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Cast of Characters

SARAH SCIENTIST 1, S.S. 1
SARAH SCIENTIST 2, S.S. 2
SARAH
BAG LADY
SARAH YOUNG, S.Y.
SARAH PRESENT DAY, S.P.D.
RICK
MINDY
MANDY
MARLY
KAREN
TIM
SUE
DIXIE
CELIA
MISS BLACKMAN
JANE
CHRIS
MYRIAM
MRS. MASON, Sarah's mother.
MR. HILLSBURY, Sarah's father.
JOE
MIKE
MICHELLE
ERIC
NORM
SIMON
ROGER
SAL
GOD-LIKE VOICE
PHIL
TECHNICIAN 1 & 2
NEWTON
COLUMBUS
FREUD
GERTRUDE

A MOST CURIOUS PHENOMENON

by Alan Haehnel

ACT I

(The lights come up on a series of platforms with screens in front of them. Everything is starkly white, as if it were a sterile scientific laboratory. Two teenage girls come forward, walking between the platforms, wearing white lab coats. They speak formally.)

S.S. 1. Ladies and Gentlemen, thank-you for coming. Before we begin exhibiting our data to you this evening, we would like to clearly explain the structure of our presentation.

S.S. 2. Perhaps some of you, surrounded as you are by the conventions of the theater...

S.S. 1. The seats, the stage, the programs handed to you by the ushers.

S.S. 2. Perhaps, given these theatrical accouterments...

S.S. 1. So to speak.

S.S. 2. ...some of you anticipated that you would be seeing a typical play at this time. We wish, from the outset, to dispel that notion.

S.S. 1. In a typical play, one is often presented with a “hook” ...

S.S. 2. So to speak.

S.S. 1. ...an enticing image, an interesting scene, an odd character.

S.S. 2. Something or someone meant to pique the curiosity.

S.S. 1. For instance:

(She goes to one of the screens and pulls it back. A ragged-looking woman with a shopping cart stands behind it. She fiddles with some of the junk in her cart, then looks up, as if seeing something.)

BAG LADY. Hey! Hey, Herbert! Get your sorry buns over here and tell me where in the hell you been! Herbert! Stop ignoring me, you old goat! Get over here! Come on!

(S.S. 1 pushes a button on a remote control she has. The Bag Lady freezes.)

S.S. 2. If this were the opening of a typical play, its purpose, in large measure, would be to make you, the theatrical observer, ask questions.

S.S. 1. Who is this woman?

S.S. 2. Why does she have a shopping cart, ostensibly filled with refuse?

S.S. 1. Why does she yell to Herbert?

S.S. 2. Who is Herbert?

S.S. 1. Are Herbert's buns, indeed, sorry?

S.S. 2. *(To S.S. 1:)* You said that purely for comic effect, not to help make the point.

S.S. 1. I admit it. I apologize.

S.S. 2. Accepted. *(Back to the audience:)* If this woman and the words she spoke were the opening of a typical play, you would understandably have many questions.

S.S. 1. Those questions would be answered throughout the course of the play, but probably not with expeditiousness.

S.S. 2. Indeed not. Rather, the playwright and director would unfold the answers incrementally so as to keep you in suspense.

S.S. 1. *(Pulling the screen in front of the BAG LADY:)* We have no interest in suspense. Whatever questions you have about the structure and overall content of this presentation, we hope to answer within the next...

S.S. 2. *(Consulting watch:)* Four point eight minutes.

S.S. 1. We *will* be expeditious. For suspense is not our business.

S.S. 2. Plot is not our business.

S.S. 1. Character, dialogue, imagery, action—these may be the concerns of the theatrical artist, but they are not our business.

S.S. 2. We are not artists. (*To S.S. 1:*) Shall we say this together?

S.S. 1. I believe it would be appropriate, yes.

BOTH. We are scientists.

S.S. 2. Our business is...a question.

S.S. 1. (*Crossing, along with S.S. 2, to the screen on the highest platform:*)
That question, specifically...

(S.S. 1 moves to throw back the screen; S.S. 2 stops her.)

S.S. 2. We should say this together, too.

S.S. 1. I concur.

S.S. 2. Our purpose is to answer a question, and that question is...

(S.S. 1 throws back the screen to reveal SARAH on her bed, hugging her pillow and crying desperately.)

BOTH. How did this happen?

(SARAH wails. S.S. 1 pushes a button on her remote, freezing SARAH mid-noise.)

S.S. 1. Now, we recognize that our display of this individual has indeed brought up sub-questions that one might claim are similar to those raised by the display we recently exhibited, which...

S.S. 2. If you will recall...

S.S. 1. we provided as an example of the theatrical sort of thing we would *not* be doing.

S.S. 2. The difference, however, is that we will now reveal, without any attempt at suspense...

S.S. 1. ...or other dramatic embellishment...

S.S. 2. the answer to these questions. Sub-questions. (*Pause.*) “Dramatic embellishment.”

S.S. 1. Too much?

S.S. 2. No, actually—quite effective, I thought.

S.S. 1. Why, thank-you.

(SARAH breaks the freeze and wails again. S.S. 2 hits the remote button, freezing SARAH again, and quickly snaps back to the task at hand.)

S.S. 2. Sub-question one: Who is this crying beast before us?

S.S. 1. Answer: Sarah Hillsbury, age 16, born February 23rd, (*Names year 16 years ago*), weighing 7 pounds, 5 ounces at birth, arriving in the world after 13 hours of labor during which her mother, Blanche Mason, screamed at her father, Darren Hillsbury, “I am going to make you pay for this, you son of a...” and I think I’m probably going into greater detail than is necessary.

S.S. 2. Indubitably. Sub-question two: In the aforementioned central question, we both asked, simultaneously for emphasis...

BOTH. How did this happen?

S.S. 2. What, then, is the “this” of that question? The aforementioned “this,” then, is...is...

S.S. 1. Yes?

S.S. 2. Perhaps you should take this part.

S.S. 1. I should? But...you started it.

S.S. 2. I think you’re much more qualified.

S.S. 1. Fine, then; I’ll take it. The aforementioned “this” of the question “How did this happen” is...

S.S. 2. Not so easy, is it?

S.S. 1. Gets a bit stuck on the tongue, I’m afraid.

(SARAH unfreezes again, starts to cry. S.S. 2 closes the screen quickly, avoiding the issue of the question they don’t want to answer.)

S.S. 2. Who are *we*? That’s one of those crucial sub-questions we haven’t yet satisfactorily answered, isn’t it?

S.S. 1. Right you are. That other question, well...

S.S. 2. The timing just doesn’t seem...

S.S. 1. Optimal!

S.S. 2. Optimal! Yes, precisely. We, as we mentioned before, are scientists, but of a unique sort. In your programs, you see us listed as S.S. 1 and 2. S.S., you see, stands for Sarah Scientist.

S.S. 1. I am Sarah Scientist 1.

S.S. 2. Sarah Scientist 2 here.

S.S. 1. Undoubtedly, you have noticed other names similar to ours in your program. S.Y., for instance...

S.Y. *(Coming from the wings, acting like a five-year-old:)* Hi!

S.S. 2. And S.P.D.

S.P.D. *(Entering:)* Did someone call for me?

S.S. 1. S.Y., here, is Sarah Young.

S.Y. Hello. I'm very pleased to meet you. Do you know how many Earths it would take to fill up the sun?

S.S. 2. S.P.D. is... *(To S.P.D.):* perhaps you would like to tell them.

S.P.D. Sarah Present Day.

S.Y. *(To audience:)* Give up?

S.P.D. Sh.

S.Y. Don't "sh" me. I have a valid voice and I don't appreciate you trying to stifle it. It would take a million Earths to fill our sun. Isn't that a fabulous statistic?

S.P.D. I don't think you mean "statistic."

S.Y. What do you mean I didn't mean it? I said it, didn't I?

S.P.D. I think you were trying to connote something other than...

S.Y. It's a number, isn't it?

S.P.D. Yes, but statistics are usually specialized numbers meant to be used for analysis and comparison.

S.Y. How do you know, Ms. Smarty-Farty?

S.P.D. Oh, now that's intellectual.

S.S. 1. Fine, fine, fine. All of this is not germane to this particular discussion.

S.Y. Germane? I like that word. Does it have the same root as “German” or “gerbil”? Or maybe “mane.”

S.P.D. “Mane” is not the root of “germane.”

S.Y. It could be.

S.P.D. It’s not.

S.S. 2. Regardless! We are all representations of Sarah; that is the point. For the purposes of exploring the central question this evening, we are all various iterations of the same individual.

S.Y. The root of “iterations” is “it.”

S.P.D. And what is the root of “immature”? Im?

S.Y. Well, I sure know the root of “dumb.” Duh!

S.S. 1. This bickering is not scientifically beneficial! S.Y., S.P.D., return to whence you came until you are needed again!

S.P.D. *(To S.Y., exiting:)* Im!

S.Y. *(To S.P.D., exiting opposite direction:)* Duh!

S.S. 2. So. Various other characters will also aid us in our exploration of the particular phenomenon...

S.S. 1. ...highly problematic phenomenon...

S.S. 2. We will be scrutinizing this evening. *(Pause.)* I think that about concludes our introduction, then, doesn’t it?

S.S. 1. No.

S.S. 2. No?

S.S. 1. We have raised a new sub-question.

S.S. 2. Have we?

S.S. 1. We have.

S.S. 2. Namely?

S.S. 1. Namely, why would there be a need for various iterations of Sarah? Why wouldn't Sarah simply speak as herself?

S.S. 2. Because she is...incapacitated.

S.S. 1. And why is she incapacitated?

S.S. 2. You know where this is leading us, don't you?

S.S. 1. I don't think we can avoid it any longer.

(S.S. 2 sighs heavily, walks back to the screen in front of SARAH, starts to pull it back, hesitates, then pulls it back all the way. SARAH lies on the bed, crying quietly now.)

S.S. 2. How did this happen? And what is the "this" of that question?

S.S. 1. Replacing the pronoun "this" with a specific antecedent, the question might then be phrased, "How did Sarah..." I can't! I can't! It's simply too embarrassing!

S.S. 2. *(Closing her eyes, shouting:)* How did Sarah fall in love?! *(Opening her eyes:)* I think I said it. Did I say it?

S.S. 1. You did.

S.S. 2. I really did.

S.S. 1. I admire your fortitude.

S.S. 2. You had better vocalize it as well. If we're going to study it, we must be able to face it.

(SARAH starts to pound on her pillow and sob. S.S. 1 closes the screen again, then turns to the audience.)

S.S. 1. How did Sarah fall in...luh...luh...luh,luh...I don't think I can!

S.S. 2. Come on, #1! Do it for science!

S.S. 1. Love! Love! How did Sarah fall in love?

S.S. 2. Congratulations.

S.S. 1. I feel so dirty.

S.S. 2. Our purpose, then, in this presentation, is to delve deeply into the greatest mystery of our time—to train the cold, incessantly-probing eye of science on the murky, nebulous swamp of, yes, love. #1, how are you feeling?

S.S. 1. Disgusted. But undaunted. *(Referring to the audience:)* I can hear them out there. Do you hear them?

S.S. 2. Indeed. What is that odd noise?

S.S. 1. Scoffs. Audible scoffs.

S.S. 2. Confirmed. We have audible scoffing coming from the assembled crowd.

S.S. 1. We need an R.A.M.

S.S. 2. Shall I fetch one?

S.S. 1. If you would be so kind.

(S.S. 2 walks off the stage and into the aisles, scrutinizing the audience members as she mumbles.)

S.S. 2. An R.A.M. We need an R.A.M. Let's see, let's see. *(Reaching a young member of the audience:)* You? Stand, please. *(To S.S. 1:)* How does this one look?

S.S. 1. Too young. Not within the average age parameters. Throw it back.

S.S. 2. *(To young audience member:)* Sorry. Not today. Sit. *(S.S. 2 continues to look around for a likely candidate:)* No, no, no, oh, definitely not.

S.S. 1. What's taking so long?

S.S. 2. I'm looking!

S.S. 1. You're not making nominations for the Nobel Prize. Just grab one!

S.S. 2. *(Grabbing another audience member:)* How about this one?

S.S. 1. I don't like the looks of that one.

S.S. 2. Now who's being picky?

S.S. 1. What about that one, there? The one with the hair?

S.S. 2. Oh, well, that narrows it down. I'll stop looking for bowling balls. *(Pointing to RICK:)* This one?

S.S. 1. Yes. Get that one. Bring him up here.

RICK. Forget it.

S.S. 2. It's being resistant.

S.S. 1. That's fine. A little feistiness is normal, even desirable.

S.S. 2. *(To RICK:)* Please come with me.

RICK. I'm not going up there.

S.S. 2. We need an R.A.M. You have been selected. Come with me!

RICK. I'm here to watch, not to go up on stage. Get your hands off me.

(S.S. 2 yanks RICK to his feet and twists his arm behind his back.)

S.S. 2. Listen, Pal, you don't mess with science.

RICK. Ow! Hey, you can't do this!

S.S. 1. Uh, #2, perhaps you would do well to remember the old adage: It is easier to catch bees with honey than with vinegar.

S.S. 2. I don't see how some apiarian proverb has any bearing on this particular situation. *(To RICK:)* Stop struggling!

RICK. You're busting my arm!

S.S. 1. Think metaphorically, #2. We might do well to offer our R.A.M. a positive incentive to join us. What is your name, sir?

RICK. What is the matter with you, anyway? Let go of me!

S.S. 2. *(Wrestling RICK to the ground, kneeling on his back:)* The lady asked you your name, Scumbag! Let's have it before I knock you into next week!

S.S. 1. #2! That's enough!

S.S. 2. Oh, my. I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I was just...caught up in the moment. There was a certain...intoxicating power that just...

RICK. *(On the floor, in pain:)* Oh, man.

S.S. 2. *(To RICK:)* I do apologize. Let me help you, here. What is your name?

RICK. You're nuts, lady.

S.S. 2. I do admit to a moment of...temporary insanity. It surprised me. Could I ask you your name, please?

RICK. I'm Rick.

S.S. 1. Rick, might you be interested in coming up here to assist our presentation...

RICK. No way.

