You didn't tell him that!"

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

"Betty, you never say that again! You will never –"

IVY

(as Betty)

"You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!"

tiny beat
they look to Mason

MASON

oh sorry

uh

I forget

do I still read them if it's in her line like that?

MR. SMITH

yes please

MASON

(reading stage directions)

"Abigail, smashes her across the face"

LEE

dude!

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

"Shut it! Now shut it!"

MASON

(reading stage directions)

“Betty, collapsing on the bed”

IVY

(as Betty)

“Mama, Mama!”

MASON

(reading stage directions)

“She dissolves into sobs.”

*and then Ivy actually does dissolve into sobs
it feels like she's probably been holding this in for days*

BETH

are you okay?

*Ivy runs out of the room
a beat
nobody really knows what to do*

*so then Shelby keeps going
she gets Really Intense during this next monologue
by the end, she's unhinged and kinda scary*

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

“Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!”

beat

BETH

Mason

MASON

shit

I mean

sorry

Ivy comes back in, embarrassed

MR. SMITH

no no it's okay
why don't we stop there for now
we're running out of time
sorry, Mary Warren

BETH

(disappointed)

oh
it's okay

MR. SMITH

that was awesome, everybody
really well done
and thanks to Shelby
for volunteering to jump in there with Abigail on her first day back
so tell me
what's notable about this scene

tiny beat

Beth raises her hand

BETH

I mean
sorry
they admit they've done witchcraft
right?

MR. SMITH

right!
and why do you think they would do witchcraft in the first place?
they had to know how severe the consequences would be if they got caught
why did they go and dance naked in the woods?

beat

LEE

for fun?

MR. SMITH

interesting
could you expand on that thought a little bit?

LEE

um

I dunno

it just seems like maybe they were bored

MR. SMITH

that's a great observation, Lee

because one interesting thing about Salem during this time
is the fact that there was no entertainment

MASON

so kinda like here

MR. SMITH

actually no

we might have to drive thirty minutes to the mall

but they didn't even have music in church

they were still waiting on a ship to bring over a piano

I know it was the olden days so you're probably thinking "okay Mr. Smith we get it"

but it's hard for us to imagine how isolated it was

Beth raises her hand

BETH

I also read that most of the girls had lost their fathers

MR. SMITH

yes

that's true

many men died in attacks on the new villages

LEE

indian attacks?

BETH

we don't say "indian" anymore

LEE

who's "we"?

BETH

the world

I mean

sorry

LEE

yeah dude it's like

Abigail says it right there in the play

I'm just quoting the play

Shelby raises her hand

SHELBY

I also think like

I think probably

they went out dancing

because it was like

the only way to *deal* with everything

you know?

MR. SMITH

“everything” meaning what?

SHELBY

um

like

their lives?

just

yeah no yeah

their lives

NELL

exactly

I mean people still do that, right?

they go out dancing to like blow off steam

MR. SMITH

absolutely

that's a great connection, both of you

I'm sure it felt good to get away from their daily lives

they were under a lot of pressure

he checks his watch

okay y'all we're almost out of time

so they went dancing in the woods

they got caught

then what happens?

NELL

they start saying that everybody else is a witch instead of them

MR. SMITH

yes!

and why would they do that?

purely self-preservation, or something more?

RAELYNN

it's like

the more we say something the less we

or like the less the thing we say is

I don't know what I'm trying to

yeah

no

A STUDENT (or MASON)

yeah

MR. SMITH

I kind of think of it like the boy who cried wolf

who knows what I mean by that?

LEE

sometimes girls just make stuff up

STUDENT (or BETH)

it's the *boy* who cried wolf

LEE

I was talking about the girls in *The Crucible*

calm down

STUDENT (or NELL)

riiiight

LEE

you callin me a liar?

MR. SMITH

no matter *who* makes things up —

boys, girls, teenagers, adults —

one lie can poison the entire well of truth
but let's dig a little deeper –
what did these girls stand to gain?

NELL

I mean it's all kind of about power

RAELYNN

yeah because they had none
right?

BETH

like less than none

MR. SMITH

awesome

yes

I think you're all right on the money

LEE

but Abigail wants to kill the wife of the dude she was with so she can keep bangin him

MASON

wait

is there sex in *The Crucible*?

LEE

so I don't know if it's this whole feminist empowerment thing like y'all think

NELL

but I mean sex is power

so there's definitely a connection there

MASON

(thumbing through his book)

I feel like I'm reading a completely different play

I thought *The Crucible* was about witches

7.

*later the same day
after school*

IVY

it sucks
which like
that sounds dumb to say
because obviously
but yeah
it's been really really bad

RAELYNN

how's your mom?

IVY

I've like
hardly seen her?
she's just
in her room a lot

BETH

she made that whole statement, though

IVY

yeah no
that was basically just the lawyer
I don't really know if it's even true

RAELYNN

what does your dad say?

IVY

I mean he says it's not true
so yeah
or like
I guess he says that he did
touch her?
or whatever?
but like
the way he touches everybody
and I guess she just misunderstood?
I mean
you guys know my dad

he's just nice
he's just really nice to everybody
and she doesn't even work for him anymore
he got her this really great job down in Kennesaw
so why would she even take a job my dad got her if he's this terrible person??
but yeah
he's been like sleeping in my brother's old room
it's really
...
...
look
I don't know if I feel good about doing this anymore
like
(she gestures to all of them)
this

BETH
feminism club?

IVY
yeah
it's just
I think Miss Gallagher was right
it's not a good / time

NELL
but like
what does being a feminist have to do with your dad?

IVY
I mean I feel like the only reason this is even a thing
is because all of a sudden Me Too stuff is just everywhere
you know?
like even my grandpa knows about Harvey Weinstein
and my grandpa doesn't know anything about anything past like 1990

BETH
but like
sorry
but it's not really all of a sudden?
like at all?
I mean Tarana Burke started Me Too in 2006
it's just
people weren't listening until now

IVY
but it's not just like
I mean these are peoples' *dads*
you know?
I feel like I wasn't thinking about it like that before
how would you feel if it was *your* dad?

beat

RAELYNN
Ivy's right
it does feel really different now
it feels like
I don't know
it feels different

IVY
yeah it's all just so much
I mean that's why *The Crucible* made me lose it in class it like
my dad even said this whole thing feels like a witch hunt
I don't know I feel like I'm not making sense
I know we're trying to do good stuff and be good feminists
Beth, I know we made all these plans
but we also don't wanna give the wrong impression

BETH
then we won't

IVY
it's really messed up that you're not supporting me right now
my dad was your frickin tee-ball coach!
you're my best friend!

RAELYNN
Ivy, we love you
we're here for you

BETH
I'm sorry, Ivy
I love your dad
I love you so much
I

the classroom door opens
Mason comes in, with Lee

MASON
sup
sorry I'm late
but I brought Lee
male feminists, motherfucker!!

Ivy leaves

MASON
oh shit was she crying again

NELL
you don't have to say *male* feminist, you know
it's just feminist

LEE
but "fem" is in the word
and that means girl
right?

