

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Neither THE LOVE COURSE nor THE OPEN MEETING, to my knowledge, has had a reviewed production in New York City. THE LOVE COURSE was done in England in the early seventies, and both have been performed in college theatres.

THE CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR CARROWAY, a woman of certain age, who is professor of romantic literature at a large university.

PROFESSOR BURGESS, a man of about the same age, who is professor of Renaissance literature at the same university.

SALLY, a student of literature.

MIKE, a student of electrical engineering.

SETTING

The entire play takes place in, and during, a class in literature at a university. The audience is to be considered members of the class. The stage should suggest the teaching area: a wooden desk or table, with two or three simple chairs on either side, facing front. A blackboard behind, on which is written a list: Plato, Euripides, Dante, *Tristan et Iseult*, Shakespeare, *Madame Bovary*, *Wuthering Heights*, D.H. Lawrence, John Updike et al. Bracketing this list, and written in large letters, is "SAVE!!"

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The Love Course

After the audience is seated, a loud school bell rings. Professor Burgess comes down the aisle toward the stage. He wears a sports coat and gray flannels, and carries a briefcase. Mike and Sally, two students who are sitting in the front row, get up to meet him. The following can be somewhat ad-libbed:

SALLY: Professor Burgess...

BURGESS: Hi, Sally...

SALLY: This is my friend Mike. Can he sit in on this class?

BURGESS: Certainly. Hello, Mike...

MIKE: Thanks, Professor Burgess.

(Burgess goes on up toward the stage and waits, as Professor Carroway comes down the aisle, acknowledging the audience with soft greetings. She carries a stack of well-worn books, and wears something simple and slightly old-fashioned. Sally waylays her, too.)

SALLY: Professor Carroway...

CARROWAY: Ah. Good afternoon, Sally.

SALLY: This is the Mike I told you about.

MIKE: I've heard a lot about you, Professor Carroway.

CARROWAY: Thank you, and welcome.

(She moves towards the stage where Burgess is waiting. She nods to him, then begins to settle her books and papers on the table. He comes behind the table to speak to her. They converse in whispers. This, again, might be somewhat ad-libbed.)

BURGESS: *(Whispering.)* I have to leave in a minute.

CARROWAY: *(Whispering.)* What? Surely not today...

BURGESS: The Curriculum Meeting...

CARROWAY: But this is our last class...

BURGESS: I'm sorry. *(Pause. He indicates class.)* You begin.

CARROWAY: Very well.

(He sits down on one of the chairs. She looks at him, looks at the class, comes downstage, and begins:)

CARROWAY: This is our last class on the literature of love. I don't mean simply for this term. This is the last class Professor Burgess and I will ever teach together. As you may know, I have accepted a position in the English Department at Mount Holyoke College for Women. And Professor Burgess has decided to join the administration of this university. So we will never teach together again. *(Glances at him.)* I am therefore especially eager on this, our last day, to bring the course together once and for all. I want to resolve, if we possibly can, all the great themes of love which have obsessed us and the Western World, from February up until now. *(Turns to Burgess.)* Professor Burgess I'm sure you have something to add.

BURGESS: Yes. *(Gets up.)* A few quick points before I go.

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* He has to go to some meeting.

BURGESS: *(To audience.)* I have to go to the Curriculum Committee.

CARROWAY: Even though this is our last class.

BURGESS: They're revising the entire undergraduate curriculum.

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* They want to make everything aggressively relevant.

BURGESS: I'm afraid I have to go.

CARROWAY: Oh don't be afraid.

BURGESS: I'm not afraid.

CARROWAY: Then go.

BURGESS: I will.

CARROWAY: I am naturally...very disappointed, that's all.

BURGESS: Surely you can handle this yourself: a quick review, a few questions, a discussion of the exam...

CARROWAY: *(Suddenly quite loud.)* I had planned to do more. In our last class. I had planned to do...everything! *(She goes and sits down, huffily.)* Well then, before you go, I hope at least you'll try to say goodbye.

(Pause.)