S.S. 1. *If we were to offer you, say, a fairly large some of money?*

S.S. 2. #1, we have requisitioned no funds for...

S.S. 1. I was merely asking Rick, here, if he *might* be interested if we *were* to offer him...

RICK. How much?

S.S. 2. How much might you need if we were to offer it?

RICK. A hundred bucks. I'll go up there for a hundred bucks.

S.S. 1. One hundred dollars. That sounds like a reasonable sum of money.

RICK. Hey, all right! You got it, then! *(Running up onstage next to S.S. 1. S.S. 2 follows him.)* I'm your man. I'm your R.A.T.

S.S. 2. R.A.M., actually—Representative Audience Member.

RICK. R.A.M., R.A.T—for a hundred smackers, sister, I'm whatever you want me to be. That kind of rhymed.

S.S. 1. Yes. Ingenious. #2, might I have a word?

RICK. *(Out to audience as S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 confer:)* Easiest hundred smackers I ever earned, man. Bet you wished you got picked, huh? I am the R.A.D. The very well-paid R.A.D.—Radical Audience Dude.

(S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 look dubiously at RICK during his speech, then turn to talk quietly.)

S.S. 1. #2, that took twice as long as it should have.

S.S. 2. Again, I apologize. I would sometime like to study the effect that...

S.S. 1. Regardless. We need to make up our time deficit.

S.S. 2. Agreed. *(Turning back to RICK, who has been gloating at the audience:)* Rick, we have brought you up here as our Representative Audience Member in order to confirm some suspicions we have about how our initial premise has been perceived thus far.

RICK. All right! *(Pause.)* Huh?

S.S. 1. What have you thought about our presentation so far?

RICK. Uh...if I answer wrong, do I lose the money?

S.S. 2. All we require is honesty.

RICK. Cool. So. What was the question?

S.S. 2. What have you...

RICK. Right, right, right, what have I thought of this thingy so far?

S.S. 1. Presentation, yes.

RICK. Right, yeah, presentation. It's cool.

S.S. 2. Cool?

RICK. Yeah.

S.S. 1. Could you be a bit more specific?

RICK. It's, you know, cool. I mean, it's kind of funny here and there, like with the bag lady. When the two Sarah chicks were fighting, I liked that.

S.S. 2. Do you understand the seminal concept behind our exploration?

S.S. 1. Can you paraphrase the central question of our inquiry?

RICK. You know what? Hey, I do have one complaint—how come you guys have to talk like that? All the big words? That's getting annoying.

S.S. 2. Well, as representatives of Sarah, we hardly have a choice. Her vocabulary store is quite expansive.

S.S. 1. Capacious, one might say.

S.S. 2. The plethora of words we have thus far displayed is but an infinitesimal fraction of the thesaurus-like library of Sarah's mind.

S.S. 1. Indeed! The dexterity with which she disseminates her...we're showing off, aren't we?

S.S. 2. Guilty as charged. Very unscientific of us.

S.S. 1 & S.S. 2. (*To RICK.*) Sorry.

RICK. Yeah. Anyway, except for that jazz, it's all cool.

S.S. 1. But do you understand the question we are asking?

RICK. Sure. How did Sarah fall in love?

S.S. 2. And what do you think of that question?

RICK. Well, it's...kind of stupid.

S.S. 1. Ah-ha! He scoffs!

S.S. 2. He derides!

S.S. 1. He exudes contempt!

S.S. 2. Just as we thought. Why, Rick, is the question, as you put it, "kind of stupid"?

RICK. Well, I mean, she's a girl. She's, what, sixteen, right? And, I mean, she's not a dog or anything. She's cute enough.

S.S. 1. Do you think so? I am an iteration of her, you know.

(S.S. 2 slaps S.S. 1 in the back of the head.)

S.S. 2. Science and vanity cannot co-habitate!

S.S. 1. They were not co-habiting! They were...paying each other a brief visit.

S.S. 2. Regardless.

S.S. 1. Re-gardless.

RICK. You two are pretty weird, you know that?

S.S. 1. (*Snapping:*) Why is our question stupid, Rick?

RICK. Because she's a teenage girl and she fell in love. What's the big deal?

(S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 stare coldly at RICK for a long moment.)

RICK. What?

S.S. 1. Thank-you.

S.S. 2. Yes, Rick, thank-you for corroborating our suspicion.

RICK. Cool. So when do I get my money? You didn't forget about that, did you?

S.S. 1. No, we did not forget, but we may need you in your capacity as Representative Audience Member again, so please sit here (*Guiding him to a chair near the proscenium arch*) and watch quietly until we call on you again.

RICK. Okay. You want me to do anything? Sweep the floor? Pick my nose?

S.S. 2. Neither sweep nor pick. Watch. Keep track of your reactions. That will be enough. (*To S.S. 1:*) How are we for time?

S.S. 1. Still behind.

S.S. 2. Onward, then!

S.S. 1. A moment.

(S.S. 1 exits.)

S.S. 2. A moment? #1, we don't have a moment. We need to proceed with absolute exigency!

(S.S. 1 enters carrying a book. She hands the book to RICK, then crosses back to S.S. 2.)

S.S. 1. Ready.

RICK. What's this?

S.S. 1. A dictionary. So we won't leave you choking on our intellectual dust manifested by our precociously erudite vocabulary.

RICK. Oh. Thanks. I guess.

S.S. 2. Was that absolutely necessary?

S.S. 1. Yes.

S.S. 2. Crucial to our purposes?

S.S. 1. Without a doubt.

S.S. 2. You know I don't have time to conduct a thorough interrogation about this so you're trying to close down the issue with brief affirmative responses.

S.S. 1. Correct.

(S.S. 2 stares at S.S. 1 for a moment, then takes a quick, deep breath and moves on.)

S.S. 2. Before we—I assume, #1, we are still functioning as a collective? The “we,” then, remains appropriate?

S.S. 1. “We” away, #2. I am your comrade in science.

S.S. 2. Before we can begin to clearly explicate why Sarah's situation is, in fact, a “big deal,” to borrow the phrase from our R.A.M...

RICK. Rock on!

S.S. 2. Please don't speak, even when referred to.

S.S. 1. *(To RICK:)* Explicate. E-X-P-L-I-C...

S.S. 2. #1!

S.S. 1. *(Snapping back to the task at hand:)* We must exhibit for you the popular conception of love, specifically, of adolescent love, so you might fully grasp the disparity we are attempting to demonstrate.

S.S. 2. *(Standing next to a screen.)* Teen-age love, the typical American perception! Sample A:

(She throws back the screen, revealing three girls. They are giddy and giggly.)

MINDY. No way!

MARLY. Yes way!

MINDY. He did not say that!

MANDY. Oh, yes, he did!

MINDY. Him? He did? No way!

MANDY & MARLY. Yes way!

MINDY. He is so fine.

MARLY. So buff.

MANDY. So nice-smelling. Have you ever got a whiff of him?

MARLY. Oh, yeah. He's yummy.

MINDY. He said that about me? Shut up.

MANDY. We both heard it, didn't we, Marly?

MARLY. Oh, yeah, loud and clear, we heard it. I heard it in this ear and I heard it in this ear and my ears have, like, 20-20 vision!

MANDY. So do mine!

MARLY. And so do the ears of like, five other girls who were there!

MINDY. Get out.

MANDY. I'm telling you—Shelly, Kelly, Jamie, Marcie, Mary, me and *(Indicating MARLY)* her all heard him say it.

MINDY. He was talking about somebody else. He had to be!

MANDY. We all heard him say your first name—Mindy—and then your last name—Mousenheimer and then “is really hot.”

MINDY. You are so lying!

MARLY. “Mindy Mousenheimer is really hot.” Seven people, Mindy, times two ears each. That’s 15 ears! We all heard it.

MINDY. Really?

MANDY & MARLY. Really!

(They all squeal and jump up and down. S.S. 1 aims a remote at them, freezing them.)

S.S. 2. Teen-age love. Is this what you envisioned? A gaggle of gasping, giggling girls?

(S.S. 2 pushes the screen in front of MARLY, MINDY and MANDY as S.S. 1 speaks, pulling back a screen on another platform to reveal KAREN.)

S.S. 1. Or perhaps our Sample B will epitomize your concept more accurately.

KAREN. This is an original poem I have composed about love. I think it captures how I feel about my boyfriend, Doug. It’s called “Doug.” *(She begins reading her poem melodramatically, getting near tears at the end.)*

My darling, darling, darling dove,
I can’t escape your awesome love.
It rained on me from the heavens above,
And now we fit like a hand in a glove.
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!
I need you like my skis need snow.
My deep desire does ever grow.
And like a horse that won’t hear whoa,
I cannot help but love you so.

(She stops, overcome by her emotions.)

KAREN. I have twelve more pages to read, but I just can’t do it right now. My heart is just overflowing like a pickup truck full of wood chips! Dougie, I love you!

(S.S. 2 freezes KAREN with her remote.)

S.S. 1. Have we yet captured it? Does this depiction—this syrupy slop of sentimental sludge—match your definition of a teenage girl in love?

(S.S. 1 closes her screen as S.S. 2 opens another.)

S.S. 2. Perhaps this will bring you that spark of recognition and you will think, “Yes, that is precisely what I mean!” Sample C:

(S.S. 2 pulls back a screen to reveal TIM and SUE on cell phones, facing away from each other as if talking from separate homes. They are silent for a long time, but smiling beatifically.)

SUE. Tim?

TIM. Yeah?

SUE. Just making sure you were still there.

TIM. You couldn’t tell?

SUE. Well, yes, I could. I could hear you breathing. I just wanted to hear your voice.

TIM. Yeah.

SUE. I can’t imagine being quiet on the phone like this with anyone else in the world. Anybody else and I would be bored out of my mind. I would say, “Talk! Tell me something!” But I don’t need to talk. I just need to know you’re there.

TIM. Yeah.

(They are silent for another long moment. Occasionally, they sigh contentedly.)

TIM. Well...

SUE. Oh, don’t say it.

TIM. What?

SUE. Don’t say that you have to go.

TIM. How did you know I was going to?

SUE. That was your “I have to go” word. You always say “well” just before you say “I have to go.”

TIM. Hm. Well...

SUE. I know, I know. Do you really have to?

TIM. I better. I'll see you at school tomorrow.

SUE. That's a whole seven hours from now.

TIM. I know.

SUE. Can't you take the phone into bed with you?

TIM. My battery's dying.

SUE. Plug me in. I mean, plug it in.

TIM. Are you sure that's what you mean?

SUE. Tim!

TIM. Sue, I do have to go.

SUE. You can sleep. I'll just lie there and listen to you breathe.

TIM. Or snore.

SUE. You wouldn't snore. You're too perfect to snore.

TIM. Well...

SUE. Okay, I know. Good-bye, Tim.

TIM. 'Bye.

(They stay on the phone.)

SUE. Are you still there?

TIM. You didn't hang up.

SUE. Neither did you.

TIM. I better.

SUE. Okay.

TIM. Good-night.

SUE. Okay.

(They don't hang up.)

TIM. I don't want to do it.

SUE. You have to. I can't.

TIM. All right. When I count to three, we'll both hang up at the same time. Okay?

SUE. Okay.

TIM. One, two, three.

(Neither one hangs up.)

SUE. Are you still there?

TIM. Yeah.

(Pause.)

SUE. I can hear you breathing.

(S.S. 2 freezes them.)

S.S. 2. Did this stultifying, stagnant scene of sickening saccharin evoke any epiphanies out there? What about from you, Rick, our Representative Audience Member—is that what you envision teenage love is all about?

RICK. I don't know. I hate talking on the phone.

S.S. 2. Have any of our samples matched your perception?

RICK. Yeah. I mean, sort of. I guess so.

S.S. 2. Could you be a millimeter more definitive in your answers?

S.S. 1. I think he's doing fine.

RICK. There, see?

S.S. 2. *(To S.S. 1:)* Oh, do you?

S.S. 1. Yes, I do. Continuing on, I believe we have a Sample D. *(Glaring at S.S. 1, S.S. 2 shuts the screen on Sample C, Tim and Sue. S.S. 1 crosses to a new screen.)* Have you still not found it? Does your conception of teenage love still remain unexpressed? We present to you, then, Sample D, for your consideration and contemplation.

(S.S. 1 pulls back the screen, revealing DIXIE. By the end of the monologue, she is a shrieking mass of anger and tears.)

DIXIE. What do you mean I can't go out with Johnny tonight? Why not? *(She listens, as if to a parent.)* I've been spending too much time

with him? Are you crazy? I haven't been spending enough time with him! Don't you understand that I love him? You don't even know what love is! I know what you think; you think this is just some little fling. Puppy love. An infatuation! That's what I heard you tell Mrs. Ricker at the grocery store. You're always talking about me behind my back, but I know! I know! You can't keep me away from Johnny! He's the only thing that matters to me in my whole life! I'll run away! I'll...I'll kill myself! I will! If you don't let me see him, I'll jump off a bridge! You think I'm kidding, but I am not! My life isn't worth living without Johnny! (*Listening for a moment.*) Don't tell me you understand; don't even try to tell me that. If you understood, you wouldn't try to keep me away from the one true thing in my life, the one true love of my life. Me and Johnny were meant to be together. We have to be together! Don't you understand that I need him? Don't you understand that he is all I need to survive? I don't need to do my homework or clean my room or "uphold my family obligations"—all this crap you've been telling me. I need my Johnny! I don't even need to eat or drink or sleep! I just need Johnny! I need him! I need him! You don't understand me one...tiny...bit!

S.S. 2. (*After freezing DIXIE.*) Has this captured the quintessence of the concept for you? Is this teenage love, this over-wrought, over-blown, over-zealous display of careering, crying, caterwauling chaos? (*She closes the screen in front of DIXIE.*) What say you, Dr. Rick, our esteemed and illustrious audience representative? Which of our samples captured for you the quintessence of teenage love?

RICK. Quin-what-ence?

S.S. 1. Why do you insist on persecuting him?

S.S. 2. Why do you insist on defending him?

RICK. (*Looking in the dictionary.*) Quint, quintain, quintar...here we go...quintessence: the pure, highly concentrated essence of something; the purest or most typical instance as in "the quintessence of evil." Cool. Hey, you know what a "quisling" is?