BETH
well
technically yes, but –

Mason and Lee high five

MASON
nailed it!

BETH
but STILL

beat

LEE
(*re: Ivy*)
sucks about her dad

NELL
yeah

MASON
messed up

BETH
yeah

MASON
how many is it?

NELL
how many women?

LEE
it's just the one, right?

RAELYNN
I mean I feel like “just” is maybe not like
the right word

BETH
there was another one in the paper this morning but it hasn't been like verified

beat

RAELYNN
I'm gonna go check on her

LEE
do you need help?

RAELYNN
...
why would I need help?

Raelynn leaves
pause

LEE
so what do y'all do in this club

BETH
well
we talk about feminist issues

NELL

we try to fill the gaps of our lacking education

BETH

it's still really new
we've kinda gotten
derailed
with
you know
everything

MASON

but no dude
it's really cool
they've been teaching me a lot of stuff

NELL

you've only been to like
one and a half meetings

MASON

yeah but
I dunno
that's more than none

beat

BETH

yeah so before you got here
Ivy was kind of talking about how she like
I dunno she maybe doesn't want to do this anymore?
so I think we're just kinda
figuring out what to do next

MASON

oh okay
I mean that sucks
Ivy's hot
but whatever
we can still meet without her

NELL

no like she doesn't think we should have a club at all

MASON

wait

noooo

dude

I really need the extra credit

LEE

so does that mean

is it true about Shelby and Ivy's dad?

MASON

yeah like is she gonna be the next girl to say something about him?

NELL

(to Beth)

did you tell them what I said?

BETH

what?? no!!

NELL

where did you hear that?

Lee shrugs

MASON

I mean

I've heard it from like five people

LEE

yeah Raelynn told me like

back in eighth grade or something that Shelby was creeped out by him

I kinda figured that was why she was acting so weird

something must have happened before she left

NELL

you mean the whole thing with you wasn't enough?

MASON

oh burn

LEE

(to Nell)

dude you like

weren't even here
you don't know what happened

NELL
I didn't have to be here to know you're an asshole
that's clear like right away

BETH
okay you guys
we don't have / to do this

MASON
I wonder who was better
you or Ivy's dad

BETH
MASON!!!!

MASON
sorry

beat

BETH
well
we had a Very Full agenda set for today
but it doesn't feel like we're going to accomplish much now

NELL
yeah we kind of need everybody here to plan the bake sale

LEE
don't feminists want to like
not cook and stuff?

NELL
that's an oversimplification

MASON
and it's a bake sale to raise money for Planned Parenthood

BETH
yeah so meeting adjourned I guess

but just fyi we were gonna talk about the problematic way white feminism is monopolizing the mainstream body positivity movement which is really important and I found a great article about it so I guess I'm just gonna stay here and read for as long as we have the room
anyone is welcome to join me
I made worksheets

SO-00000817673

8.

*early the next week
Shelby and Raelynn work on their project
the same classroom, before school
long silence*

SHELBY

we don't have to make it a thing

Raelynn stares

SHELBY

I just mean that we can make it so we both like
come up with different stuff
and put it together
and don't even have to talk to each other much

RAELYNN

he always knows when people do that
that's not the point of collaboration

SHELBY

he had to have done this on purpose, right?

RAELYNN

I don't think he knows

SHELBY

I think all the teachers know more than we think they do

RAELYNN

we literally watched him draw the names
you sound a little crazy

SHELBY

cool
thanks

Raelynn unfolds a piece of paper and reads from it

RAELYNN

"choose any two characters from *The Crucible* who never have a scene alone together and
imagine what this scene might be. what would they say? what do they need from each

other? create a performance no longer than 5 minutes long, based on this scene and incorporating at least two outside sources. your scene should –”

(she stops reading from the paper)

blah blah blah blah

basically just “make it good”

so I guess maybe we should start by reading the play

SHELBY

I already did

RAELYNN

(sure you did)

right

okay

SHELBY

why would you just assume I haven’t read the play?

RAELYNN

well I know you

SHELBY

I guess you don’t

I literally did research on the play

I read a book

I showed up before school for this

I make a lot of fucking effort

but you’re acting like I’m the same Shelby who copied your homework in sixth grade and like

I fucked up with you

I know that

but that doesn’t mean I Always fuck up

and just because I like

let you see things about me that other people don’t see

doesn’t mean that you get to use those things against me

I

Raelynn covers her face with her hands, crying

hey

no no no no don’t cry

heyyy

I’m sorry

I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry

pause
Raelynn keeps her face covered

I really want to hug you
and I feel like maybe it's not a good idea
but I really want to

beat

Rae?

Shelby gingerly puts a hand on Raelynn's shoulder
Raelynn lets her
a moment, during which Shelby starts crying a little
Raelynn peeks at her then jerks her hands away from her face

RAELYNN
why are you crying??

SHELBY
because!!

RAELYNN
you yelled at me!!

SHELBY
there's just a lot, okay!!
there's just a lot

they look at each other for a moment, tearful

hey
so I really want / to say

RAELYNN
let's just
we really need to work on this do you have any ideas?

beat

SHELBY
I mean
I feel like we both know we're gonna do a dance

Raelynn laughs automatically, against her will

RAELYNN

I mean yeah obviously

SHELBY

we've been waiting our whole lives for an assignment with "interpretive" in the title
for this very reason

we're very gifted very beautiful interpretive dancers

Shelby does a little bit of a cheesy interpretive dance

Raelynn hesitates, then riffs on Shelby with her own version

they laugh

they love each other so much

*there are miles to go, but they're testing the ground, inching toward fixing this
beat*

RAELYNN

now what?

SHELBY

you tell me

9.

later the same day
Beth eats lunch in Mr. Smith's classroom
she reads quietly while he grades papers

BETH
thanks for letting me do this

MR. SMITH
Beth, you always have a place here
you don't have to say thank you every time

BETH
okay
sorry
thank you

MR. SMITH
I should really be thanking *you* for the good company

Beth beams
beat

BETH
um so I've been thinking a lot about *The Great Gatsby*

MR. SMITH
I knew you'd love it

BETH
but like in the context of Lorde and *Melodrama*?
do you know Lorde?

MR. SMITH
I know my lord and savior jesus christ

BETH
oh no I
she's a singer

MR. SMITH
I'm kidding
I know who you're talking about
I'm not that old

BETH

sorry!!

okay well she has all this commentary on party culture like throughout her body of work which totally lines up with *Gatsby*

but the main thing I've been thinking about is the song "Green Light" you know?

MR. SMITH

(singing badly, on purpose)

"that green light, I want it"

BETH

oh my god??

MR. SMITH

see?