BURGESS: *(To audience; haltingly.)* Last fall, when Professor Carroway asked me to join her in teaching this course, I must confess I had some trepidation. She proposed that we deal with the literature of

love from Plato all the way to the present. Now I'm a Renaissance Man...

CARROWAY: *(Under her breath.)* So I have heard and do, in part, believe...

BURGESS: *(After glancing at her.)* And Professor Carroway specializes in the Romantic period. Neither one of us had ever before focused on so specific a topic from so broad a perspective. And neither one of us had ever taught in...tandem before.

CARROWAY: *(Standing up.)* You are apologizing for the course!

BURGESS: I am not. I'm simply saying—

CARROWAY: You are apologizing for what we have done.

BURGESS: Dear lady, I am not! I've *loved* the Love Course! *(Covering his enthusiasm.)* I mean, it has been just the sort of course students seem to want. *(Pause.)* I am simply responding to the criticism which has arisen on the outside.

CARROWAY: What criticism?

BURGESS: Well, we have been accused, by some of our colleagues of...

CARROWAY: Of what? Of what?

BURGESS: Of being flamboyant and theatrical.

CARROWAY: *(Laughing.)* Oh dear.

BURGESS: And of straying far from the syllabus...

CARROWAY: Oh dear, oh dear...

BURGESS: Others say that all we've done is carry on private dialogue in public!

CARROWAY: And have you regretted it, Professor Burgess?

BURGESS: Not for a moment! I'm simply saying that some people have called our Love Course a little erotic—I mean, erratic.

CARROWAY: *(Laughing.)* Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Sigmund, wouldst thou were with us at this hour...Perhaps you'd *better* go to your meeting.

BURGESS: I will. I plan to. Good luck to all on the exam. *(He starts out.)*

CARROWAY: *(Suddenly getting up.)* I had planned...

(Burgess stops out of politeness.)

I had planned to read and discuss the first few lines of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

BURGESS: Ah...

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* It says worlds about what we've been up to.

BURGESS: *(To audience.)* I'm very fond of the first scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

CARROWAY: I know you are.

BURGESS: (*Quoting.*) "Here is my space... Kingdoms are clay..."

CARROWAY: I know. I know.

BURGESS: (*To audience.*) I once wrote an article about that first scene.

CARROWAY: (*To audience.*) "In his salad days,
When he was green in judgment, cold in blood."

BURGESS: It was a good article.

CARROWAY: It most certainly was. Much better, perhaps, than some of
your recent, earnest memoranda on the curriculum.

BURGESS: We have a responsibility to the students.

CARROWAY: We have a responsibility to Shakespeare.

BURGESS: One must try to keep a foot in both camps.

CARROWAY: (*To audience.*) "His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm,
Crested the world!"

BURGESS: (*Taking her up.*) "O Star of the East!
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand
And with out sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours."

CARROWAY: Oh exactly! Are you sure you can't stay and teach the first
scene?

(*Pause.*)

BURGESS: (*Suddenly calling out.*) Someone... will someone do me a favor?
Will someone run over to the meeting...

CARROWAY: (*Calling out.*) Someone not regularly in the class...

BURGESS: And tell them I'll be a little late...

CARROWAY: I want our regular students here. Since it's the last class.

BURGESS: Is there anyone auditing, then?

SALLY: (*Appears in the aisle. Calling up.*) Mike says he'll do it.

CARROWAY: Oh yes. He's expendable.

BURGESS: Mike, would you run over to the conference room on the third
floor of the new science building, and tell them I've been temporarily
delayed.

CARROWAY: Say he has a class.

BURGESS: Say I'll be there soon.

CARROWAY: In an hour.

BURGESS: In a minute.

SALLY: Go on, Mike. Do it.

BURGESS: Will you, Mike? As a favor to me?

MIKE: Uh huh. (*He exits up the aisle.*)

CARROWAY: Thank you, Sally, for lending us your lover.

BURGESS: (*Now rummaging through his briefcase.*) Now where's my Shake-
speare?