S.S. 2. A quisling?

RICK. Yeah. Quisling.

S.S. 2. You're making that up.

RICK. No, it's right here. Quisling: a traitor who serves as the puppet of the enemy occupying his country.

S.S. 1. That is fascinating.

RICK. Yeah, dude, check this one out: quirt. It's like this whip thing. Look at the picture.

S.S. 2. Enough! We are not here to peruse the dictionary.

RICK. I'm learning stuff.

S.S. 2. We are not here for you to "learn stuff." Your purpose is as our R.A.M.; you are here to represent the views of the audience so we can ascertain whether our multifarious points are being sufficiently established as we wend our way down the path to thoroughly explicating the question, which is, if you will remember... *(She crosses to the screen hiding SARAH. She throws the screen back. SARAH wails.)* How did this happen? *(She shuts the screen quickly and walks back to RICK.)* So?

RICK. What?

S.S. 2. Which of our samples represented most fully for you the concept of teenage love?

RICK. If I answer, I might be like the quintessential quisling, huh?

(He laughs. S.S. 1 joins in.)

S.S. 1. That was very good!

S.S. 2. *(Grabbing RICK, hauling him toward the audience:)* That's it! We need a new one.

RICK. Hang on!

S.S. 1. *(grabbing RICK's arm, yanking him away from S.S. 2:)* No! He stays!

S.S. 2. He is slowing us down! You, yourself, have been insistent on our adherence to time constraints.

S.S. 1. *(Consulting watch:)* We're...we're a bit behind, but that is not entirely attributable to Rick!

S.S. 2. He's a big part of the problem!

RICK. Whoa, whoa, here, sisters, scientists, chill. *(To S.S. 2:)* I'm staying, okay? For one hundred smackers, I am your R.A.M-man, all the way. In answer to your question, which of the samples captured the quintessence of teenage love? None of them, exactly, but all together—you nailed it. I mean, the bit with the phones and the screaming and the cheesy poem and the giggling...that's it. That what they do—hell, it's even kind of what I do—when teenagers fall in love. So, you show me this Sarah chick crying her guts out and you tell me she's in love, well, it's sort of like, duh! What's the big deal?

S.S. 2. You asked that before.

RICK. And I'm asking again. I mean, I know this whole gig of yours revolves around this question—How did Sarah fall in love?—but, really, what is the big deal?

S.S. 1. Thank-you, Rick. Your commentary has provided the perfect punctuation to this portion of our program. Don't you agree, #2?

S.S. 2. Let us proceed. *(She pulls out a white board from offstage.)* Established: Samples A...

(S.S. 2 writes the words "Sample A" on the white board as well as "Sample B," "Sample C" and "Sample D" at the appropriate times. S.S. 1 runs from screen to screen during this section, throwing them back to reveal just a snippet of each of the scenes, then quickly closing them again.)

MINDY. No way!

MANDY & MARLY. Yes way!

ALL THREE. *(Shrieking:)* Oh, wow!

S.S. 2. B...

KAREN. Oh, Dougie, Dougie, Dougie, Doug,
I'd sell my cat to have your hug!
I'd sell my clothes and the living room rug;
I'd even sell my favorite mug.
My love is a train that goes chug, chug.

S.S. 2. C...

SUE. Do you know what, Tim?

TIM. Yeah?

SUE. We just breathed on the phone to each other for 22 minutes and 13 seconds without saying a word.

TIM. You timed it? That's amazing.

SUE. I loved every second.

TIM. Me, too.

S.S. 2. D...

DIXIE. We're going to build a life together! A real life! Not this fake one that you and Dad have with your house and your cars and your kids and all this...stuff! Me and Johny have something real, something you'll never understand! We have love! We have true, complete, awesome love! You can never take it away!

S.S. 2. All of these samples, then, have exemplified the typical view of adolescent love. Also established: Sarah...

(S.S. 1 pulls back the screen on SARAH.)

SARAH. *(Whimpering, hugging her pillow:)* I love him so much.

S.S. 2. Ostensibly, *(Writing SARAH's name on the white board under Samples A-D)* Sarah fits neatly into the category we have established, a category we could call, at the risk of being repetitive, *(At the top of the board, over the listed items, she writes the following three words as she speaks them)* "Teenagers in Love." R.A.M., is this an accurate summary?

RICK. Affirmative.

S.S. 1. Good word.

RICK. Thanks.

S.S. 2. #1, might you be willing to take the transition?

S.S. 1. Affirmative, #2.

RICK. Good word.

S.S. 1. Thanks. (*Taking S.S. 2's place at the white board, pointing at the various items on the list:*) A, B, C, D, Sarah—all members of the same set, correct? Incorrect! (*She erases everything on the board vigorously and replaces it with a new word as she speaks—"ostensibly."*) Those of you paying close attention may have noticed that #2 said that Sarah "ostensibly" fit neatly into the category called "Teenagers in Love." "Ostensibly" is the key word here.

S.S. 2. Indeed it is, for, as we...

RICK. (*Reading from the dictionary:*) Ostensible: representing or appearing as such; professed, as in "their ostensible gratitude was actually an attempt to gain an advantage." Whoa! I get it! Ostensible means just looking like something, but being something else.

S.S. 1. Precisely! While Sarah may look, ostensibly, like a typical teenage girl in love, she is far from typical! In this next section of the presentation, we will illustrate, using a series of comparisons, how Sarah Hillsbury is, in fact, vastly atypical, thus establishing why our central question...

RICK. How did this happen?

S.S. 1. Well-timed.

RICK. I'm all over it.

S.S. 1. Thus establishing why that very question is, in fact—to borrow the phrase from our R.A.M.—

RICK. Yo.

S.S. 1. A very big deal.

(During this last segment, since the point when RICK interrupted her, S.S. 2 has been standing aside, looking quite put out. Here, S.S. 1 turns to look at S.S. 2, expecting her to pick up with the next line. S.S. 2 looks back at her, feigning indifference. After a pause, she speaks.)

S.S. 2. What?

S.S. 1. Oh. I just...I assumed you would be coming in at that point.

S.S. 2. I'm still a part of this?

S.S. 1. Why wouldn't you be?

S.S. 2. Well, given the way you and Dr. Ram here were proceeding, I guess I just thought you had found me obsolete. (*To RICK:*) Do you need my coat?

RICK. Nah. Too small.

S.S. 1. #2, Rick is obviously not here in your capacity.

RICK. No way. I couldn't keep up with you guys.

S.S. 2. Then why don't you stop trying?

RICK. Whoa. Okay. Speak when spoken to only. Gotcha. For a hundred bucks, I can keep my mouth shut. No problem-o.

S.S. 1. #2, I don't think...

S.S. 2. Our first point of comparison is between the intelligence levels of Sarah and a typical teenager. While this may not seem intrinsic to our discussion, it will lay the groundwork for what will follow.

S.S. 1. (*Still concerned over RICK's ill-treatment:*) Uh...yes. Since, uh, since vocabulary has been a minor theme of this event, we will use it as a tool for exploring this component of Sarah's intelligence. First, we will bring out an individual you met earlier—S.Y.. Sarah Young.

(S.Y. comes in skipping.)

S.Y. Greetings again.

S.S. 2. And, for the purposes of our comparison, we will bring out Celia.

CELIA. Hey, everybody.

S.S. 1. Now, Celia is a typical teenage girl. She is 15 years old.

CELIA. 16 in a month.

RICK. My birthday's next month, too.

S.S. 1. That, while interesting, has no bearing whatsoever on our discussion, thank-you.

S.S. 2. Sarah Young is our representation of Sarah at age five.

S.Y. Five and three months. That means I'm five and three twelfths years old, which can be reduced to five and a quarter. That's how old I am.

S.S. 1. Now, one might assume that a fair comparison of vocabulary levels would necessitate that both subjects be of the same age.

S.S. 2. We believe, however, that this disparity in ages will better prove our point. A five-year-old Sarah versus a 15-year-old typical teenager.

S.S. 1. Now, the rules of this game are simple.

S.Y. A game! I love games. I have this one that I made up called SuperLab, and what you do is you take three Petri dishes...

S.S. 1. Sarah Young—time.

S.Y. Oh, yeah. Sorry.

S.S. 1. We are going to ask you to define a few words, ones that commonly appear on standardized tests for college admissions. We'll say the word. The first to raise her hand will be the first to have the opportunity to define it. If she fails in defining it, the other person will get the chance. #1 will keep score on the board. Ready?

CELIA. I guess.

S.Y. Ready, ready, ready, ready!

S.S. 1. First word: immutable.

S.Y. *(Raising her hand immediately:)* Oh, I know, I know!

S.S. 1. Sarah?

S.Y. Unchangeable. You want me to use it in a sentence?

S.S. 1. No, that's fine.

S.Y. I can!

S.S. 2. *(Marking it on the board:)* That's one point for Sarah Young.

S.Y. *(To CELIA:)* Did you know what it meant?

CELIA. I think I've heard it before. Maybe.

S.S. 1. Next word: guile.

(S.Y.'s hand shoots up immediately. CELIA raises her a moment later, but tentatively.)

S.S. 1. Sarah again.

S.Y. "Guile" means deceit. "I get bothered when people try to trick me with their guile."

S.S. 1. Correct again!

S.S. 2. That's two for Sarah Young and zero for Celia.

S.Y. *(To CELIA:)* Hey, I just thought of a joke. Want to hear it?

CELIA. Not really.

S.Y. Okay. What do you call a deceitful reptile with lots of teeth?

CELIA. Next word? Can we?

S.Y. A croco-*guile*! Get it? Croco-*guile*? That's a good one!

S.S. 1. Next word: insipid.

S.Y. 'Cause "guile" means deceitful and croc... *(To S.S. 1:)* I know that. "Insipid" means dull, lifeless. "The contestant's vocabulary did not seem to go beyond the most simple, insipid words."

CELIA. All right, you don't have to insult me, you little...

S.Y. What? I wasn't!

S.S. 1. That's another point for Sarah Young.

S.S. 2. Our score is now...

CELIA. Three to zero! I know! Next word—come on!

S.S. 1. Our next word is "instigate."

CELIA. All right, I'll take that one! Right here!

S.Y. *(To CELIA:)* Good job!

CELIA. Shut up.

S.S. 1. All right, Celia, what is your definition of “instigate,” please?

CELIA. It’s a...it’s like a...

S.Y. (*Whispering to CELIA:*) It’s really not “a” anything. It’s a verb, not a noun.

CELIA. I said shut up, you annoying little...genius.

S.Y. Oo. Snap, snap goes the croco-guile.

S.S. 1. “Instigate” is the word.

CELIA. I know what the word is. It means...something you open and shut really quickly.

(S.S. 1, S.S. 2 and S.Y. all stare at CELIA. RICK claps his hands three times.)

RICK. Way to go, Celia. You got one.

S.S. 1. (*turning to RICK suddenly:*) Sh!

CELIA. Yeah. That’s what it means.

(S.Y. suddenly starts to laugh uproariously.)

S.Y. Oh, that’s great! That’s a good one! “Instigate: Something you open and shut really quickly.” Get it—insta-gate? (*S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 start to laugh as well.*) That’s really funny!

CELIA. Yeah, thanks.

S.S. 1. I’m sorry. That is not correct.

S.Y. Hurry, supplies are limited. Please call the number on your screen to get your very own personal Insta-gate. Keeps pets and children right where they belong! I like that one, Celia.

CELIA. So glad I could make your night.

S.S. 1. Sarah Young, can you define correctly define “instigate”?

S.Y. Why, yes I can. Instigate: to provoke, to start something. My reptile joke seemed to instigate a whole new, fun direction for our game!

S.S. 1. Correct!

S.S. 2. And our score now stands at Sarah Young—four; Celia...

CELIA. You know what? I don't need this. I think you made your point, okay? I'm leaving. Forget this!

(CELIA exits.)

RICK. *(Rising, following CELIA off:)* Hey, wait a second!

S.Y. Aw, that's too bad. She was pretty funny. Can we keep playing, please? I know. How about if I can get two points for each question—one for giving the right answer and then one for coming up with a good joke about it? Wanna do that? Do you? Do you? What's the next word?

S.S. 2. *(Pushing the score board offstage:)* No, Sarah, that will have to be all for this segment.

S.Y. Oh, come on, please? I'm begging you. I'm imploring you. That's a good word, isn't it? Implore.

S.S. 1. *(Looking offstage, concerned about RICK's exit:)* Yes, very good, but...

S.Y. You know what I bet Celia would've said for that one? She probably would have said implore was the opposite of explore or something. She wasn't too bright, was she?

S.S. 2. It's not that Celia wasn't bright, Sarah; it's that you're exceptional.

S.Y. Thank-you. Can we play some more now?

(RICK has returned to his seat.)

S.S. 2. Not now. Ah, our prodigal audience member returneth. How nice.

RICK. Yo.

S.S. 1. Where did you go?

RICK. Nowhere. I was just talking to Celia for a second.

S.S. 1. Why?

RICK. I just wanted to tell her something. Is that a crime?

S.S. 2. I am glad you're back, actually. We...

S.S. 1. Are you sure you were telling her something? Or were you asking her for something?

S.S. 2. #1...

RICK. What are you talking about?

S.S. 1. Like her phone number? Her screen name? Hm?

RICK. What are you, my mother?

S.S. 1. I'd just like to know...

S.S. 2. #1! (*S.S. 1 looks over.*) Do you think we might proceed?

S.Y. Let's play another game!

RICK. Not that it's your business, but, if you must know, I was just telling Celia not to let that little brat bother her.

S.Y. Oh, yeah? Well, guess what? Your cranium is stuffed full of effluent, how about that?

RICK. Buzz off.

S.Y. Bet you don't even know what that means, do you? Do you?

S.S. 2. Sarah Younger, that's all we need you for at the moment. Why don't you go offstage for now? Okay?

S.Y. I don't like that guy.

RICK. Likewise, Pipsqueak.

S.Y. (*Moving toward RICK:*) Why, you...

S.S. 2. No, no, S.Y. That's enough. You go ahead offstage; we'll need you back later, all right? Maybe we'll play another game. Okay?