I know all the cool things

Beth laughs but also melts into the ground from sheer embarrassment

BETH

I'm going to pretend you didn't just do that anyway...

it's interesting because in the context of the song

a green light is kinda like permission? to move on?

or like that's how I interpret it like she wants to move on

which is obviously the connotation at like stoplights or whatever

but in the book the green light is like this concrete image of *Gatsby* never moving on and his like inability to realize the American dream, like he's stuck in these ideas

so it's just a

yeah I'm just thinking about the different meanings I guess

like as symbolism

MR. SMITH

or maybe

Lorde was never using it like a stoplight at all

maybe she wants her ex to leave the metaphoric green light on for her

just like *Gatsby*

it seems like there's a commonality there —

youth, parties, longing...

maybe Lorde is absolutely conscious of that reference

BETH

...

oh
my god
you totally just blew my mind

MR. SMITH
it's just an idea

BETH
no it's great it's I love it I want to write about it I
you're the best teacher I've ever had

a half-knock on the door
it's Shelby

SHELBY
hey
sorry
Beth?
I was just in the library?
are you still good / to –?

BETH
oh no I'm so sorry I completely forgot!!!

SHELBY
no that's fine
we can do it another time / or something

BETH
no no no!!
now's great!
(to Mr. Smith)
I'm helping Shelby get caught up in history
Miss Gallagher said I can list it as tutoring for college

MR. SMITH
that's great, girls
it's a win-win

BETH
(to Shelby)
sorry
I just came to eat in here to get away from like
I mean I've been having kind of a tough time with Ivy's dad and everything?

sorry to / like

SHELBY
yeah no totally

MR. SMITH
you know you two are welcome to stay in here
if you don't wanna go to the library
I won't bother you

BETH
that's perfect!
(to *Shelby*) we were just talking about "Green Light"

SHELBY
you mean the best song of all time?

BETH
yeah like in conversation with *The Great Gatsby*!

SHELBY
naturally

BETH
Mr. Smith has this interpretation that's just like
brain-exploding
wait oh my god do you remember the day it came out?

SHELBY
oh my god at your house?

BETH
Mr. Smith, last year when it came out we sat on my floor
and played this song on repeat for literally like two hours straight
just sitting and like

SHELBY
listening

BETH
and then we had a dance party that got so intense
Raelynn cried and Ivy almost threw up

Shelby laughs

SHELBY

I forgot about that

BETH

(a performative look toward an invisible horizon)

“was anyone ever so young?”

SHELBY

(smokes a fake cigarette)

“I am here to tell you that someone was.”

they both laugh

MR. SMITH

I hate to break it to ya, but you’re both still pretty young

BETH

sorry that’s –

it’s from a Joan Didion essay?

it’s just like a

thing we do

sorry

SHELBY

it’s our little bit

it’s weird

we’re weird

MR. SMITH

Beth, I love that you love Joan Didion

Slouching Toward Bethlehem is one of my favorites

BETH

Shelby actually introduced me to her

SHELBY

yeah

Beth isn’t the only one who reads

I think Walt Whitman probably said it best:

I contain frickin multitudes

10.

later the same day
class
folks are a bit rowdy

MR. SMITH
okay okay
enough of that
it's *Crucible* o'clock

groans and laughter

I cannot wait to see what y'all are cookin up for those interpretive projects
they'll be here before you know it
anyway
it felt like we got into some great stuff around power last week with acts one and two
and now that we've read through the end I'd love to circle back to the girls' motivation

SHELBY
I was / reading this –

BETH
I did a little bit of
oh
sorry
I didn't mean to interrupt you

SHELBY
no go ahead

BETH
okay so I did a little bit of research
and the girls were largely used as pawns by the town officials
to settle land disputes

MR. SMITH
Beth's right
the town of Salem / was very –

SHELBY
I mean I also did some research
sorry but like the thing that nobody in this play is talking about
is that pretty much all these girls had been like
assaulted at some point

I mean like
sexually

gasps and murmurs
Ivy is especially horrified

MR. SMITH
all right, Shelby let's tone it down a little
be considerate

SHELBY
no but those are just facts!
I read this book that says most of these girls probably had like PTSD
which explains the like crazy physical fits that people thought were happening because
of witchcraft but anyway so yeah like the assault stuff was *everywhere*
their dads
older men in the town
stable boys
whoever
and even if you managed to get by without *that* happening –
even then you'd probably lost your dad
like Beth said the other day
and so it / was like

IVY
what are you trying to say?

SHELBY
what?
no /
nothing

IVY
I mean
sexual stuff
dads
it sounds like you want to say something to me

MR. SMITH
okay ladies
let's take / a minute

SHELBY
no I only brought up dads / to say they all died!

MR. SMITH

Shelby

let's just –

SHELBY

and like in really violent crazy ways
like scalpings and guttings and stuff

MASON

indian attacks!!

NELL

oh my / GOD

RAELYNN

Mason

MASON

sorry

MR. SMITH

Miss Holcomb

those are really

fascinating points

but I'm going to have to ask you to keep it to the text

SHELBY

why doesn't Beth have to keep it to the text?

and I *am* keeping it to the text, Abigail literally has that whole monologue about
watching her parents' heads get split open

MR. SMITH

speaking of Beth's point from earlier

it does beg the larger question –

do we think the girls knew they were being used to settle land disputes?

were they puppets or were they complicit?

SHELBY

maybe not all the girls knew

but Abigail was like clearly super smart

A STUDENT (or IVY)

she was clearly crazy

BETH

let's be careful about calling women "crazy"

A STUDENT (or IVY)

but what about women who are crazy?

SHELBY

but also like

John Proctor never even apologized

BETH

what does he need to apologize for?

SHELBY

also he calls Abby a whore like

at least five times

LEE

she *is* a whore, though

NELL

but he was the married guy who took her virginity

SHELBY

and also he was her boss??

NELL

right?

so like if she's a whore

what is he?

SHELBY

I think she was awesome

MASON

awkward

SHELBY

how is it awkward, Mason?

like

that's not what that word means

do you not know that?

are you stupid?

or are you just fucking annoying?

MASON

whoa

MR. SMITH

language, Miss Holcomb

LEE

you kiss Ivy's dad with that mouth?

MR. SMITH

(sharper than we've ever heard him)

Lee!

Principal David, now!

Lee leaves

everyone's a little shaken

Mr. Smith takes a second

I'm sorry about that y'all

I really am

I

...

why don't we shift gears a little bit
give ourselves some space from that particular discussion
yeah?

let's jump to the end of the play
no matter what we think about the girls' motivations
at this point the damage is done, right?
and John Proctor is a flawed man, absolutely
that's partly what makes him such a rich dramatic character
but in his last moments, he has the opportunity to live
and he has a lot to live for
he and his wife have just begun to reconcile
their relationship has been torn apart by all this
they have a baby on the way
all he has to do is lie
and he can go back to his life and family
the stakes couldn't be higher
but he would rather die than put that stain on his good name
I'd love if we could read that final monologue
page 133*
any volunteers?

*or whatever page number it is in your edition

*of course Beth's hand goes up
but surprisingly, so does Mason's*

Mason!
yeah!
“with a cry of his whole soul...”

MASON
(as John Proctor, stiffly but trying)
“Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!”

applause

MR. SMITH
well read, Mason, well read
that's my favorite part of the play
such an incredible monologue

Shelby raises her hand

MR. SMITH
Shelby!
yeah!
start us off

SHELBY
I don't get it
all you have is your name?
what is THAT?