CARROWAY: I have mine. Look on with me.
(*She holds out her book. He joins her, notices her book.*)

BURGESS: All these notes in the margin...

CARROWAY: Oh I plan my classes. I prepare...

BURGESS: I can see you do.
(*They might settle in their chairs behind the table here.*)

CARROWAY: Well. (*To audience.*) After some preliminary—and I've always
felt unnecessary talk—Antony and Cleopatra enter and take the
stage. (*Reads.*) "If it be love indeed, tell me how much."

BURGESS: (*Reading.*) "There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd."

CARROWAY: "I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd."

BURGESS: "Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth."
(*Pause.*)

CARROWAY: (*To audience.*) Of course, she is asking him to describe his
love.

BURGESS: (*To audience.*) Which he refuses to do.

CARROWAY: (*To him.*) Why?

BURGESS: Because to describe something is to... limit it. It's beggary, base
and contemptible, to pin down a love like theirs.

CARROWAY: So she says she'll make up new rules, new boundaries. "I'll set
a bourn," she says.

BURGESS: And he replies that she'd have to invent an entirely new
world—"new heaven, new earth"—to encompass their love.

CARROWAY: Yes. (*Pause. Then to audience.*) But you see: they *have* de-
scribed their love by *refusing* to describe it.

BURGESS: But we also get a shiver of foreboding. Because we know it can't
last. Not in this world.

CARROWAY: Which is why they create their *own* world. Through lan-
guage.

BURGESS: Which can't last either.

CARROWAY: Oh yes.

BURGESS: Oh no. The real world intrudes almost immediately. A mes-
senger arrives from Rome.

CARROWAY: Who tells us that the real world is falling apart.

BURGESS: Not falling apart...

CARROWAY: Oh yes, oh yes. Collapsing completely. And we also hear...

for the first time...that there's a wife. *(She glances at him, then reads.)*
"Fulvia perhaps is angry"...and later, "The shrill-tongued Fulvia
scolds." *(To audience.)* Fulvia being the wife. *(Reading slyly.)* "Thou
blushest, Antony..."

BURGESS: *(Quickly.)* But Antony replies—in some of Shakespeare's most
sweeping poetry... *(He should be on his feet by now; reciting from
memory.)* "Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay...The nobleness of life
Is to do thus..."

(Pause; he looks at her; then turns to audience.)

And at this point, he kisses her.

(Pause.)

According to the First Folio edition.

CARROWAY: Yes. I believe he does.

MIKE: *(Coming down the aisle.)* Professor Burgess...

(Burgess looks out.)

They want you there.

CARROWAY: Why?

MIKE: They said they need your vote.

BURGESS: I'd better go.

CARROWAY: Vote, and then come back.

BURGESS: There won't be time.

CARROWAY: There will be if you run!

BURGESS: I won't run, thank you very much. *(He comes down into the aisle,
speaks to audience as he leaves.)* Good luck, people. I probably won't
see you again.

CARROWAY: *(Calling after him.)* Nonsense! Antony comes back, and so
will you. If you hurry! *(To audience.)* "And so he moved, with stately
steps, and slow..."

*(Burgess glances at her then leaves. Carroway closes her Shakespeare and
comes to a decision. She goes to the stack of books on the table and takes
up another book, old, leathery and worn. She looks at it affectionately
then calls out to the audience.)*

CARROWAY: You...Young man...Mike.

MIKE: *(Appears reluctantly in the aisle again.)* Me?

CARROWAY: You. Would you like to do the state some service?

MIKE: *(Shrugs.)* I guess.

CARROWAY: Come up here, please.

(Mike comes up on stage, uneasily, shy, embarrassed.)

Now. Do you see this book?

(Mike nods.)

This is my own personal annotated version of *Wuthering Heights*. I
used this when I wrote my biography of Emily Brontë.

(Mike nods.)

Have you read my biography?

(Mike shakes his head.)

Have you read *Wuthering Heights*?

(Mike shakes his head.)

Then, poor soul, there is a great gap in your education which you
could have repaired if you'd taken this course.