S.Y. Promise?

S.S. 2. Promise.

S.Y. (*Suddenly cheerful:*) Okay.

(She sticks her tongue out at RICK, then runs off.)

S.S. 2. Well. Now that we...

RICK. (*Reading from the dictionary:*) Effluent: An outflowing of waste, as if from a sewer. “Your cranium is stuffed full of...” Hey, that little brat called me a...

S.S. 2. Continuing on! #1, would you please recapitulate for us the purpose of our last demonstration?

S.S. 1. Fine. While Sarah, at age five, still had some growth to make in the area of manners...

RICK. You think?

S.S. 1. Our demonstration has clearly shown that she was certainly precocious in her vocabulary, one indicator of intelligence. In that area, she was far above average. Nor was vocabulary the only area in which Sarah’s growth was quite anomalous.

(S.S. 2 pulls back a screen showing MISS BLACKMAN, speaking as if to SARAH’s parents at a parent-teacher conference.)

MISS BLACKMAN. I am so pleased to finally meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Hillsbury. Oh, it’s not? Mr. Hillsbury and Mrs. Mason. Certainly, I understand. I apologize for my assumption. Is that hyphenated—Hillsbury-Mason—or...? No. Mr. Hillsbury, Mrs. Mason. I see that now, in my folder. I should have...anyway. Parents of Sarah—what an...outstanding daughter you have. I don’t know what to say, exactly. In every area she is, quite literally, off the charts. Just by way of comparison, allow me to show you some typical student work and then some of Sarah’s work. One of our first projects was to draw a picture of your family. Here we have a picture by a very nice boy in class, Billy Thompson. (*She holds up a crayon picture showing stick figures of a family—two parents, two children, a house and the obligatory sun in the corner.*) He’s made some good progress with his coloring, staying in the lines. His choice of colors is often a bit random—the green sun, for instance—but nothing terribly out of the ordinary. Now, this is what Sarah created in reaction to the same prompt. (*She holds up a picture, also out of crayon, of a replica of the Mona Lisa.*) As you can see, this is, uh, extremely well done. We had some question as to why Sarah chose this as a depiction of her family, and her explanation was—let’s see, it’s written on the back—”This classic painting by DaVinci metaphorically represents my family since there are four of us in our

family, if you include our turtle, Hyperion, and four is a very symmetrical number and I admire the symmetry in this painting. I also think our family is incredibly classic. Also, the smile of Mona Lisa is a lot like the smile my father has on his face when he falls asleep in his chair with a copy of the galleys for his latest scientific article on his lap.” If, uh, I remember correctly, Sarah was going to write more—she wrote it herself; we didn’t take dictation, as we usually have to for the kindergarteners—but we needed to move on. So that’s Sarah in art. In math, we have this typical work from Becky. (*MISS BLACKMAN holds up a piece of paper with large, ill-formed numbers on it.*) Becky’s getting some of the basic concepts of arithmetic down. $2+2$ here and the answer, 4, over here. Most of her numbers are...fairly close. So that’s Becky. And here is Sarah’s work in math. (*She pulls out a large piece of paper on which a complicated formula has been written out.*) This is a fascinating problem that, uh, Sarah needed to explain to me. I haven’t dealt with algorithms in quite a long time. But... (*as if listening to MRS. MASON.*) Oh, there is? Well, I’m sure if Sarah had had more time, she would have corrected the error. I’m sorry I didn’t catch it myself. Anyway, these two examples pretty much show how things have been going for Sarah in kindergarten. You know, we had the kids planting beans for one project, and commenting on how they grow, giving their observations. We tend to get things about the color of the leaves and how skinny the stems are—things like that. Sarah...well, I’m afraid her explanation about genetic mutations probably went over most of her classmates’ heads. And the heads of our two paraprofessionals. And, frankly, over mine as well. Mr. Hillsbury, Mrs. Mason, we are not mentally equipped to teach your daughter!

(S.S. 2 closes the screen.)

S.S. 1. So, let us now check in with Rick, our Representative Audience Member, to be certain that the import of this latest data has struck home. Rick, what do you think of Sarah at this point?

RICK. She is one very smart little brat.

S.Y. (*Offstage:*) I heard that, Effluent-head!

S.S. 2. Now, now, keep in mind that Sarah Young represents Sarah Hillsbury at a young age; Sarah is actually sixteen.

RICK. Oh, yeah. The crying chick back there.

S.S. 1. Yes. Now, using a bit of extrapolation, if Sarah was that intelligent, that far above average in kindergarten, what might she be like now, as an adolescent?

RICK. One super-duper smart chickeroony.

S.S. 2. Would you call her average?

RICK. Uh, gee, let me think, here...no.

S.S. 1. Precisely.

RICK. Okay, okay, but the question is still “How did Sarah fall in love,” right?

S.S. 2. Correct.

RICK. News flash, girls—smart people fall in love. I mean, maybe it’s a bit tougher for them—they have to take a break from...being so smart. But it’s still not a big deal.

S.S. 2. Ah, Rick, thank-you very much for that excellent segue into the next portion of our presentation. Incidentally, I am impressed, Dr. Rick. At times, you can be quite an effective Representative Audience Member.

S.S. 1. Hey!

S.S. 2. Pardon me? What’s the matter?

(RICK and S.S. 2 look at S.S. 1. She looks at them uncomfortably, unsure how to justify her jealous outburst.)

S.S. 1. *(Launching into the next part of the presentation:)* The turn our presentation must now take has been dictated by our Random Audience Member’s latest comment which carries with it the implication that, though Sarah may be highly advanced and far from typical in academic areas, that atypicality may not apply to so-called “matters of the heart.”

S.S. 2. In other words, might Sarah not be ready to pursue a Master’s Degree in, say, molecular biology at age 16, but still be very much at adolescent grade level in the study of love.

S.S. 1. To be even more concise, might Sarah be book-smart but love-dumb?

S.S. 2. The answer...

S.S. 1. Unequivocally:

S.S. 1. & S.S. 2. No.

S.S. 1. Behold two typical scenarios. Scenario One:

(S.S. 1 pulls back a screen showing JANE, acting like a seven-year-old, talking to her mother, CHRIS.)

JANE. Mamma, you know Billy at school?

CHRIS. Sure I know Billy. What about him, Sweetheart?

JANE. Some of the other girls say that he likes me.

CHRIS. Oh, Honey, your first crush. Let me get the camcorder for this. *(She takes out the camcorder and trains it on JANE.)* Go ahead now, Jane.

JANE. What do you want me to say?

CHRIS. Just talk about Billy again. Oh, just a second. *(Turning the camera on herself:)* This is Jane's first crush, March 17th, 2003. It's so cute! *(Turning the camera back around:)* Go ahead.

JANE. Mom!

CHRIS. Just act natural. Talk about Billy. Do you like him?

JANE. I guess. Kind of. I don't know.

CHRIS. Does he talk to you?

JANE. Sometimes. He chooses me to be on his side when we play kickball.

Chris *(Looking into the camera:)* Kickball! Did you hear that? So cute! *(Camera back on JANE:)* Go on, go on.

JANE. He wanted to hold my hand during a movie we watched yesterday.

CHRIS. Did you let him?

JANE. For a minute. Then it got all sweaty and gross so I took my hand back and wiped it on my pants.

CHRIS. Oh, this is so great! Okay, I want you to start again, (*CHRIS is getting to the floor and aiming the camera up at JANE*) but I'm going to film you from down here this time.

JANE. Mom, how do I know if he really likes me or not?

CHRIS. Oh, that is such a cute question. (*Camera on herself:*) Cute, cute! (*Camera on Jane:*) Go ahead, Honey. Talk about Bobby some more.

JANE. Billy!

CHRIS. Oh, oh, yeah. Just keep going. This is great! Grandma will have to see this—she'll just die!

(S.S. 1 shuts that screen.)

S.S. 2. Scenario Two!

(S.S. 2 pushes another screen back, showing MYRIAM giving a report on Valentine's Day. She has a poster with big hearts plastered on it.)

MYRIAM. For my holiday report I'm going to do a report about Valentine's Day. I have a poster here that I made. Um, I made all the hearts and my mom wrote some of the words because I couldn't get them to be big and still fit on the poster. Anyway, um, Valentine's Day wasn't always a holiday. Before it was a holiday it was just February 14th, which is sometimes on a Monday and sometimes on another day like Wednesday. And sometimes it's on a Thursday, but it's not always on a Thursday like Thanksgiving. And it doesn't have turkeys, either. Um, Valentine's Day is named after a man named Valentine. (*Reading from her notes:*) He was a priest back when everybody was a Roman, and he married people even when a general said that they couldn't be married because then they would be too busy being married to go and fight in wars. Valentine got in trouble and got his head cut off. And died. And so, a few years later, in 496 A.D., the Emperor Gela...Gelatine said that, from then on, everybody had to have Valentine's Day on February 14th to celebrate when St. Valentine got his head chopped off. And so now, we send cards and make cards and we have candy for Valentine's.

My mother usually gets all of us kids a big box of candy that we're supposed to share. And that's how we're supposed to show our love on Valentine's, by sharing, except my little brother doesn't like nuts so he bites into the chocolates to see if they have nuts and if they do he just puts them back in the box with teeth marks on them and I hate that so I usually hit him which I probably shouldn't do on Valentine's Day. But it's my favorite holiday because I love the colors pink and red and I love getting candy. The End. *(She pauses, as if getting a question from the teacher.)* What does A.D. stand for? Um...I think it's...after dinner?

(S.S. 1 closes the panel on MYRIAM.)

S.S. 1. Now, having viewed...

S.S. 2. One moment, #1, if you please. I believe it would be advantageous, at this juncture, for us to check in with our R.A.M.

S.S. 1. Why?

RICK. Really, you don't need to check in with me. I'm fine.

S.S. 1. Why do you want to check in with him, #2?

S.S. 2. Simply listen. Predictability, in the case of a standard theatrical production, a play, is viewed as a detrimental element. In our case, however, as scientists unfolding a concept built around a central question *(Pulling back the screen to reveal SARAH loudly blowing her nose, then closing it again quickly)*—how did this happen?—we aim for predictability. We wish our audience to be able to easily follow the structure of our argument. Therefore, we turn to our Representative...

S.S. 1. To our Representative Audience Member, Rick, to ask him how well we are achieving that predictability. Rick, what do you think is coming next?

RICK. Lunch?

S.S. 1. *(After brief perfunctory laughter:)* No, really. Given the samples we just exhibited, what do you suppose will follow?

RICK. A light snack?

S.S. 2. Remember before when I told you how impressed I was with your behavior as R.A.M.? I take it back. Answer the question!

S.S. 1. Please, Rick.

RICK. All right, all right. Geez, you guys need to lighten up now and then. Live a little.

S.S. 1. Rick!

RICK. You just showed us two examples of how typical little dudes might deal with the idea of love. Next, I suppose we're going to be seeing how Sarah, the not-so-typical little br...smart kid, deals with the same thing.

S.S. 2. There, now, was that really so difficult?

S.S. 1. *(To S.S. 2:)* There, now, do we really need to be so condescending?

RICK. Are we doing a lunch break at any point?

S.S. 2. And so, in precisely the same locations as our last samples, in accordance with our clearly predictable plan, we will now witness Sarah's education in the oh-so-nebulous arena of love.

RICK. I guess that's a big no on the food thing. Great.

(S.S. 2 begins to pull back a screen. S.S. 1 stops her.)

S.S. 2. #1?

S.S. 1. #2, perhaps now would be an opportune time for a brief intermission.

RICK. Now you're talking!

S.S. 2. Intermission? That is theatrical terminology. Need I remind you, #1, of our earliest and most basic tenet—this is not a play?

RICK. Just ten minutes so I can grab something to eat.

S.S. 2. We are not here to cater to your gastronomical whims!

S.S. 1. #2, if I might have a word.

(S.S. 1 whispers in S.S. 2's ear.)

S.S. 2. (*Pulling away:*) Didn't you go before we started?

RICK. Hey, I bet #1's not the only one who has to go number one.

S.S. 2. (*To RICK:*) Cease all communications. Well, #1?

S.S. 1. I didn't have to before. Besides, we have clearly established the next segment of our explication. We will lose nothing by pausing at this juncture.

RICK. Come on, #2, be a sport.

S.S. 2. (*To audience:*) Despite my better judgment, we are apparently going to acquiesce to the bodily needs of S.S. 1 and our Representative Audience Member. Please return punctually in ten minutes.

RICK. (*Rushing off:*) Great!

S.S. 2. (*Exiting with S.S. 1:*) Next time, be sure...

S.S. 1. I will, I promise.

(S.S. 2 holds her up her ten fingers and mouths the word "ten" to the audience just before exiting.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(S.S. 1, S.S. 2 and RICK enter. The stage is as it was when they exited.)

S.S. 2. Very good. Now that we have dispensed with that superfluous delay...

S.S. 1. Did you get something to eat, Rick?

RICK. Yeah, I snagged some nachos and a Dr. Pepper. I'm good.

S.S. 1. I'm so pleased.

S.S. 2. *(Pointedly at S.S. 1 and RICK:)* Now that we have dispensed with that superfluous, extraneous and downright nettlesome delay, we will continue.

RICK. *(To S.S. 1:)* She's got some anger issues.

S.S. 2. To remind you where we left off, I will repeat the same sentence I used previous to the...

S.S. 1. Intermission.

S.S. 2. Interruption. In accordance with our clearly predictable plan, we will now witness Sarah's education in the oh-so-nebulous arena of love.

(S.S. 2 pulls back a screen to show S.Y. with her mother and father.)

S.Y. Mother, Father, I have a question.

MRS. MASON. Yes, Sarah.

MR. HILLSBURY. Sit down, Sarah.

S.Y. Well, there is a boy named Billy at school.

MRS. MASON. Billy Thurston?

S.Y. Yes, him. Three girls from class told me that he likes me.

MRS. MASON. Ah. Did Billy actually approach you at any point?

S.Y. Sort of.

MR. HILLSBURY. Explain.

S.Y. Well, I saw him maneuvering his way over to me just before we were going to watch a movie during class. During the film, I think he wanted to...hold my hand.