BETH
I think it means that like
Proctor is saying / that he –

SHELBY
no no yeah I mean I get it
(sparknotes voice) “this allows him to die, honorably, with his goodness intact”
it says that on sparknotes
but I still feel like
what GOODNESS?

MR. SMITH

okay well we should talk about your use of sparknotes and how that does not foster a meaningful relationship with the text

SHELBY

I also read the play

I did!

I just thought I was missing something

so I looked at sparknotes as like supplemental material

anyway I totally get what the monologue is doing from like

a literary standpoint I guess

but your name is literally just a word that someone else gave to you

you can change it

you can give it to someone else –

I mean

you gave yours to your wife

and that's another shitty thing!

MR. SMITH

language...

NELL

but right?

women's names are all tied up in their relationship to a man

we were just talking about this in feminism club

MASON

yeah it's like

women have "miss" and "ms" and "mrs"

and all men have is "mister"

it's kind of fucked up

MR. SMITH

Mason!

language!

SHELBY

okay but wait

I have a point, I swear

it's a good one

I make really good points

I'm really smart

I know a lot of you don't think I am, but I am

you've told me I am, Mr. Smith

remember?

I do

I remember it very clearly

I remember exactly where we were

MR. SMITH

...yes, Shelby, I think you're very smart

I think all of you are smart

and my goal as an educator

is to get you to apply that intelligence / into –

SHELBY

I mean that's not really how you phrased it to me

but okay

so anyway

it's like

your name was made up

your ancestors were like

"ooh there are a bunch of blacksmiths in our family, better call ourselves Smith"

like that's what names *are*

they're fiction

but my body is a fact

I live inside of it

MR. SMITH

we're going to have to wrap up this point pretty soon, Miss Holcomb

if you could please bring it back to the text?

SHELBY

Abigail was a human being

she like

she existed

that's a fact

but John Proctor is just obsessed with this made-up thing

BETH

yeah but

his name stood for a lot more

it's like

his reputation

his honor

A STUDENT (or IVY)

and Abigail's been trying the whole play to like

ruin him

NELL

nope

he made choices

SHELBY

exactly!

but he's just pretending like

I dunno like

his fiction is more important than her fact?

I mean

that *sucks*

like

John Proctor is clearly the villain

right?

MR. SMITH

John Proctor is one of the great heroes of the American Thea/tre

SHELBY

yeahhhhh no

I don't think he is

I think he sucks

reactions

MR. SMITH

okay well I think we all have a lot to mull over / and we

SHELBY

last thing last point I swear

say you run into someone who might not recognize you right away

and they're like

"Mr. Smith? Carter Smith? is that you?"

you could easily be like

"oh no, sorry you must be thinking of someone else, that's not my name"

but if I run into someone and they're like

"are you living inside of a body or are you a ghost?"

I mean I am pretty clearly inside of a body

MR. SMITH

Shelby, let's / just

SHELBY

a name doesn't mean anything if it doesn't have a body to be attached to
your name doesn't have a memory, *Carter*
but my body remembers being touched by you
and I know your body remembers mine

confused reactions and murmurs from the class

MR. SMITH

all right, Shelby
I'm gonna have to ask you to leave
right now

SHELBY

wow
yeah
it's funny you're asking me to leave
when six months ago
you were asking me to come

11.

*one week later
the same classroom
Shelby's gone
Mr. Smith is also gone
Miss Gallagher stands at the front of the room*

MISS GALLAGHER

I appreciate you bearing with me while we get all this sorted out
I know it's been a
tough week
but we
things should be back to normal soon

NELL

what does that mean?

A STUDENT (or RAELYNN)
is Mr. Smith coming back?

MISS GALLAGHER

it means
that we're working on it
and that in the meanwhile
you get in-class time to work on your projects

BETH

(raising her hand)
Miss Gallagher?

MISS GALLAGHER
yes Beth

BETH

sorry
we just kind of got
interrupted
when we were discussing the end of *The Crucible*?
and I feel like it would be really useful for our projects
to finish talking about it?

MISS GALLAGHER

...
all right

would you like to lead a discussion?

BETH

(SO excited but so flustered)

would I –?

um

yeah!

sure!

hold on lemme –

I have some notes

Beth scrambles in her bag for her notes

MASON

have you read *The Crucible*, Miss G?

MISS GALLAGHER

I have

I read it when I was your age

in this very same classroom, actually

the students' minds are slightly blown by this

BETH

okay

um

I have my notes now

MISS GALLAGHER

take it away, Miss Powell

BETH

well I would love to get back to the whole thing we were um
debating

like

whether or not um

so Mr. Smith says that John Proctor is a hero

and that's clearly what Arthur Miller thought too

and all my research backs that up

every interpretation

IVY

yeah the only person who didn't think so was Shelby

BETH

yeah no I know

I think I just like

I don't know

okay so Mr. Smith always says to look at a character's first and last moments

and we already talked about when Proctor first comes in and it says

"on seeing him, Mary Warren leaps in fright"

NELL

yeah but basically every stage direction about John Proctor is like

"storms in angrily with a deep rage" or something crazy

BETH

totally

his anger absolutely has an arc throughout the

so okay um the ending

page 133 again

*Beth picks up her script and flips to the end
some people join her, some people ignore her*

right here where they're about to take John Proctor away
and he says to Elizabeth

um

Mason could you read it for us?

MASON

(reading)

"Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it!"

BETH

great so yeah

that's John Proctor's last line

um

so do we think that supports or doesn't support the idea that John Proctor is a hero?

beat

MASON

I don't know if it really changes anything?

but like

I could be wrong

NELL

yeah it seems like more of the same
like
“I have honor lalala”

BETH

yeah
yeah I dunno I just wanted to revisit that moment in the light of
okay so yeah moving on I really wanted to talk / about –

RAELYNN

I actually feel like
um
...
sorry I

BETH

no no go for it

RAELYNN

um it's just like
John put Elizabeth through so much?
like SO much right?
and now like
he's about to *die*
and like pretty much as a direct result of what he did?
and he doesn't apologize?
and he tells her not to cry and not in a nice way?
and says nothing about like “hmmm let's take a second to figure out how you're gonna
take care of yourself and our baby when I'm dead”

MISS GALLAGHER

right!
he doesn't even tell her he loves her!
sorry to jump in
I just
I remember being your age and reading that part and feeling like
I don't know
my teacher said that John Proctor was this beacon of integrity
and it must be true, if a teacher said it, right?
but I guess I always kind of resented the idea that honor has to be um
stony and stoic?
I guess?

BETH

yeah wow that's like...
textbook toxic masculinity

RAELYNN

exactly!
and he just um
I don't know
I mean he just tells her how to feel and how to act
and he's done it before in the play too
remember when he says he should have yelled at her instead of confessed to having an
affair? how does he say it?

BETH

(has this memorized)

"I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and
like a Christian, I confessed."
act two

RAELYNN

like...
yeah

MASON

"roared you down"??
what a dick

NELL

Rae, you're right

RAELYNN

really?