MIKE: Hey now wait a—

CARROWAY: Quiet, please. I'm about to give you instructions. Take this
book to the Curriculum Meeting. Give it to Professor Burgess. Tell
him I plan to end the class reading from it. *(Takes a bobby pin out of
her hair, puts it in the book.)* Reading here. On this page. At this point.
(Hands him the book.) Take it, and guard it with your life.
(Mike takes the book, and starts off, eager to be off the stage.)

Tell him...

(Mike stops.)

Tell him we began the class in his field. I'd like to end it in mine.

MIKE: I'll give him the book. *(He goes out, down the aisle.)*

CARROWAY: Now. While we're waiting, let's be aggressively Socratic. *(Calls
out.)* Come up here, Sally, where we can all see and hear you.
*(Sally comes up on stage; Carroway puts her arm around her and speaks
to audience.)*

Sally has been loyal from the beginning. Sally has loved this course.
Indeed, when Sally heard that my contract was not being renewed,
she wrote a letter in protest on my behalf. So let's listen, and learn
from Sally. *(She gestures for Sally to sit down.)* Sally, why did you sign
up for this course?

SALLY: To learn about love.

CARROWAY: Have you ever been in love?

SALLY: Yes. *(Pause.)* No.

CARROWAY: Make up your mind.

SALLY: I thought I was. But now I don't think so.

CARROWAY: Would you like to be?

SALLY: Oh yes.

CARROWAY: Why?

SALLY: Because...oh because...it sounds so great.

CARROWAY: Of course. These books do that for us. They've given us the words that make it great. *(To audience; indicating blackboard.)* Everyone thinks Wagner fell in love with Cosima Liszt, and then wrote *Tristan und Isolde*. Not true! Not true, people! Wagner wrote *Tristan* and thereby found the language which *enabled* him to fall in love. So it is with you, Sally. You are no longer in the cave! You are not longer blindly groping at the rank body of some pimply adolescent male! You have learned the language of love now. You are doomed to reach and strive and seek for something far more transcendent. Am I right, Sally?

SALLY: *(Nodding eagerly.)* Uh huh.

CARROWAY: Let's pursue the case further, Sally...Have you read all the books on the reading list?

SALLY: Oh yes.

CARROWAY: Did you like them?

SALLY: Oh yes. Most of them, anyway. Yes.

CARROWAY: Did you find anything in common with all of these books?

SALLY: *(Pause. Sally scrutinizes the list of the blackboard.)* It's kind of hard to keep them all in mind.

CARROWAY: Oh the mind, the mind. We're way beyond the mind, Sally. By now these books should be in your deep heart's soul.

SALLY: I know it.

CARROWAY: Then think, Sally. What are these books all about?

SALLY: They're about love.

CARROWAY: We know that, Sally. But what kind of love?

SALLY: *(Thinking like hell.)* Most of them are about...well, adultery.

CARROWAY: That's a grim, Puritanical word, Sally. They are about love beyond marriage.

SALLY: Yes...

CARROWAY: And what else are they about, Sally?

SALLY: Most of them...are about death.

CARROWAY: Precisely. *(Strides to the blackboard, begins ticking off the books.)* Phaedra, Beatrice, Isolde, Juliet, Emma Bovary, Catharine Earnshaw—all the great women die for love!

SALLY: Is that true?

CARROWAY: Of course it's true! There it is, on the board!

SALLY: *(Looking at the board.)* Lady Chatterley doesn't die.

CARROWAY: Well she ought to, Sally.

SALLY: And in the modern books...in John Updike and...others...people don't die.

CARROWAY: They *do*, Sally. The women do. They die the modern death. They die spiritually. Oh yes. Name a book, name a love story worthy of the name, that does not end with the death of the lady.

(Pause.)

SALLY: I can't.

CARROWAY: Then love in the Western World ends in what, Sally?

SALLY: Death.

CARROWAY: And do you still want to fall in love, Sally?

SALLY: Yes.

CARROWAY: Why?

SALLY: Because it must be worth it.