MRS. MASON. And what did you do?

S.Y. I kept slapping it away. Finally, when he persisted, I turned to him and said, "Billy, I hypothesize that you could swallow your own hand clear up to the elbow. I would like to prove that theory right now." He moved away.

MR. HILLSBURY. (*To MRS. MASON:*) Well, I think she handled the situation admirably.

S.Y. Thank-you. But he still looks at me all the time. What's the matter with him?

MRS. MASON. Biology is the matter with him, Sarah.

S.Y. Biology? Mother, I hate to say this, but my class has barely even approached a discussion of proper scientific methodology, never mind any specific discipline.

MRS. MASON. I realize this, Sarah. By biology, I do not mean the particular science; I mean the hereditary force that is working inside of poor Billy. I hope you won't be offended by my frankness here, Darren.

MR. HILLSBURY. Quite to the contrary, Blanche. I believe our daughter needs frankness at this time.

MRS. MASON. Billy is a male of the species; as such, even at his age, he is quite forcibly compelled by his biological instincts. Though he doesn't realize it, and certainly can't, nor probably ever will be able to verbalize his tendencies, Billy's problem is simple: He wants to fertilize your eggs.

S.Y. Mother. You've shown me the charts and diagrams. I am still years from puberty. I have no available eggs.

MRS. MASON. Billy is practicing. Unfortunately, the male biological urges couple with an over-heated and delusional media these days, so the acting out of these mating rituals occurs at younger and

younger ages. I am afraid, Sarah, that you have not seen the last of Billy and his ilk.

MR. HILLSBURY. In the future, they may be reaching for things other than your hand.

S.Y. The girls, though, the ones who first reported to me about Billy's...

MRS. MASON. Affinity?

S.Y. Yes! I just looked that one up yesterday. "Affinity." Anyway, the girls who first told me of Billy's affinity for me—they actually said that he...loved me.

MR. HILLSBURY. Love.

S.Y. What's that all about?

MRS. MASON. I suspect, at some point in history, that some man was having a very difficult time spelling biology, so he invented the word love.

S.Y. Love is biology?

MRS. MASON. Yes.

S.Y. Okay. Thanks. I'm going to go record this conversation in my journal.

MR. HILLSBURY. Excellent. I have some writing to do myself. Need to finish up that article.

(MR. HILLSBURY kisses his wife and daughter, then exits. S.Y. starts to follow him off.)

MRS. MASON. Sarah?

S.Y. Yes, Mother?

MRS. MASON. What do you plan to do about Billy?

S.Y. Well, now that I know all this hand-holding business is just a play for my not-yet-existent eggs, I think I'll avoid him.

MRS. MASON. A decent tactic. But Sarah, I must warn you of one phenomenon.

S.Y. What's that?

MRS. MASON. The female biological programming makes us susceptible to a particular emotion: pity.

S.Y. Pity.

MRS. MASON. Yes. I believe, if it weren't for pity, we women could easily stay disentangled from men until the appropriate time, which should be in our late twenties to mid thirties, or at least until we have our doctoral degrees.

S.Y. How does pity figure in?

MRS. MASON. You see, Sarah, boys, well, truth be told, men, too, for that matter, can appear very needy at times when it comes to the whole issue of biology, love, or, an even easier word to spell—sex.

S.Y. Billy did look a lot like a beaten puppy when I said that about his hand.

MRS. MASON. Precisely. In the future, Billy, and others like him, will get very clever, very insistent, that this love is something they need, must have, or they will absolutely die or fall to pieces or explode or some other such nonsense if you don't...help them. So, you may, if the male is attractive enough or just plain plaintive enough—for goodness' sake, Sarah, they can look for all the world like a helpless hamster with its foot in a trap—you may just think the boy is too pitiful to be ignored and you must bring it aid.

S.Y. Like the St. Bernards with the little barrels around their necks that find people lost in the snow.

MRS. MASON. Just like that. Boys wanting sex can look just as desperate as lost travelers in a blizzard. But, mind you, they're not going to die—not really. And you don't have to be their St. Bernard. Don't take pity on them. Send them on their way with a polite pat on the head and a suggestion they mail you a postcard if they are still single after they've earned their Ph.D.

S.Y. Mother?

MRS. MASON. Yes, Sarah?

S.Y. Did I come from pity?

MRS. MASON. Oh, no, Sarah. You came from informed, mature, loving choice.

S.Y. So Dad never looked like a hamster in a trap.

MRS. MASON. Well, occasionally, but that can't be helped. Seriously, though, the lie you will unfortunately be inundated by is that love and sexual desire are uncontrollable, like forces of nature. You're walking outside and suddenly it starts to rain, or, more apropos, you get struck by lightning.

S.Y. That's actually extremely rare, I read. You have more chance of a fatal accident in the bathtub than you do of being killed by lightning.

MRS. MASON. True. The point is, however, that lightning is a force of nature, and getting struck by it is something that just happens. You don't have a choice.

S.Y. Well, you have the choice of not standing out in the open during a thunder storm or not being the highest point...

MRS. MASON. Sarah, you're dwelling on the wrong side of the simile, here. I'm talking about the fallacy that love happens to you. What I want to stress, though, is that it is a choice. A choice. In your pre-teen, teen-age and young adult years, you need to choose to stay aloof from the chaos of it all so you can accomplish the things you should. Then, when the time is right, you may enter the arena, so to speak, proclaim yourself available, and let love come to you, as your father came to me. Then, from that union, came you. A genuinely loving experience, perfectly timed.

S.Y. You never liked any boys before Father?

MRS. MASON. Well, after choosing to enter the arena, as I mentioned, various suitors came and presented themselves, but your father won, so to speak.

S.Y. And he got to fertilize your eggs! He's the only one who ever got to, right?

MRS. MASON. That is...correct, Sarah. Now, I'm glad we had this talk.

S.Y. So am I. I'm ready for Billy now.

MRS. MASON. Good for you. Remember: What do we not want to show?

S.Y. Pity.

MRS. MASON. Good! And love is a...

S.Y. Choice.

MRS. MASON. That we make after...

S.Y. We earn our doctorate!

MRS. MASON. That's my girl.

(S.S. 2 closes the screen.)

RICK. You have got to be kidding me. Nobody in the history of this country has ever had a conversation with a kid like that. Nobody! Nobody in the history of the world!

S.S. 1. Actually, it did happen.

S.S. 2. Would you like to look at the corroborating documentation?

RICK. I have no idea what you just said, but I don't think so. That was whacked!

S.S. 2. Considering your educational level and gender, I'm not surprised you found it "whacked."

RICK. What's that supposed to mean?

S.S. 2. Nothing, except I can easily picture you as gerbil with its foot in a trap.

S.S. 1. That is quite enough. #2, might I remind you that Rick is here on his own volition. We should not be abusing him.

RICK. Yeah, and I hope whatever you just said about me being here on my own violation or whatever keeps in mind the hundred bucks!

S.S. 2. Yes, #1, did you keep in mind his salary?

S.S. 1. (*Uncomfortable:*) Of course. Our final sample for this segment of our presentation correlates and contrasts with the earlier sample you saw—that highly informative piece about Valentine’s Day. Without further adieu, Sarah, age seven, delivers her oral report.

(S.S. 1 pulls back the screen. S.P.D. stands beside a highly complex poster showing cut-aways of two human brains. Also, on the bottom left side of the poster is a picture of two jumping rabbits. On the top of the poster, these words: “Infatuation: A Form of Mental Illness.” Though she is dressed as she was when we first met her, S.P.D. speaks as if she is seven years old.)

S.P.D. The thesis of my report today is that adolescent infatuation bears a definite resemblance to many forms of mental illness. Before I go deeply into my main explanation, though, I want to call your attention to this part of my visual. *(She points to the rabbits. She pauses for a moment, as if listening to someone in the crowd.)* Well, I’m so glad you have three rabbits, Jackson, but since this is my report right now I think you should pretty much keep your mouth shut. *(As if listening to the teacher:)* Yes, Miss Buckley, I will let you take care of discipline. Now, back to my poster. These are European Hares, and the reason I drew them jumping like this was...

(S.Y. enters onto the platform, looking furious.)

S.Y. What do you think you’re doing?

S.P.D. I’m giving this report. What does it look like I’m doing?

S.Y. And who are you representing, pray tell?

S.P.D. Sarah, of course, just as we all are.

S.Y. Sarah at what age, pray tell?

S.P.D. At age...you were busy. I just figured I would take this because you just finished that last scene.

S.Y. So you just thought you could proceed on over here to play Sarah at age seven, is that it?

S.P.D. Well, you’ve been out here plenty! I thought the audience might just like to see a new face now and then.

S.Y. You just thought you'd let your jealousy get the best of you. I am Sarah Young. I play her from ages three to seven. You take her from 12 to 16.

S.P.D. Well, at our current pace, we're never going to get to my section.

S.Y. Well, that's not my problem!

S.S. 2. Sarah.

S.S. 1, S.P.D., & S.Y. What?

S.S. 2. Sarah Present Day, though we are, admittedly, a bit behind on time, we will certainly get to the samples involving you. They are crucial to our exploration.

S.P.D. Well, all right. I...I apologize.

S.Y. You do?

S.P.D. Yes. I am sorry for trying to usurp your part.

S.Y. You're sorry?

S.P.D. I am.

S.Y. Well, apology...denied. Get out!

S.P.D. We need a new Sarah Young! She is insufferable! Intractable!

S.S. 1. (*Pushing S.P.D. offstage:*) I know, I know. It's fine. Be patient.

S.P.D. She is a brat!

S.Y. Of course I am! That's just what Sarah was when she was a little kid! So I'm playing it just the way... (*Noticing RICK sitting by, looking smug:*) Yeah, okay, fine, I admit it. You happy?

RICK. Indubitably.

S.S. 1. Sarah Young, since the topic has come up, we really do have to press forward.

S.Y. (*Back to the report:*) European hares. When the female is in estrus, which happens for only a short time, the animals perform frantic mating antics, hence the phrase "mad as a March hare." Now, I bring this up only to illustrate the point that we humans

have often looked at the animal kingdom and decided that animals, in the middle of sexual desire... *(As if listening:)* All right, I'll try not to say that. We humans call animals that are all revved up and ready to do the nasty... *(As if listening:)* But that's not really accurate, is it? Okay, even though you're damaging my scientific integrity. We humans call animals that are...in love...crazy. What I'm trying to show is that humans, especially in the early phases of se...love...act much the same way and could also be called insane. Here's a quote from an article in the Science section of The New York Times, May 30th: "New love can look for all the world like mental illness, a blend of mania, dementia and obsession that cuts people off from friends and family and prompts out-of-character behavior." These two brain scans show the profiles of two people. The top is a paranoid schizophrenic strung out on cocaine. The bottom is a 17-year-old girl who lives next door who just recently got a major crush on a guy named Max Cooper. You probably better not tell her about how her brain scan ended up here, by the way. Anyway, we can see the major similarities between the patterns... *(As if listening:)* Really? Out of time already? But I...okay. I just wanted to do one more thing, really quick. This sort of has to do with my project. Can I? Good. *(She takes out two Easter eggs.)* Billy, I got these for Easter last year. My neighbor gave them to me. They are my eggs. Do you understand? My eggs. You can have them, okay? But after I give them to you, after you have my eggs, which is what you want, then you better keep your hands to yourself, Buster!

(S.S. 1 closes the screen.)

RICK. Whoa.

S.S. 2. Now do you see?

S.S. 1. Rick, can you understand the reason for our question?

S.S. 2. Can you see how Sarah falling in love is, indeed, a big deal?

RICK. Well...and she was like this all the way...?

S.S. 1. Throughout elementary school, junior high, and the first two years of high school, yes.

RICK. Dude, that is one of the saddest things I've ever heard.

S.S. 2. Sad? Why sad?

RICK. I mean, what did she do all the time? Sit in her laboratory and conduct experiments? What kind of a life is that for a kid?

S.S. 1. Oh, no, no, Rick, you misunderstand. While Sarah certainly spent a fair amount of her time on rigorous studies—by this time she was augmenting her standard high school curriculum with numerous college courses—she also had a very active social life.

RICK. Yeah—chicks only, though.

S.S. 2. With a plethora of friends of both genders. She outgrew her some of her less endearing social tendencies...

RICK. You mean she wasn't always a brat.

S.S. 1. Exactly.

S.Y. *(Off:)* You're all effluent heads!

S.S. 2. While no one would claim Sarah was the most popular individual at her high school, she did have a large circle of acquaintances and an average number of good friends.

RICK. Yeah, but, like, what did they...do?

S.S. 1. Talked, bowled, watched films, went skiing, ate pizza...the normal activities. Observe.

(S.S. 1 opens a screen, showing S.P.D. laughing with three friends—JOE, MIKE and MICHELLE.)

JOE. You have got to be kidding me.

MIKE. No, seriously. I saw him do it. He jumped over the fence, ripped a big hole in the crotch of his jeans...

S.P.D. Oh, that's terrible!

MICHELLE. I can just see him doing it, too! He is such a klutz.

S.P.D. Then what happened?

MIKE. Then he fell, face first, in about a foot of mud.

JOE. Man, I wish I had seen that!

S.P.D. Was he all right?

MIKE. It was a soft landing. He was all right, but when he got up, he's got one hand wiping his face, the other holding his pants together...

MICHELLE. It serves him right, anyway; he's always trying to show off.

S.P.D. That is so funny. Oh, you know what? That reminds me of a joke.

(The friends all groan.)

S.P.D. No, this is a good one! You'll like it!

JOE. Sure, like the one about the mitochondria that I'm still trying to figure out?

MICHELLE. Sarah, nobody gets your jokes.

S.P.D. You'll get this one. You will.

MIKE. So, this astrophysicist walks into a bar...

S.P.D. Oh, stop! I tell good jokes.

JOE. Just tell me this: Is this a Hillsbury original?

S.P.D. Well...

MIKE. Oh, no!

MICHELLE. Sarah!

S.P.D. But it's good! Just listen. This philosopher...

MIKE. This is not promising.

S.P.D. This philosopher has a problem with flatulence, right?

MIKE. Flatulence?

JOE. Gas, Mike—you should know that one.