NELL

dude
yeah

BETH

I never
I didn't even think about it like that
I'm sorry
I don't
I don't know why I didn't see it
now it seems so obvious

I'm so sorry

I shouldn't have been allowed to lead the discussion if I wasn't prepared

MISS GALLAGHER

Beth, honey

you can stop apologizing

you don't have to apologize for existing

SO-00000817673

12.

later the same day
after school
Mason and Nell work on their project
they're both studying their books

MASON

but the devil's not a character in the play

NELL

or is he

MASON

um

yeah

no

he's not

see?

character list

no devil

NELL

he's a character in the minds of the townspeople
and the idea of him is visually represented by the yellow bird

MASON

but are we even allowed to do something like that?
like with characters that aren't there?

NELL

it's an interpretive assignment
we can do whatever we want

MASON

yeah but like

well

okay

how do we do it?

NELL

that's why we're meeting
that's the point of projects
we figure it out

MASON

oh

okay

last project I got Beth and she basically just like
did all the work

NELL

yeah that's Beth

MASON

I feel like maybe it would have made me feel a little bad
but she seemed to really like doing it

NELL

yeah

that's Beth

also I don't really believe you would've felt bad

MASON

(his feelings are a little hurt)

...I feel bad about stuff

NELL

if you say so

MASON

I say so

NELL

okay

beat

Beth's such a trip

I think she just like

assumes I'm cool because I'm from somewhere else and she wants to *be* somewhere else?

but sometimes I worry everybody here's gonna like

find me out

'cause I'm super not cool

like

at all

I was actually kinda having a hard time before this

in Atlanta

with like

my friends
or “friends”
blehhh
this is boring, I’ll stop

MASON
I’m not bored
and you *are* cool

Nell makes a face

I mean I think you are
I know you don’t care what I think

NELL
I don’t Not care what you think
...
please don’t tell anybody all that stuff
okay?

MASON
I won’t

a shared smile
they return to their work

wait
yellow birds are symbols for like the devil??
I totally missed that

NELL
how are you in honors?

MASON
I’m like really good at taking tests

NELL
not all yellow birds are the devil
that’s just what it means in *The Crucible*

MASON
oh
okay
thanks

you're really smart

NELL
I know

MASON
damn
humble too

NELL
I mean I'm not going to pretend I don't know something
if I already know it
that's part of what makes me smart

MASON
hmm
yeah I guess that's a good point

NELL
“we teach girls to shrink themselves
to make themselves smaller
we say to girls
‘you can have ambition
but not too much
you should aim to be successful
but not too successful
otherwise you will threaten the man’”

MASON
that sounds familiar

NELL
it's in a Beyoncé song

MASON
yes!!

NELL
but it's actually from this talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

MASON
we should use it as one of our outside source things!
I mean if you think it'd be good

NELL

that could actually be really cool
I mean I don't know how it'll fit in

MASON

yeah but
“that's the point of projects” right?
like you said?
we'll figure it out

Nell smiles

NELL

yeah
we'll figure it out

beat

hey do you like
do you know Shelby very well?

MASON

I mean
we've been in the same class since second grade
so I guess?
but also I don't really think I've ever had like
a real conversation with her
so I guess not

NELL

yeah
I was just kinda wondering what you think about everything
since you've like
known her longer than I have

MASON

yeah
yeah I don't know
I heard he just like
gave her a ride home one day and she tried something but he said no?
and I guess she got embarrassed?

NELL

I mean I heard they had like a full-blown relationship

MASON
dang
for real?

NELL
yeah so who knows
I wish I could like reach out to her without it being weird
but I think it'd probably be weird
I don't know

beat
Nell goes back to her book
Mason smiles at Nell while she reads

MASON
hey Nell?
this might not be the best time to ask this or whatever but I'm just gonna go for it I mean
um
do you wanna like
hang out?
like outside of class and feminist club?
I just
I'm really into how smart you are?
which is like a new thing for me and it really
I dunno
never mind
it's okay

beat

NELL
yeah okay let's hang out

Nell goes back to reading

MASON
yeah??

NELL
do your work, Mason

MASON
(immediately going back to his book)

on it

NELL

just because you were sweet to me for like a second
doesn't mean I'm gonna do your work for you

MASON

no no yeah for sure I don't want you to
this is fun

he grins at her one last time, then goes back to reading
Nell watches him for a minute
she smiles
goes back to reading too

13.

the next day, after school
Beth is alone in the classroom
she thinks she hears a noise outside and perks up
waits
nope
nothing
she gets up and starts to go to the door
just as she gets there, the door opens
it's Ivy
Beth screams
Ivy screams

IVY
what the heck????

BETH
you scared me!!!

IVY
I'm sorry??

BETH
I mean I didn't think anybody would actually come
...
especially not you

IVY
yeah
I mean yeah
I didn't really come for the club
this is just better than going home
and also I just
...
I miss you
I know that sounds stupid
I see you every day but you know / what I mean

BETH
it doesn't sound stupid

IVY
it's just been
I mean you know

BETH
yeah

beat

IVY
are we still best friends?

BETH
of *course* we are

IVY
okay

BETH
we always have been and we *always* will be

IVY
okay
cool
I just
I didn't know if you were mad at me or something

BETH
what are you talking about?
why would I be mad at you?

IVY
I didn't know if you were like
I know things with my dad have been
I know I haven't been like
my usual self

BETH
well yeah I mean that's completely understandable, though

IVY
yeah it's like
I mean
you know my dad's like weirdly my favorite person on the planet

BETH
that's not weird

IVY

I just

this is gonna sound so pathetic but

you and me haven't had a sleepover in like three weeks which is weird for us, you know?

and what if now you never wanna have a sleepover at my house again because you feel weird around my dad?

it's like

I dunno it's dumb I feel dumb

I don't even know / why I'm

Beth interrupts Ivy by hugging her

they hug really tight

they love each other so much

mid-hug, the door opens again

it's Raelynn and Nell

Beth is really excited to see them

BETH

you guys look Ivy's here!!

we're all here!

she rushes to Raelynn and Nell and hugs them

NELL

okay calm down we saw you an hour ago

IVY

she literally screamed when I came in

like a serial killer scream

NELL

I don't know if serial killers are the screamers

right?

like I'm pretty sure their victims are the ones who scream

RAELYNN

I wish we could scream or somethin

beat

BETH

my mom said the school board already met about Shelby

they're trying to like

be quiet about it

RAELYNN

her parents wanted her to meet with my dad for like counseling but
he wanted to see what the school board decided first

IVY

I heard she wasn't really staying with her aunt in Atlanta
she was at like a mental hospital

RAELYNN

I mean
I don't think her family could like
afford that

BETH

I know I'm supposed to believe women
like no matter what
but I just
I know him, you know?
he's like the best person I know
he's the *best* person
I just don't see how he
yeah

IVY

I mean yeah
that's how I feel about my dad

beat

BETH

I hope he's okay

IVY

yeah

BETH

he's not returning my texts and I just
I hope he's okay

RAELYNN

wait
you text him?