CARROWAY: Oh yes I think so. Yes I hope so. Yes. Despite all the risks, despite the fact that the woman is always sacrificed, it must be worth it. Yes. *(She looks out and sees Mike returning at the back of the room.)*

Ah. Is that our messenger from Rome?

(Mike tries to take his seat.)

I'm speaking to you, sir. Are you our messenger from Rome?

MIKE: Huh?

CARROWAY: No, no. Don't sit *down*. Messengers never sit. They stand. And speak. Come up here. Tell us how things are in the real world.

SALLY: *(To Carroway.)* He's shy.

CARROWAY: Then he should learn not to be. Come up here, please.

(Mike reluctantly comes onto the stage.)

CARROWAY: Now tell us about the Curriculum Meeting. Who's in, who's out? Who was interrupting whom? What fateful edicts and what grim decrees were they determining?

(Pause.)

MIKE: I dunno.

SALLY: *(Starting to leave.)* We'd better—

CARROWAY: No, stay, Sally. Both stay. While we hear the messenger. *(To Mike.)* Tell me about Professor Burgess. Did you give him my book?

MIKE: Yes.

CARROWAY: You did?

MIKE: Yes.

CARROWAY: Did you tell him what I told you to tell him?

MIKE: Yes.

(Pause.)

CARROWAY: Well then, what did he say?

MIKE: He said thank you.

CARROWAY: He said...

MIKE: Thank you.

CARROWAY: (*Sarcastically; to audience.*) Oh these long-winded messengers! (*She wheels on Mike.*) Did he say he'd come back?

MIKE: No.

CARROWAY: No he didn't say, or no he wouldn't come back.

MIKE: He didn't say.

CARROWAY: Is that all?

SALLY: Professor Carroway, Mike's not in the course.

CARROWAY: He can speak, can't he? He has a tongue. (*To Mike.*) Did Professor Burgess look at the particular passage I indicated in my book?

MIKE: Yes.

CARROWAY: And? Did he say anything?

MIKE: No.

CARROWAY: Then what did he *do*? Did he tear the book asunder? Did he press it to his breast?

MIKE: He put it down.

CARROWAY: Down? Down where?

MIKE: On the table.

CARROWAY: You mean my book is simply sitting there, ignored, at that stupid meeting?

MIKE: Someone else picked it up and started looking at it.

CARROWAY: Someone *else*?

MIKE: I think she was his wife.

(Pause.)

CARROWAY: His wife.

SALLY: I think his wife is on the committee. I think she teaches in the Political Science department.

CARROWAY: No, Sally. No. She does *not* teach in the Political Science department. She is *connected* to the Political Science department through some academic nepotism which we will not go into. But she does not *teach* there. Unless you call sitting around in some seminar with two or three graduate students—unless you call that teaching. Which I do not. This, *this* is teaching.

(Mike tries to leave.)

Wait! I said, wait.

(Mike stops.)

So his wife was there. At this meeting.

MIKE: (*With increasing exasperation.*) Yes.

CARROWAY: What about his children? Were his children there? Did they contribute to the discussion? Did they have a vote?

MIKE: No.

CARROWAY: Did his children get their grubby little hands all over my personal copy of *Wuthering Heights*?

MIKE: There were no children at that meeting. (*He starts off again.*)

CARROWAY: Why are you slinking away?

MIKE: I'm not slinking.

CARROWAY: Then tell me more. What did his wife do, after she took my book?

MIKE: Do?

CARROWAY: (*To audience.*) "By heaven, he echoes me
As if there were a monster in this thought
Too hideous to be shown."

SALLY: Professor Carroway...

CARROWAY: What did the wife do with the book? Great heavens, have you ever taken a literature course in your *life*? Are you utterly incapable of description? What are you studying to *be*?

SALLY: He's just visiting, Professor Carroway. He...

CARROWAY: Quiet, Sally. I am educating your lover. You'll thank me for it one day. (*To Mike.*) What do you want to be, sir?

MIKE: An electrical engineer.