MIKE. Oh, yeah.

S.P.D. Everything he eats gives him trouble that way. He becomes a pariah because of this problem of his.

MICHELLE. The problem turns him into a little fish with sharp teeth?

S.P.D. Pariah, not piranha. Pariah means social outcast.

MICHELLE. Then say that, Sarah! I can understand that!

S.P.D. “Pariah” is a perfectly good word. Why should I waste my breath on the phrase “social outcast” when “pariah” is available? “Social outcast” is four syllables while “pariah” is only three!

JOE. Okay, fine. We’ve heard the public service message from the Society for the Preservation of Syllables, right? Let’s get on with the joke.

S.P.D. Where was I?

MIKE. The guy has gas; he’s an outcast...

S.P.D. Right, right, and he’s a philosopher—that’s an important detail.

MICHELLE. Philosopher with gas, not a piranha. Let’s hear it, Sarah!

S.P.D. He can never have any friends over because of his flatulence troubles, so he’s a very lonely man. One day, though, he discovers, while he’s cooking his dinner, that the smell of boiling sweet potatoes neutralizes the smell of his...other odors.

JOE. Okay.

S.P.D. So, this solves his problem. Now, he can entertain friends in his home and not worry about the gaseous emissions.

(MICHELLE starts to laugh. After a moment, she stops.)

MICHELLE. What?

S.P.D. That wasn’t the punch line.

MICHELLE. Oh. I thought it was. It sounded like it could be. I mean, when you tell jokes, Sarah, half the time you finish and I don’t know you’ve finished and then you look at me like, “Why aren’t laughing?” and I didn’t even know I was supposed to so I decided, this time, I would laugh when I thought you were done.

S.P.D. Even though there was nothing to laugh at.

MICHELLE. I just wanted to be nice! Sorry.

MIKE. Okay, okay...back to the joke. The guy...

S.P.D. The philosopher!

MIKE. The philosopher has friends now because he boils sweet potatoes that cover the smell of his gas.

S.P.D. Right! So, one day, one of his friends says to this philosopher, "Why is it that every time we come to visit, you have sweet potatoes cooking?" And the philosopher replies, "I stink, therefore I yam." (**MIKE, JOE and MICHELLE** all stare bemusedly at **S.P.D.**) Get it?

JOE. You did it again, Sarah.

S.P.D. Descartes, right? The famous quote from Descartes, the philosopher—"I think, therefore I am"? Everybody knows that. It's the existential credo!

MIKE. Sarah, you're going to be a piranha if you keep trying to tell jokes.

S.P.D. You know, it's a rhythm thing; you guys just won't let me get rolling with the joke before you interrupt. Rhythm is a very important component of humor...

(S.S. 1 pulls the screen shut.)

S.S. 2. Granted, Sarah's intelligence created certain impediments to smooth social intercourse at times...

RICK. Whoa! Intercourse! I thought you said she didn't do that stuff!

S.S. 2. Ah, a multi-syllabic word has piqued Dr. Rick's interest. Why don't you look it up; you'll understand my meaning and your ignorance.

RICK. You want me to look up intercourse? All right. I wonder if they've got pictures for this one.

S.S. 1. (*Pulling S.S. 2 aside:*) You know, I have tried, through subtle tactics, to let you know of my disapproval, but now I must be overt: Leave Rick alone. Why do you insist on attacking him?

S.S. 2. Attacking him?

S.S. 1. Yes. Your tone, directed at him, clearly shows...

RICK. (*Looking for the word:*) “Interclavicle.” That sounds kind of dirty. Here we are: “Intercourse: dealings or communications between persons or groups.” Oh.

S.S. 2. Ah, he stands enlightened.

RICK. Yeah, but look here. “2. Sexual intercourse.” See, see?

S.S. 2. Yes, I affirm that; I am aware of that definition. But, you see, my dear R.A.M., allow me to let you in on a little secret about the English language. Are you ready?

S.S. 1. You see, #2? That condescending tone is precisely...

S.S. 2. In English, you see, the same word can have various meanings depending on context. Do you need me to define context?

S.S. 1. Leave him alone!

(S.S. 2 and RICK look at S.S. 1 for a long moment.)

RICK. Yo, #1, Sister, it’s cool. I can take it.

S.S. 2. (*To S.S. 1:*) There, you see? He can “take it.” Satisfied?

S.S. 1. (*To RICK:*) I am not your sister.

RICK. What is it with you people and words?

S.S. 1. Back to a further elucidation of our argument. Established: Sarah is not a typical teen-ager.

S.S. 2. Established: Sarah has not received a typical education concerning the concept of adolescent love.

S.S. 1. Established: Though atypical, Sarah manages quite well to blend in with normal society, in most areas.

RICK. As long as she doesn’t tell jokes.

S.S. 1. However, having reached adolescence, Sarah steadfastly refused to allow herself to be assimilated into one particular aspect of her surrounding society.

S.S. 2. Correct!

S.S. 1. Not that she was without opportunity!

S.S. 2. Correct again! Though the workings of her intellect bore little resemblance to those of other females of her age, her body did develop in normal ways. S.P.D., come forward, please.

(S.P.D. comes out.)

S.S. 1. Stand here, please.

(S.P.D. stands on a short platform.)

S.S. 2. Before us, then, is Sarah Present Day. While she is only a representative of the real Sarah incapacitated behind yonder screen, she was chosen, in part, because her physical attributes quite closely match those of the real Sarah.

S.S. 1. A brief examination of those afore-mentioned attributes...

S.S. 2. Actually, #1, I think we have a more interesting method we might use to evaluate those attributes.

S.S. 1. Have we?

S.S. 2. Yes. Rick?

RICK. Right here.

S.S. 1. I am not certain that...

S.S. 2. You are a boy.

RICK. A man.

S.S. 2. A male.

RICK. Yeah.

S.S. 2. What do you think of this specimen before us?

RICK. What, her? I don't get her jokes.

S.S. 1. I object to this...

S.S. 2. No, no, Rick. Disregard anything you know of Sarah's personality or mind. Look solely at her physical characteristics right now.

RICK. You mean...

S.S. 2. Check out her bod, Rick.

S.S. 1. This is not scientific!

S.S. 2. Of course it is.

RICK. Well, uh...

S.S. 2. Oh, come now, Rick; don't be shy. You males are constantly rating and ranking females; it's an almost automatic past-time. This one before you—what do you think?

RICK. Okay.

(RICK begins to circle around S.P.D., checking her out.)

S.S. 1. Rick, if you find this demeaning at all...

RICK. No, no—I'm good. I can handle this.

S.S. 2. What is your assessment?

RICK. I'm still...assessing.

S.S. 2. Might we hear your thoughts?

RICK. Nice face. Pretty hair. Like the color.

S.S. 2. Oh, please; statistics show that human males do not begin evaluating females based on their hair and face. Be honest.

RICK. She dresses nice.

S.S. 2. How about her mammary glands?

RICK. Where are those?

S.S. 2. Breasts, Rick—breasts. Like them?

RICK. Whoa!

S.S. 1. Maybe that's not what he looked at first!

S.S. 2. Of course they are! He's a male. *(To RICK:)* Well?

RICK. They're...hey, I don't do this with chicks. This is a guy thing.

S.S. 1. You see? He's uncomfortable with this. We shouldn't be...

(Author's Note: If this next section is too provocative for your audience, you may eliminate bringing out ERIC and cut right to bringing out NORM. In addition, the conversation RICK has with NORM could be reduced to a series of appreciative, meaningful euphemisms or even non-words. While I think the script as written is funniest and most accurate to true experience, I realize that directors must be sensitive to the audience.)

S.S. 2. Bring out another male, then! *(Eric comes out.)* There. There's a guy. Interact with him. Let's hear your typical assessment.

RICK. Yo, Dude, check her out. What do you think?

ERIC. *(Looking longingly at Rick:)* Actually, I don't find her all that interesting. Let's talk about you.

RICK. Oh, now, this ain't going to work, either!

S.S. 2. *(Pushing ERIC offstage:)* We need a heterosexual male, please.

(NORM comes out.)

NORM. Yo.

RICK. Yo, Dude. How's it hanging?

NORM. Good, Man; how's it with you?

RICK. Hey, check this one out.

NORM. Mm. Not bad.

RICK. Yeah. Decent rack. Like the tush. I could get into that.

NORM. Hell, yeah. Wouldn't have to pay me or nothing.

S.S. 1. All right, that is enough! Enough!

S.S. 2. I think that evaluation would suffice, yes.

RICK. *(To NORM:)* Later, Dude.

NORM. *(Exiting:)* Take it easy.

S.S. 2. Suffice to say, then, Rick, you, as a male of the species, would find Sarah...sexy.

RICK. Yeah. Yeah, she's sexy.

S.S. 2. Using the second definition of intercourse, then, you would enjoy...

S.S. 1. I think we have sufficiently established the point, don't you?

S.S. 2. Perhaps you're right. Thank-you, S.P.D. (*S.P.D. goes off.*) Established, then: Sarah is a good-looking, sexually desirable young...

S.S. 1. For purposes of further clarification, I believe we should ask our Representative Audience Member how he would evaluate other iterations of Sarah.

S.S. 2. Why is that necessary?

S.S. 1. (*Standing on the platform that S.P.D. was on:*) Does he, for instance, find Sarah Scientist #1 also...sexy?

S.S. 2. I entirely fail to see...

S.S. 1. Does he?

RICK. You know what? Hundred bucks or not, I'm not sure this whole thing is worth it. You people are putting way too much pressure on me!

S.S. 2. You criticize me for being hard on him—you're the one who's going to drive him right out of the presentation.

S.S. 1. (*Getting off the platform:*) Fine, then, fine! He finds her attractive. That's all we need to know. Fine. Proceed.

S.S. 2. What purpose did...

S.S. 1. Never mind. I was temporarily deluded. The point is, our dear audience, that Sarah was attractive and therefore was subject to the advances of teen-age males. Her responses to those males, however, illustrate the fact that she never wavered from the ideals instilled in her at a young age.

(S.S. 1 throws back a panel. S.Y. is behind it. SIMON approaches her.)

SIMON. Hey, Sarah.

S.Y. Hello, Simon.

SIMON. Sarah, I was just wondering if you would like to...I mean, maybe sometime we could...we could...

S.Y. You want to fertilize my eggs?

SIMON. No! Nothing like that!

S.Y. Oh, you just want to go out.

SIMON. Yeah. I thought maybe we could see a movie or something.

(S.P.D. appears behind S.Y.)

S.P.D. What are you doing?

S.Y. Oh, just filling in. I thought you might have been tired after that last evaluation scene. A body can get very fatigued by being so closely scrutinized.

S.P.D. You were doing me a favor?

S.Y. Merely reciprocating the one you attempted to do me earlier.

S.P.D. Fine. Consider it reciprocated. Go away.

S.Y. How does it feel, to have someone trying to usurp your spot, hm? Does it feel scintillating? Empowering? Ennobling?

S.P.D. Actually, it creates an interesting sensation in my forearm. It apparently generates some sort of electric impulse that triggers a contraction of the muscles in my hand. See that? See how that's happening?

(She moves her fingers, jerking them into a claw-like shape.)

S.Y. That is a unique response.

S.P.D. Indeed. And now the spasms are increasing in intensity, inexorably pulling my fingers in tighter. *(Her hand has formed a fist.)* I can't seem to help it.

(Her arm pulls back, ready to punch S.Y.)

S.Y. You wouldn't!

S.P.D. (*Arm fully back, ready to let the punch fly:*) I cannot be held responsible!

S.Y. (*Running off:*) Mother!

S.P.D. (*Relaxing her hand:*) Ah. Much better. Now, you were saying, Simon?

SIMON. I thought maybe we could go to a movie.

S.P.D. Alone.

SIMON. Yeah. The two of us.

S.P.D. And then you could fertilize my eggs?

SIMON. Hey, Sarah, lighten up. I never said that!

S.P.D. Whether or not you said it, or even knew it, that's what you meant. You can't help it. You're a male. (*Reaching into a box, taking out two eggs:*) Here you are. These are mine. You can have them. Good-bye.

(*SIMON walks off, dejected. From the other side of S.P.D. comes ROGER.*)

ROGER. Hey, Sarah, how's it going?

S.P.D. Fine, Roger, how are you?

ROGER. Good, good. Look, I'm having a party this week-end, you know, just a few of us out at my dad's camp. Want to come?

S.P.D. (*Searching in the box:*) Let's see, let's see. (*Pulling out two more eggs:*) These are a good color for you. (*Handing ROGER the eggs:*) No, I will not go to your party. Here are my eggs.

(*ROGER exits. SAL comes in.*)

SAL. Sarah, looking good today.

S.P.D. Blue! (*Reaches in the box, pulls out two blue eggs, hands them to SAL:*) For you. Good-bye.

(*SAL exits. S.S. 1 closes the screen.*)

S.S. 2. Her defenses were impenetrable!

S.S. 1. Her goals rock-solid!

S.S. 2. Her reasoning accurate!

S.S. 1. Her intellect honed to razor-sharpness!

RICK. Then how in the hell did Sarah ever fall in love? (*S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 turn to him abruptly.*) It's a really good question.

S.S. 1 & S.S. 2. Thank-you.

RICK. Can I look at her again? The real one?

S.S. 2. Be our guest.

(RICK crosses up to the screen hiding SARAH.)

RICK. (*Regarding the screen:*) What do you do? Just pull this?

S.S. 1. Allow me.

(S.S. 1 pulls the screen back to show SARAH, still on the bed, whimpering. RICK looks at her.)

RICK. Can she see me?

S.S. 2. She is oblivious to all but her own misery.

RICK. Yeah. Can she see me?

S.S. 1. No.

(He moves around SARAH, shaking his head.)

RICK. You're sure this is the same girl? The one with all the words? With the bad jokes? All that? This is the one with the eggs.

S.S. 1. The very same.

RICK. Nobody came in here and did a body-snatcher thing, replaced the real Sarah with this one.

S.S. 2. Fingerprints and DNA analysis confirm—she is the Sarah Hillsbury.

RICK. Drugs! Somebody slipped a mickey in her juice or something!