BETH

yeah just sometimes
for like book recommendations or emergencies
and this is clearly an emergency

NELL

...what other emergencies have there been?

BETH

wait
are we even allowed to be meeting right now?
since he's not at school?

IVY

I kinda feel like
nothing should happen to anybody until there's like
a trial
and then we can punish the men *if* they're proven guilty
but if we find out the girls are making it up
they should get punished just as bad

BETH

that's like
I mean our justice system isn't really
like your dad can afford legal fees and good lawyers and stuff

RAELYNN

also like
I think no matter what's true or like
not true
we have to remember that Shelby's clearly kind of going through something
and I mean like
we haven't really even listened to her yet

IVY

it feels like
if you're accusing Mr. Smith of this
you're basically accusing my dad of the same thing

RAELYNN

but like
your dad admitted that he did it

IVY

my dad had a brief, consensual flirtation
it was a mistake
he's very ashamed
but he didn't just –
that lady is making it sound like it was all his fault
and I mean my dad didn't like
rape her

...

I know that's not the only bad thing that can happen
I just

beat

NELL

(to Beth)

I think it might be weird that you text Mr. Smith

BETH

...

no
it's not
it's not like that
he's a really good teacher and he cares a lot and he's there for me
you and Ivy are the ones who talk about his like
his private parts

*Ivy kinda half-laughes
she can't help it*

BETH

his PENIS

OKAY??

IS THAT BETTER

GOD

PENIS

*then Beth screams
it feels so good
they all look at her
she stops
she's about to apologize, but then –
Raelynn screams
Beth and Raelynn scream together*

Nell joins in
Ivy joins in
they scream so loud and for so long
it's a lifetime of screams
it's awesome

the classroom door opens
Mason and Lee come in
the girls stop screaming
beat

MASON
what
the fuck

NELL
we're stressed out

LEE
are you guys doing actual witchcraft in here?

the classroom door opens
it's Shelby
oh shit
beat

SHELBY
um
I need to
Rae? Beth?
can I talk to you two?

LEE
isn't there a rule about like
extracurriculars if you don't come to class?
are you even allowed to be here?

SHELBY
whatever
just
(to Rae and Beth) please?

BETH
I actually

um
I'm sorry but
I don't really know what to say to you right now

SHELBY
I'm not asking you to say anything
I'm just asking you to listen

MASON
I mean
(*gesturing to Lee*) we already know you get around
if that's what you're gonna say

BETH
Mason!

SHELBY
okay so by your logic
I'm definitely telling the truth
wow, thank you so much for believing me, Mason!
thank you for being an ally
I feel a lot better now to know that even one shitty human being who smells like cheese
is on my side

BETH
he's not a shitty human being!

NELL
yeah and he smells really good!

SHELBY
just because he's your little pet project fucking feminist club mascot
and is actually performing like
basic human decency
sometimes instead of never
doesn't mean he's not shitty
y'all just have a really low bar for boys' behavior
which is like
I mean you guys you just
god
(*to Beth*) you're a fuckin hypocrite

she leaves

NELL

(to Mason)

why were you being a jerk

MASON

I wasn't!!

geez!!

I was backing Beth up!

BETH

I didn't say she got around

MASON

yeah but you were all

you acted like you didn't

I mean you said we should support women!

I was supporting you!

NELL

that's not what that means

RAELYNN

I think I'm gonna

I need to

I'm gonna go check on her

LEE

hey

Rae

wait a second

just

wait a second

RAELYNN

what

LEE

um

are you gonna come back?

RAELYNN

I dunno

LEE

okay I just thought like
we could maybe
Talk
after this

RAELYNN

...

LEE
I mean
I've been like
making a lot of effort
you know?
coming to these meetings?
I'm even being like
really vulnerable and stuff
saying this in front of people

beat

RAELYNN
so what
now you want like
a reward?

LEE
no
I mean
no
I just wanna talk

RAELYNN
what about

LEE
a lot
things just like
we had that whole conversation
and then you / like never

RAELYNN
oh that whole "conversation"?
do you mean like
when you threw a desk on the ground

and kiss-raped me?

LEE

kiss-raped you??

RAELYNN

I mean I guess the proper term would be like
sexual assault or harass/ment

LEE

whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa
okay
come on now

RAELYNN

yeah
those are some of the terms we learn here
if you're so fucking interested in our fucking club

LEE

whoa dude
you always yell at me for cussing

RAELYNN

well sometimes, Lee
sometimes the only fucking word that fucking fits
what you're trying to fucking say is a fucking cuss word
so if you want to come to feminist club
because you *want* to then I will be happy to see you here
but I don't see the point in talking anymore
and to quote Taylor Swift
"we are never
ever
ever
ever
ever getting back together
like
ever"

she leaves

14.

*a little later, the same day
outside a gas station
Shelby and Raelynn are drinking slushies*

SHELBY

so yeah
I didn't know how to tell you
but I also didn't know
how to *not* tell you?
it just
fuck
so yeah so I
I didn't like Plan it
with Lee
but I was obviously feeling like really messed up?
I mean I had been

she gestures around wildly, can't quite say "sleeping" or "having sex"

with our *teacher*
for like *months*
which is *insane*
and I felt like
I dunno I think I felt really gross and weird and sad
and you know how sometimes you just need to like
dig yourself a deeper and deeper hole?
and like
boning Lee would make me feel grosser and weirder and sadder
I mean
I'm just gonna stop talking now

*beat
Raelynn laughs*

RAELYNN

I can't believe you just said "boning"
in the middle of this like really serious conversation

Shelby starts laughing too

SHELBY

shut up

RAELYNN
you're such an idiot

they both laugh

RAELYNN
I'm still
I'm still really mad at you

SHELBY
okay

RAELYNN
like about Lee a little
but it's not really that
I'm more just mad that you didn't talk to me
like you're my ride or die
how dare you

SHELBY
do you believe me?

beat

RAELYNN
yeah
I do

*Shelby nods
pause*

RAELYNN
I know the answer is probably "no"
but are you like
okay?

SHELBY
yeah the answer is definitely no
but it's fine

beat

RAELYNN
you didn't like

I mean was there um
was there a particular reason you were gone for as long as you were?
like did you *need* to be gone for a certain amount of time?

SHELBY
dude are you asking if I was pregnant?
is that what people think??

RAELYNN
I don't think *all* people...

SHELBY
fuck
I mean
no
I wasn't
I'm not
god
can you imagine?

beat

RAELYNN
are you staying in school?
are you allowed?

SHELBY
I mean they're not gonna let me stay in his class
I don't remember the way they said it
but I'm a risk or something
a liability?
very cool thing to say to a literal child
anyway
whatever
he's coming back
it's like
official

RAELYNN
god
are you serious?

SHELBY
I mean I kinda saw it coming

beat

RAELYNN

what do you do for the rest of the year?

SHELBY

supervised study hall aka sit in the library
then I have to finish lit this summer with a different teacher
but don't worry
we still get to finish our project
it'll be my grand finale
they wanna make sure like
your grade doesn't get messed with because of me

RAELYNN

that's fucked up

SHELBY

yeah

beat

yeah

beat

I wish we could do a project about the ocean
I've gotten really into the ocean
it's awesome
how little we know about it
and scary
I really like scary stuff lately
I dunno
it makes me feel better about my life to know that there are fish with teeth on the
outside of their heads

RAELYNN

totally

SHELBY

I went to the aquarium a lot in Atlanta
my aunt has a pass

RAELYNN

I wanna go!

SHELBY

okay!

beat

but yeah

it's fine

he never teaches senior lit

so it's just this year

RAELYNN

what do your parents think?

SHELBY

they're like

you know with my um history of being a little crazy

RAELYNN

you're not crazy

SHELBY

I mean you know

you know how I get sometimes

you know how people like

I mean it's okay I'm fine but I'm

yeah

it's a Thing

and they're very Them about it

so obviously they think I'm me and Mr. Smith is just like

everything

because of church and stuff

they don't

I think they wanna make sure I can get through the year without burning it all down

beat

RAELYNN

what if we both did senior year in Atlanta

we could live with your aunt

I could get a weekend job and pay rent or like

I dunno

it's just for a year
then we can go anywhere

SHELBY

yeah
maybe

...

also
I can't tell if we're There yet
but I'm just gonna gamble and say –
you kinda dodged a bullet with Lee in terms of the
he is like
Not good at doing his job
and I am amazing at doing mine?
felt very unfair

Raelynn laughs and is scandalized at herself for laughing

RAELYNN

well he hadn't really done it before!
cut him some slack!

SHELBY

I mean sure
but there are ways to learn like
while you're in the thick of it

RAELYNN

oh my god

they laugh

SHELBY

you can also just ask?
do boys not get that?

RAELYNN

do boys get anything?

*they laugh some more
beat*

SHELBY

that's the thing, though

with Carter –
Mr. –
yeah
he like
he asked a lot of stuff
not even sex stuff
like
stuff about my life
stuff about me
I mean he
yeah
I really liked that

beat
Shelby shakes her head really fast

say something dumb
distract me

RAELYNN
ummmm
I mean was it good enough to wear the Town Slut badge with honor?
(valley girl voice) because it's so pretty on you

they both burst out laughing

SHELBY
are we even allowed to be laughing?

RAELYNN
I think that's up to you

SHELBY
judging by everything I know
I mean
I think I'm probably gonna be super messed up for a really long time?
but I don't know if I'm like
fully equipped to start that journey right now
I think that'll kinda just come whenever it comes
so yeah
I dunno
I think we're allowed to laugh

Raelynn laughs a very exaggerated and insane laugh

*Shelby does her own version
they trade crazy laughs back and forth
somewhere along the way, crazy laughing turn to real laughing
oh no now they can't stop laughing
they laugh and they laugh
it's the kind of laughing that goes on for so long it stops being funny
then it's funny again
their stomachs hurt from it
they laugh for way, way longer than you think they should
they might hold hands, or lean a head against a shoulder, or something
the audience should absolutely get a little uncomfortable from how long they laugh
if you think they're laughing long enough, they almost definitely probably aren't
the laughter might turn a little manic in an edge-of-tears way
but still
they laugh*

15.

the next week
lunchtime

MR. SMITH
thanks for coming in early

BETH
of course

beat

MR. SMITH
I know those lunchtime minutes are precious

BETH
no no
I'm
of course

beat

MR. SMITH
how have you been?

BETH
...I've been okay
it's been
I've been okay

beat

it's kind of surreal
to see you back
it feels like it's been forever

MR. SMITH
I know
I can't believe it
I mean I'm
Miss Gallagher's gonna be sitting in on classes for the rest of the year

BETH
she was actually

it was great to have her
she had some good stuff to say

MR. SMITH
that's awesome

BETH
I mean obviously we missed you a ton

MR. SMITH
well thanks
that's sweet of you

beat

BETH
I haven't really heard much news about the details of

MR. SMITH
you know
without saying too much
there just wasn't a lot of proof
and the school board called into question the
character
of uh

beat

BETH
that's great

beat

MR. SMITH
gosh Beth
I'm just
I've been totally sick over this

beat

I need to know
I
no
I'm sorry

that's inappropriate

BETH
what?

MR. SMITH
I wanted to know if
if you believed me
but that's
I can't ask you that

BETH
oh

beat

MR. SMITH
I just don't know what I'm going to do
you know?

BETH
I think
maybe
it'll blow over?

MR. SMITH
I don't want you to feel like I'm putting you in a bad position

BETH
no
I don't feel that way

MR. SMITH
it's just that you're one of the only friends I've got left
I mean
that's probably the last thing I should say now
but
I really miss our talks

BETH
I do too

beat

MR. SMITH

my wife doesn't believe me
she says she does
but

BETH

I'm
sure she'll come around
you two have such a special –
I'm so sorry

beat

MR. SMITH

it really felt like
for a while
that my life was over

...

it got to the point where I was thinking
"this is it. I'm just going to kill myself. they'd all be better off without / me"

BETH

no no no no don't say that please don't say that

...

I wouldn't be better off

beat

Mr. Smith smiles at her

MR. SMITH

it feels really good to be back
to see you
what have you been reading lately?

16.

*later the same day, class
it's day one of class project presentations
before the bell
Miss Gallagher and Mr. Smith meet*

MISS GALLAGHER

so I just wanted to make sure we both understand why I'll be here
the school board felt like it would be a good way to cover our bases
and after today I'll really just be a
presence
I'll monitor and provide accounts to the administration and be here for the students if
they have any questions or concerns but
I won't say anything during class unless I need to
and I won't interfere with your authority
today, though, it's a little tricky
since Shelby will be here for one day only, it would be great if I could kind of
take the lead this time
and have you just solely be taking notes for grading purposes

MR. SMITH

whatever you think is best

MISS GALLAGHER

great
well then unless you have any / questions –

MR. SMITH

I just wish I had seen this coming
you know?
I mean
I saw that she had a crush on me
I knew there's been a history of
how did you say it?
concerning behavior?
anyway, I knew that and I didn't shut it down
that's on me
I just had no idea she would –
it's crazy
I like to think the best of people
especially my students

MISS GALLAGHER

right

MR. SMITH

anyway

it's all taken care of now

and thank you for being here

I'm really lucky to have you, Bailey

(checks watch)

almost time to get started!

MISS GALLAGHER

...

you know

I'm a tri delt

MR. SMITH

nice

I'm delta tau delta

MISS GALLAGHER

my grand-big was Lorin Kerr

do you know her?

she's from Russell County?

MR. SMITH

Lorin Kerr...

MISS GALLAGHER

she was a senior in high school when you were a senior in college

she met you at a party

MR. SMITH

what a small world

you know, it's been so long

I'm terrible with names

MISS GALLAGHER

yeah

it's funny, though

she remembered you real well

her little did too

beat

and I knew Ellen

I mean just a little

through Fran
but I heard about all your
yeah

MR. SMITH
Ellen and I had a very
complicated relationship
and it was a long time ago

MISS GALLAGHER
I didn't believe them
any of them
because you were you
because I knew you
my brother knew you
everybody knew you
you were always so nice to me
...
so there must have been a misunderstanding, right?
they must have just gotten confused?
they were all crazy?