S.S. 1. Her parents had her tested. No illicit substances of any kind. A trace of antihistamine for her stuffy nose—that's all.

RICK. Well, that can do a number on you right there. I once had this cough syrup; man, did it make me loopy!

S.S. 2. The antihistamine was administered two hours ago, after she went to her room and began this...fit, for lack of a better description.

RICK. Wow. Weird.

S.S. 1. I do appreciate how sensitive you're being to this situation now, Rick.

S.S. 2. Yes. *We* do appreciate that you, as our Representative Audience Member, have finally come to an understanding of the gravity and depth of this enigma. Only after a long and arduous explication of just how unique is Sarah's situation can we begin to contemplate the reason for this—if I may editorialize--horrendous occurrence.

RICK. What I want to know is, Who is the dude?

S.S. 1. Precisely! Who is the dude?

RICK. I mean, he must have been some kind of—I don't know—mega-scientific stud who came along and just...knocked her out, you know? I mean, I wouldn't have had a chance with her. She would've been handing me her eggs in about two seconds flat.

S.S. 1. You may be underestimating yourself.

(S.S. 2 has taken off her lab coat. She holds it up to RICK.)

RICK. Whoa, what're you doing?

S.S. 2. Oh, well, just taking a look here. Since you so clearly want my position, I thought I would just see if the coat would, indeed, fit you.

RICK. Look, we've been through this before. I ain't after your job.

S.S. 2. Oh, I am eternally grateful. I thought, the way you were so energetically theorizing over the type of "dude" who has caused this cataclysm, and the way you (*Referring to S.S. 1*) were so

wholeheartedly cooperating with him, that I had become suddenly obsolete.

RICK. I'm going back to my spot. Here I go. R.A.M. in his chair. Don't mind me. I'm just audiencing.

S.S. 2. *(To S.S. 1:)* Are we prepared to continue?

S.S. 1. I suppose so.

S.S. 2. You suppose?

S.S. 1. Yes.

S.S. 2. And why, pray tell, do you suppose rather than know? *(S.S. 1 doesn't answer.)* #1, what is the cause of your obvious disgruntlement?

S.S. 1. *(After looking at S.S. 2 for a long moment:)* I am not disgruntled.

S.S. 2. You most certainly...

S.S. 1. *(Out to audience:)* Who! That is the logical next question as we continue to delve into this mystery. Who could have the power to break through the thick logic walls and sturdy scientific turrets of Sarah Hillsbury's anti-sex, anti-biology, anti-love castle?

S.S. 2. Welcome back, Science Sister!

S.S. 1. Take it, #2.

S.S. 2. Who, indeed?

(S.S. 2 goes up to another screen and pushes it back. S.P.D. stands behind it, holding several eggs.)

S.P.D. I have plenty of eggs left. Any other takers? Feel free, males of the species. Anyone finding me sexually attractive, come on down and get an egg or two. It's yours to keep, to use as you please. Anyone? Anyone?

S.S. 2. One might justifiably imagine that the individual powerful enough to bring about Sarah's downfall would be virtually...god-like.

(A heavenly light shines down on S.P.D. A god-like voice booms from some unseen source.)

GOD-LIKE VOICE. Sarah.

(SARAH turns toward the voice.)

S.P.D. Hello. Are you after my... *(She drops all of her eggs and stares into the light, awe-struck. We hear the strains of heavenly music.)* Oh! Who art thou?

GOD-LIKE VOICE. Sarah, I am a male of the species.

S.P.D. *(Falling to her knees:)* Yes, so I noticed.

S.S. 1. One might imagine that the intellectual power of this boy-slash-man-slash-other-wordly-being must have been overpoweringly prodigious.

GOD-LIKE VOICE. Sarah, Einstein was a fraud. Here is my proof!

(The light intensifies even further as the music swells. S.P.D. squints into the light, as if reading what this god-like figure is showing her.)

S.P.D. I never thought of the universe that way! You are a genius!

GOD-LIKE VOICE. Sarah, I want your eggs!

S.P.D. *(Enraptured:)* Oh, take me! Take all of me!

(She falls prostrate on the floor. The music and light fades away.)

S.S. 2. One might imagine that only an individual of such power, such immensity, such capacious cranial capacity could win the heart of our Sarah.

S.S. 1. One might imagine.

S.S. 2. But one would be wrong.

(PHIL enters onto the platform, from the same direction as the light. He is a very non-descript boy.)

PHIL. Hi.

S.P.D. *(Looking up from where she has fallen amongst her eggs:)* Hello.

PHIL. *(Stooping to pick up the eggs:)* You want some help? That's was quite a fall you just took.

S.P.D. Yeah. Yes. Uh, thanks.

PHIL. My name's Phil.

S.P.D. I'm Sarah.

RICK. *(Running over, grabbing a remote, freezing the scene with Phil and S.P.D.:)* What? You have got to be kidding me. This dude? This? What's his name, Phil? So what is he, a rocket scientist or something? A nuclear...whoosie-doozy? I mean, he's nothing.

S.S. 1. Yes. We are as astounded as you are, Rick.

RICK. What's he got going for him?

S.S. 2. Patience. Watch. The mystery gets murkier.

RICK. *(Crossing back to his chair:)* Phil. Phil! This is nuts.

S.S. 1. Excuse me, Rick?

RICK. It doesn't make any sense.

S.S. 1. Might I have the remote back?

RICK. Oh, yeah. Sorry. This thing has me really screwed up.

(S.S. 1 gets the remote from RICK. Their hands touch. S.S. 1 savors the moment briefly.)

S.S. 1. Thank-you, Rick.

RICK. The guy's name is Phil. That's wrong right there.

(S.S. 1 hits the button to restart the scene with S.P.D. and PHIL.)

PHIL. Sarah, huh? Hm.

S.P.D. What?

PHIL. Oh, nothing. I knew another Sarah once, that's all.

S.P.D. Really? Was that a deleterious experience, knowing this other Sarah?

PHIL. Deleterious? Well, if I knew what that meant, I would tell you if it was that way or not.

S.P.D. Sorry. Causing harm.

PHIL. Oh. No, it wasn't like that at all. What's with the eggs, anyway?

S.P.D. Oh, these are mine. You don't...do you want one?

PHIL. Not especially, no. Thanks for asking.

(S.S. 2 closes the screen.)

S.S. 2. And so it began.

RICK. So it began? What began? Just like that? "Not especially, no. Thanks for asking." He didn't even know what deleterious meant. He's a moron! Why did she go for a guy like that?

S.S. 1. Rick...

RICK. I know, I know, I'll shut up. No, I don't want to wear anybody's lab coat. I'll sit here.

S.S. 1. Indeed, our Representative Audience Member voices the very consternation we have felt.

S.S. 2. The very consternation we, frankly, continue to feel.

S.S. 1. How?

S.S. 2. How?

BOTH. How did this happen?

RICK. Somebody give me a clue!

S.S. 1. The good scientist, the thorough scientist, does not take things at face value.

S.S. 2. Thus, we must begin with a thorough look at this specimen to which we have recently been introduced, the male called Phil.

S.S. 1. Phil, please.

(TECHNICIANS 1 and 2 come out, wheeling PHIL in on a hand truck. They, too, wear lab coats. During their examination of PHIL, he is mannequin-like unless called upon to speak. The scientists and technicians have total control of him.)

RICK. Oh, man, more of the white coats. I'm going nuts.

S.S. 1. For this portion of our exploration, we will enlist the aid of two technicians. They, also, are scientists, but they're just not as intelligent as we are.

S.S. 2. An extraordinary individual such as Sarah Hillsbury, if she is going to fall in love against all of her training and logical impulses, would only be susceptible, one might assume, to another extraordinary individual.

S.S. 1. At first glance, Phillip Alan Rice, for that is his full name, does not seem to be such an individual. As I previously mentioned, however, the job of the scientist is to go beyond first glances—to examine, to analyze, to probe.

RICK. Whoa, do I pity you, Phil-boy.

S.S. 2. Though we hardly think it likely that Sarah would be swayed by such matters, we begin our examination with Phil's physical traits.

(As S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 call for the following statistics, the TECHNICIANS swarm over PHIL, taking measurements and making observations.)

S.S. 1. Height?

TECHNICIAN 1. 71 inches.

S.S. 2. Difference in height between specimen and Sarah?

TECHNICIAN 2. 3.2 inches in favor of specimen.

S.S. 1. Weight?

TECHNICIAN 2. 154 pounds.

S.S. 2. Difference in weight between specimen and Sarah?

TECHNICIAN 1. 37 pounds in favor of specimen.

S.S. 1. Statistical anomalies in height or weight?

TECHNICIAN 2. None. All fall within normal ranges.

S.S. 2. Nothing so far. Strip him!

(The TECHNICIANS move as if to take off PHIL's clothes.)

RICK. Whoa, what kind of a show are you people running here?

S.S. 1. He may be correct, #2. We cannot necessarily assume scientific objectivity on the part of all those assembled here.

S.S. 2. Screen!

(Another TECHNICIAN rushes in and covers the TECHNICIANS and PHIL with a screen. The TECHNICIAN exits.)

S.S. 2. Proceed.

(The TECHNICIANS move swiftly, taking off PHIL's clothes and placing them on the screen. In a manner of seconds, he is "naked" behind the screen.)

RICK. Poor guy. Somebody should've warned him.

S.S. 1. Unusual markings?

TECHNICIAN 1. None.

S.S. 2. All digits on hands and toes accounted for?

TECHNICIAN 2. Check.

S.S. 1. All limbs and appendages within normal ranges?

RICK. Hey, now, don't you be measuring...Damn, you people are thorough.

TECHNICIAN 1. All limbs and appendages within normal ranges, check.

S.S. 2. Blood pressure?

TECHNICIAN 2. Normal.

S.S. 1. Heart rate?

TECHNICIAN 1. Normal.

S.S. 2. Respiration?

TECHNICIAN 2. Normal.

S.S. 1. White blood count?

TECHNICIAN 1. Normal.

S.S. 1. Coloring?

TECHNICIAN 2. Normal.

S.S. 2. Scent?

(Both TECHNICIANS lift PHIL's arms and sniff.)

RICK. Oh, now that is too much!

BOTH TECHNICIANS. Normal.

RICK. Somebody shoot me.

S.S. 1. Re-clothe the specimen. Remove the screen.

(As S.S. 2 speaks, the TECHNICIANS "re-clothe" PHIL and remove the screen.)

S.S. 2. Physically, Phil is nothing extraordinary. All of his characteristics are well within normal ranges. If one were to observe him, one's initial impression might be, "There goes a normal teenage boy." In this particular instance, the impression would be correct.

S.S. 1. Conduct cranial examination simultaneous with psychological profile.

(The TECHNICIANS lay PHIL down on a table and quickly hook electrodes to his head, running them to a machine that gives a print-out.)

S.S. 1. Now we begin to look at the internals of the specimen called Phil—the way his mind works—a far more significant bit of data collection, considering the extreme mental prowess of our Sarah.

TECHNICIAN 1. Probes attached and monitoring brain activity.

S.S. 2. Commence psychological profile.

TECH 2. Commencing. Phil, can you hear me?

PHIL. Yes.

TECH 1. We're going to say words. We would like you to respond with the first word that comes to mind after hearing them. Do you understand?

PHIL. Yes.

TECH 2. Black.

PHIL. White.

TECH 1. Green.

PHIL. Trees.

TECH 2. Fog.

PHIL. San Francisco.

TECH 1. Mother.

PHIL. Hug.

TECH 2. Father.

PHIL. Nap.

TECH 1. Vampire.

PHIL. Sucker.

TECH 2. God.

PHIL. Bless America.

TECH 1. Car.

PHIL. Jaguar.

TECH 2. Sex.

PHIL. Car.

TECH 1. That concludes that portion of the examination. Now, Phil, we are going to hypnotize you.

PHIL. Okay.

TECH 2. You are feeling very sleepy.

(PHIL snores.)

TECH 1. Not that sleepy.

PHIL. I'm back.

TECH 2. Imagine you are going through a long tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, you see yourself as a child, age three.

TECH 1. Go through the tunnel, Phil.

PHIL. I'm going.

TECH 2. When you get to the end of the tunnel, get out and go to yourself at age three. Are you there?

PHIL. Yes. My three-year-old self is drooling.

TECH 1. That's fine.

PHIL. That's fine.

TECH 2. Now, we want you to become your three-year-old self, Phil. Become him. Are you ready?

PHIL. Ready.

TECH 1. Go, Phil.

PHIL. I am going. *(As three-year-old self:)* Vroom, vroom, vroom!

TECH 2. Phil, how old are you?

PHIL. Want to see my truck? It's red. It can run you right over!

TECH 1. That's nice, Phil.

TECH 2. Phil, how do you feel? Examine your feelings. Tell us what sensations you have.

PHIL. I like my truck! Can I have some Cheetos?

TECH 1. Can you tell us any more, Phil?

PHIL. I got to go wee-wee.

TECH 2. Hold it, Phil.

PHIL. I really got to go!

TECH 1. *(Quickly:)* Phil, get out of your three-year-old self, get back into the tunnel and walk back to us. When I count to three, you will wake up refreshed. One, two, three.

TECH 2. Phil, are you awake?

PHIL. Yes.

TECH 1. How old are you?

PHIL. Sixteen.

TECH 2. How do you feel?

PHIL. Honestly?

TECH 1 & TECH 2. Of course.

PHIL. I really have to go to the bathroom.

TECH 1. *(As both TECHNICIANS take off the electrodes and PHIL gets up:)* That concludes our cranial and psychological examination.

PHIL. *(Running off:)* Thanks very much!

S.S. 1. What do you surmise from the results of the examination, Technicians?

TECH 2. All cranial read-outs...

TECH 1. All verbal answers...

TECH 1 & TECH 2. Indicate extreme normalcy.

S.S. 1. I concur.

S.S. 2. As do I. *(To the TECHNICIANS:)* Thank-you both; that will be all.

(The TECHNICIANS bow slightly and leave.)

S.S. 1. Extreme normalcy.

S.S. 2. In all ways, Phillip Mason is a typical teen-age boy.

S.S. 1. In all ways save one.

S.S. 2. Correct, of course, #2. In this one aspect, Phil is one rare specimen indeed.

RICK. In what way? What?

(S.S. 1 pulls back a screen revealing S.P.D., sitting in a chair. She has electrodes attached to her head and arms. We hear a steady beeping sound.)

S.S. 2. We have attached Sarah Present Day to a series of monitors that measure the physiological reaction she has to the presence of various individuals.

S.S. 1. The repetitive tone you hear will stay constant as long as Sarah's reactions stay within certain parameters; the tone will only change when Sarah's reactions violate those parameters.

(S.P.D. sits as various characters enter. The first is her father.)

MR. HILLSBURY. Good morning, Sarah.

S.P.D. Hello, Father.

(He exits. MICHELLE enters.)

MICHELLE. Hey, Sarah.

S.P.D. Greetings, Michelle.

(MICHELLE exits. MRS. MASON enters.)

MRS. MASON. Sarah, how are you feeling?

S.P.D. Fine, Mother.

(MRS. MASON exits. S.Y. enters.)

S.Y. Hello, older self.

S.P.D. Go away! What are you doing here?

S.Y. I am here merely for purposes of persecution.

S.P.D. Remove yourself immediately!

S.Y. *(Exiting:)* Tsk, tsk, such unwarranted aggression.

S.S. 2. Notice that the tone has remained even despite the entrance of various individuals, even of one who caused S.P.D. significant dismay.

S.S. 1. I don't believe we schedule Sarah Young's entrance, in actuality.

S.S. 2. Agreed, but it proved enlightening nonetheless.

(The tone on the monitors suddenly start to get louder and faster as S.P.D. looks offstage.)

S.S. 1. Ah! Sarah's reactions have just exceeded the set parameters. And what might have triggered such a shift?

(PHIL enters.)

S.P.D. Hi, Phil.

PHIL. Hey, Sarah. Sorry I'm late; I just had to take care of something kind of urgent.

S.P.D. That's okay. Can you stay for a while?

PHIL. Sure.

(By now, the monitors are practically wailing. S.S. 1 closes the screen, stopping the sound.)

S.S. 2. Thus we reveal the sole outstanding attribute of the specimen called Phillip Mason: His ability to cause a physiological reaction in Sarah that the presence of no other individual can cause.

RICK. What was that stuff measuring? What was the beeping about?

S.S. 1. The parameters could only be violated by reactions signaling that the individual—Sarah Present Day, in this instance—was experiencing that curious phenomenon we have been examining throughout the duration of this presentation: love.

RICK. That measured love?

S.S. 1. Yes, Rick. Love. Love.

S.S. 2. The only thing, ladies and gentlemen, that makes Phil unique is his ability to cause Sarah Hillsbury to feel sexual, biological attraction! Why, esteemed audience? How could this be?

S.S. 1. Love, Rick. How did love happen?

S.S. 2. I believe you've sufficiently briefed him on that point, #1.

S.S. 1. What? Oh. Oh, yes.

S.S. 2. Before proceeding into the final portion of this exposition, let us recapitulate briefly.

S.S. 1. Point A: Sarah Hillsbury is an extraordinarily bright individual.

S.S. 2. Point B: Sarah Hillsbury was extraordinarily well-defended against love.

S.S. 1. Point C: Phillip Mason is in no way extraordinary.

S.S. 2. Point D: Sarah Hillsbury should never, logically, have fallen in love with Phillip Mason.

S.S. 1. In short, then...

S.S. 2 & S.S. 1. It makes no sense!

RICK. You've got that right.

S.S. 2. Yet, this is the very essence of science, is it not? Historically, has not mankind been faced with occurrences that seemed not to make sense?

(S.S. 1 pulls back a screen revealing NEWTON. NEWTON drops an apple on the ground.)

NEWTON. Why did that apple fall down and not up? That does not make sense.

(S.S. 1 closes her screen and S.S. 2 pulls back another, revealing COLUMBUS.)

COLUMBUS. Yonder ships go out of sight on the horizon, yet I know they have not yet fallen off the edge of the world. That does not make sense.

(S.S. 2 closes her screen and S.S. 1 pulls back another, showing FREUD.)

FREUD. The dreams of the patient express desires that the waking person does not acknowledge. That does not make sense.

(S.S. 1 closes her screen.)

S.S. 1. The directive of science, then...

(Another screen opens, pulled back by S.Y. behind it.)

S.Y. At a certain point in the presentation, they begin to ignore the most intriguing character the audience has seen. That does not make sense.

(S.S. 1 runs up and closes the screen on S.Y.)

S.S. 2. The directive of science, then, though admittedly oversimplified, is to make sense of the nonsensical.

S.S. 1. Given the phenomenon of Sarah Hillsbury in love, our task is to theorize how this might have happened.

S.S. 2. My first idea...

RICK. Wait a minute! Wait just a second, here!

S.S. 1. What is it, Rick? Is Rick short for Richard, by the way?

RICK. Yeah, why?

S.S. 1. Just curious.

S.S. 2. Why the latest disruption, our most esteemed Dr. Rick?

RICK. What about Sarah and Phil?

S.S. 2. What about Sarah and Phil? This has all been about Sarah and Phil.

RICK. No, no—I mean, what about their, like, relationship? The love part. I mean, all you did was say “Sarah fell in love with Phil. Phil’s really ordinary. That does not make sense.”

S.S. 1. That’s all true, Richard.

RICK. Rick. I like Rick, okay?

S.S. 1. Of course, of course. I apologize.

RICK. Anyway, I know it’s all true, but...we never saw any of the two of them, besides that picking up the eggs bit and him coming in and getting her beeper going.

S.S. 2. Nothing more is necessary. We’ve established the facts.

RICK. No, you haven’t. I mean, so they met, but when did the whole love thing happen?

S.S. 1. Actually, it began at the very moment of meeting. The anomaly began then and simply intensified from there.

RICK. Okay, okay, now we're getting to it. The "intensified" part. We should see some of that.

S.S. 2. Ah, I see. Our dear Representative Audience Member is laboring under a misconception.

RICK. What?

S.S. 1. *(To S.S. 2:)* Refrain from being hypercritical, please.

S.S. 2. Rick seeks entertainment rather than enlightenment. Entertainment would have us revealing, in lurid and salacious detail, all the ins and outs, so to speak, of this burgeoning love betwixt Sarah and Phil. However, that is not within our chosen purview. We have shown what we need to show to establish our argument.

RICK. Yeah, okay, fine, but...

S.S. 2. I believe we warned you, and all of your cohorts in the audience, that this is not a play. This is a scientific exploration. We will now move to the section when we will explore several viable hypotheses.

RICK. Fine. Great. Major let-down, but...you scientists just go ahead and do what you have to do.

S.S. 2. Thank-you for your permission, though I hardly find it necessary.

S.S. 1. However, given that Rick, here, does represent the audience, his sentiments are assuredly felt throughout the auditorium. Would we not be remiss in not providing them with at least a smattering of that which they desire?

S.S. 2. You wish to pander the masses, #1?

S.S. 1. I wish to offer them a small gift of gratitude for their attention.

S.S. 2. Fine, then. A brief, though totally unnecessary, overview of the love affair—ugh!—between Sarah and Phil.

(S.S. 1 pulls back the screen. S.Y. stands next to PHIL.)

S.Y. Hello, Phil.

PHIL. Hi, Sarah.

S.Y. So, where are you from?

PHIL. Ohio.

S.Y. I must admit to some rather unsettling feelings toward you, Phil.

PHIL. Do you mind if I hold your hand?

S.Y. All right. Do you think we might be somewhat overaccelerating the pace of this relationship?

PHIL. Maybe. *(They drop hands.)* I miss you.

S.Y. I miss you, too.

(They hold hands again. Suddenly, S.P.D. comes charging into the scene, pushing S.Y. away from PHIL. The electrodes from the previous scene still hang from her head, as does some duct tape from her hands and feet.)

S.Y. Hey, cut it out!

S.P.D. Get out of my scene, you despicable excuse for protoplasm!

S.Y. Hey, I can be here! I'm an iteration of Sarah, too!

S.P.D. You're Sarah Young, not Present Day. I am Present Day, and I cannot believe that you duct-taped me to that chair just so you could horn in on my action!

S.Y. Nobody was paying attention to me! *(The two TECHNICIANS come and drag SARAH YOUNG away.)* No, no, don't take me away. I'm a better Sarah than she is! I want to kiss Phil. It was my big moment!

S.P.D. *(To PHIL:)* Sorry about that. Where was I?

PHIL. You were just being missed.

S.P.D. I miss you, too. *(They hold hands.)*

RICK. *(Grabbing a remote, freezing them:)* Wait a sec, while we're stopped, here. What's the deal with this? She asks where he's from and then they're holding hands? What is this?

S.S. 2. Phil and Sarah, the condensed version. It's all you get.

S.S. 1. I tried, Rick.

RICK. All right, fine. I guess it's better than nothing.

(He unfreezes the scene.)

S.P.D. You know, sometimes when we're close like this, I kind of think about...

(They move close, as if to kiss.)

PHIL. I think I know what you're thinking.

S.P.D. I think I know what you think I'm thinking.

MR. HILLSBURY. *(Entering suddenly:)* You two seem to be spending a lot of time together.

(PHIL and SARAH quickly pull away from each other.)

S.P.D. Just school.

PHIL. Big project.

MR. HILLSBURY. Carry on, then.

(He exits.)

S.P.D. I've been experiencing the strangest heart palpitations and difficulties with sleep.

PHIL. Me, too.

S.P.D. And enormous distractibility and a tendency toward great mood fluctuations.

PHIL. *(Taking her hand again:)* Me, too.

S.P.D. Loss of appetite and a single-minded focus on one individual and one individual alone.

PHIL. *(Coming in close for a kiss again:)* And who might that individual be?

S.P.D. None other than...you.

MRS. MASON. *(Suddenly entering:)* I'm concerned with how much time you're spending together.

(The two break apart quickly again.)

S.P.D. Just school.

PHIL. Very challenging project.

MRS. MASON. Maybe.

(She exits. S.P.D. and PHIL come immediately back together as they were before MRS. MASON's entrance.)

S.P.D. I don't understand what's happening.

PHIL. I think I might.

MRS. MASON. *(Suddenly entering again:)* Are you sure?

S.P.D. School, nothing more!

PHIL. Humongous project.

MRS. MASON. Keep it that way.

(MRS. MASON exits. PHIL and S.P.D. turn to look at one another for a brief moment, then come together quickly for the long-awaited kiss. As soon as they lock lips, S.S. 2 shuts the screen.)

S.S. 2. Phil and Sarah, the condensed version, the end. *(To RICK:)* Satisfied? Good. Now, as we move on...

RICK. Hang on, here; wait!

S.S. 2. Actually, I am glad you interrupted me yet again. You see, I believe that your usefulness as R.A.M. has come to an end.

S.S. 1. What?

S.S. 2. For this final portion, we will not need your services as Representative Audience Member. I will no longer be conferring with you to gauge our effectiveness. Thank-you for your time.

S.S. 1. No!

S.S. 2. What is the matter now?

S.S. 1. You...you can't send him away. We...that is...

S.S. 2. Ah, of course. There is that matter of financial responsibility.

RICK. You've got that right!

S.S. 2. That, I'm afraid, Dr. Rick, is an issue you will have to take up exclusively with #1 over there.

RICK. Okay, what about it?

S.S. 1. Rick, this isn't about money at this point.

RICK. It better be.

S.S. 1. Well, of course it is, it will be, when we arrive at that juncture. Yet I sensed that you had another matter to bring up concerning Sarah, didn't you?

RICK. Hey, I can get over that. I'm ready to be done.

S.S. 1. No, please, I implore you—please vocalize your dissatisfaction.

RICK. Well, all right, fine, so we saw the condensed version, there. Not exactly what you'd call primo, but good enough, I guess. (*He crosses up the SARAH's screen and pulls it back. She lies on the bed, eyes closed, still sniffing occasionally.*) What about this, though? How did she end up like this?

S.S. 2. Strange how attached you seem to have become to a character who, at one time, was "no big deal."

RICK. Hey, I'm just curious, okay? So shoot me.

S.S. 2. That is the second time you've extended that invitation.

S.S. 1. I think his curiosity is born of a natural sensitivity, #2. And I believe we owe him an explanation.

S.S. 2. Not to mention, I believe it was, a sum of \$100.00?

RICK. That's what *I'm* talking about.

S.S. 2. Ah, then...fine. An explanation for Sarah's depression, though it is hardly necessary. At Sarah's age, when does love not end in misery? Look. She is obliging us right now; how fortuitous.

(SARAH has reached under her pillow to pull out a letter. She holds it above her head, reading it silently. S.S. 2 pulls a screen to reveal PHIL.)

PHIL. Dear Sarah,

The days I have spent since meeting you have been filled with wonder. I think you are one of the most special girls I have ever met. I will never forget you. But Sarah, I don't think our relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend has much of a future. I don't want to hurt you, but you haven't even told your parents about us because you think they'll be too disappointed. Plus, I really think I'm not good enough for you. It's not just your intellectual jokes I never get and all those textbooks you read; I just don't think that I am helping you reach your goals. You deserve better. Of course, I want us to still be friends. Nothing more, though. I never meant to hurt you. I'll never forget you.

Your Good Friend,
Phil

(S.S. 2 closes the screen on PHIL. SARAH hugs the letter to her chest and sobs. S.S. 1 closes the screen on SARAH.)

RICK. Ouch.

S.S. 2. Indeed. And now, Dr. Rick, Richard, R.A.M., the time has come for us to part ways, both because you will not be needed further and because I can no longer endure your interruptions. Thank-you for your services. You have benefited the cause of science.

RICK. Give me the money and I'll go.

S.S. 2. Benefiting science should, in my opinion, be remuneration enough, but, given your esteem of science, I doubt it is enough for you. So, #1?

S.S. 1. Well, um, Rick, ah...

RICK. So?

S.S. 1. If you remember back when we first brought you up here?

RICK. Sure. Super Science over there practically ripped my arm off, then you told me I could have a hundred bucks.

S.S. 1. Technically, I didn't say that.

RICK. What?

S.S. 2. Record-keeping, please!

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