*the bell rings
students start shuffling in*

welcome, welcome everybody!
as soon as we've taken our seats we'll just dive right in

*Shelby and Raelynn come in wearing full-out 1600s attire
or like, at least their non-budget version of full-out
definitely at least bonnets
one of them carries a visible music-playing device: speaker, boombox, phone, etc
they're nervous*

oh my goodness, you two look amazing!
why don't you go ahead and get set up right here at the front

*they stand at the front of the classroom
get their music all ready to go, check in with each other*

all right
everybody settle down
whenever you're ready, ladies

SHELBY

um

we'd like to start with an outside reading?

RAELYNN

from sparknotes

*they stare at Mr. Smith and the rest of the class for a second
they dare them to question the validity of sparknotes*

RAELYNN

"Honest, upright, and blunt-spoken, John Proctor is a good man, but one with a secret, fatal flaw."

SHELBY

"Proctor is, above all, a proud man who places great emphasis on his reputation."

RAELYNN

"He finally bursts out with a confession, calling Abigail a 'whore.'"

SHELBY

"He goes to the gallows redeemed for his earlier sins."

RAELYNN

a good man

SHELBY

a proud man

RAELYNN

whore

SHELBY

(making excuses)

but he's such a good man

RAELYNN

(making excuses)

he's a very proud man

SHELBY

think about his reputation

RAELYNN
whore

they sharp-turn to face each other

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
hello, Abigail Williams

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
hello, Elizabeth Proctor

...
well
now that we've got the stiff pleasantries out of the way

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
yes
now that the audience knows who we are
we can begin

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
do I start?

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
you know
I'm not sure
we don't really talk to each other in this play

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
do you at least know what we're supposed to talk *about*?

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
I assume John

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
that seems like a good assumption
I assume I'm also supposed to apologize at some point

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

yes that's probably expected

*up until this point, there may have been a ~performance~
to the way they're playing Abigail and Elizabeth
all of that should fall away now*

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

I don't really *want* to apologize, though?

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

that's okay

I don't really want to talk about John

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

oh good

I'm just kind of

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

sick of him?

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

exactly!!

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

can I ask you a question?

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

sure

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

why did you dance

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
in the woods?

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
were there other times not in the woods?

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
oh yeah
I dance all the time
it's really fun

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
but it's not allowed

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
but why not

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
because of god

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
I don't know
I think god would like it
they say he wouldn't but
part of what I learned from all this
is that all these men in charge?
they just make stuff up
they just make up whatever suits them
whenever it suits them

RAELYNN
(as Elizabeth)
they say it's because they know best

SHELBY
(as Abigail)
well if they say it, it must be true

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

they were scared of you
you made them scared

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

being scary was even more fun than dancing
they actually paid attention when I was scary

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

but you were lying
weren't you?

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

I told the truth about John Proctor
he didn't like that very much
no one listened when I told the truth

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

I don't know if I've ever been scary
I don't know if I know how
maybe things would be different if I did

SHELBY

(as Abigail)

yeah but
it shouldn't take being scary to make things different
they shouldn't have to be scared into listening to us
things should just *be different*
they should just *listen*

*the following unfolds the way fire does:
a spark, then a flame, then a roar, then a sustained burn*

RAELYNN

(as Elizabeth)

one day
maybe
the new world we were promised

will actually be new
one day
maybe
the men in charge
won't be in charge anymore
one day we can dance in the forest
and in the streets
and with each other
in our rooms that belong to us and only to us
on our beds we share with no one
under the moon
under the sun
under the shade of our favorite trees
under a shower of the blood and brittle bones of supposedly strong men who failed us
and when that day comes
it won't matter that we're not supposed to dance
it won't matter that once upon a time
I married a man who made me feel smaller than nothing
and like his shame was my shortcoming
it won't matter that when you were sixteen and newly orphaned
a married man two decades older than you made promises he had no intention to keep
and said things in the dark that made you feel like you were made of fire
it *will* matter that you took that fire and burned him down with it
because that same fire will spread
it will scorch the earth to make room for the new world we deserve
it won't matter that he told you and told me it was all our fault
each of us
both of us
it won't matter that we let him think he had reclaimed his goodness in the face of death
it won't matter because that kind of currency has been out of date
for centuries in our new world
those feelings will be so far away from us by then
at first we won't remember their names
and that will plague us
then the faces of those feelings will become blurry
and we'll feel the stirrings of peace
and then we won't remember those feelings at all
we wouldn't even recognize them if they passed us on the street
we'll sleep soundly then
we'll use our fire only for warmth

*Shelby presses play on the music, maybe after they check in with each other first
Lorde's "Green Light" starts to play
god that song is so good*

*and just fyi this sequence needs the whole song to get to where it needs to go
I promise*

*during the first verse, they perform a series of precise, synchronized movements
it might be hard for Shelby to fully commit for the first part of the dance
she might even have to stop once or twice –
I mean, Mr. Smith is Right There
but she's so fucking brave and she keeps going
because Raelynn's Right There too
they're doing this together
that's all Shelby needs*

*then during the pre-chorus key change, when it's like "but I hear sounds in my mind"
Shelby and Raelynn start to nod their heads and really feel the beat
it escalates – nodding spreads to shoulders to feet to whole bodies*

*by the time the chorus hits, they are dancing full-out
wild and free, big and chaotic
hair flying, limbs flailing – but still choreographed
the second verse comes
they keep dancing, a return to a more contained choreography
they travel all over the classroom
when the second verse is halfway over and it's clear they aren't gonna stop dancing:*

MR. SMITH

*(shouting over the music)
all right, that's your time
five minutes is up
thank you very much, ladies*

*they keep dancing
the music gets louder*

MR. SMITH

ladies

they keep dancing

*Mr. Smith stands up and starts to approach the dancing to stop it
all of a sudden, Nell stands up too
she starts dancing
the class looks at her like "is this part of the project?"
she dances into Mr. Smith's path
like "no way are you gonna stop them if I have anything to say about it"*

*she goes to dance with Shelby and Raelynn
they welcome her
the music gets louder*

MR. SMITH
all right, ladies

*Mason stands up
this moment's not about him
he knows it's not
but he really wants to show his support
he does a sweet little dance at his desk*

*Mr. Smith starts to walk closer to stop the dancing
he barely takes a step, though –
Miss Gallagher stands up
gives him a Look
he stops*

*others might get up and dance too, if you have others
but it should never be end up being more than half the class dancing
otherwise it's too easy*

*somewhere along the way –
toward the end of the dance but not so much that there's no time –
it starts to look less like a dance and more like an exorcism*

*maybe we see the moon
maybe we see fire
maybe not*

*then, when the song starts to go into that slower moment at the end:
Beth stands up
she looks a little surprised at herself
the other girls see her
we see them see her
she takes a step toward them
is she going to dance too?
she might
she just might*

blackout

end of play

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