CARROWAY: Ah. Then we can look forward to more and better television sets. But what will be shown on them? Can you engineer that? And can you possibly engineer a description of what happened to my own personal copy of *Wuthering Heights*?

MIKE: (*Defiantly.*) She took the book.

CARROWAY: Yes. We know that.

MIKE: And she looked at it.

CARROWAY: Yes. Good. That's vivid. That's precise.

MIKE: And she smiled.

(Pause.)

CARROWAY: Smiled.

MIKE: Uh huh.

CARROWAY: Was that grunt meant to indicate the affirmative.

MIKE: (*Shouting.*) SHE SMILED AT THE BOOK!

CARROWAY: *(Suddenly all business.)* I am going to that meeting.
SALLY: Professor Carroway...
CARROWAY: I am going to retrieve my book!
SALLY: But Professor Carroway...
CARROWAY: *(Exiting down the aisle.)* And I also intend to make a little speech! *(Stops at exit.)* Sally, take the class. Read your excellent paper on Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadour Poets. *There was a woman who knew about love!* *(She leaves.)*
SALLY: *(Calling after her.)* But I didn't bring that paper! *(To audience.)* I didn't bring that paper.
MIKE: *(Under his breath.)* Bitch.
SALLY: She's not.
MIKE: You're welcome to her.
(He starts off. Sally grabs his arm. The following dialogue starts sotto voce, and grows louder.)
SALLY: You're not leaving me up here.
MIKE: Damn right.
SALLY: Alone? All by myself?
MIKE: I've got work to do.
SALLY: You said you'd come to the class.
MIKE: I never said I'd teach it.
SALLY: She asked me to take over.
MIKE: She didn't ask me. *(By now he is almost off the stage.)*
SALLY: *(Louder, from stage.)* Thanks a lot, Mike! I mean just thanks a lot! *(To audience.)* Some man. Some friend. *(To Mike.)* Just... leaving me up here. Oh boy.
MIKE: *(Calling out; from the aisle.)* This is your course, not mine! I'm not even registered!
SALLY: That's right! Which is sad! Because you, especially, could learn so much from it!
MIKE: *(Stopping; turning.)* O.K. *(He marches back up the aisle.)* O.K. *(He comes onto the stage, grabs a chair, plunks it down center, sits in it.)* O.K. *(He folds his arms.)* Teach me.
SALLY: *(Nervously.)* What?
MIKE: You drag me here, you set me up as a messenger boy, you let your pal Carroway give me a hard time, and now you say I've got a lot to learn. O.K., so now may I ask a few questions? *(Raises his hand, like a child.)* May I, Teach? May I?
SALLY: *(Coldly.)* Certainly. Ask away.

MIKE: First question: what is so goddam great about this course?
SALLY: Burgess and Carroway, that's what. Burgess and Carroway.
MIKE: And what's so great about them?
SALLY: If you can't feel it, I can't explain it.
MIKE: They're not even here.
SALLY: Which makes them all the greater.
MIKE: Why's that?
SALLY: Because even when they're gone, we can imagine them. They taught us how to imagine.
MIKE: I learn more in ten minutes in my major than I've learned here.
SALLY: About computers.
MIKE: What's wrong with computers?
SALLY: *(To audience.)* He loves computers.
MIKE: *(To audience.)* I like computers.
SALLY: You should learn about love.
MIKE: I know a thing or two.
SALLY: You should learn about me.
MIKE: I know about you.
SALLY: You don't. You just plain don't. You don't know me at all.
(Pause.)
MIKE: *(Raising his hand again.)* O.K., then. Tell me.
SALLY: Tell you?
MIKE: Yeah. For example, tell me why you moved out on me?
SALLY: *(Embarrassed.)* Mike...
MIKE: I want to learn, Teach. Teach me. Suddenly, in the middle of the term, you move out of our apartment and back into the women's dorm. I want to know why?
SALLY: *(Whispering.)* Mike, this is a class...
MIKE: Right. So I want to know why.
SALLY: I moved out because... *(To audience.)* I decided not to share a room with Mike because I decided I didn't love him.
MIKE: That's not what you said then.
SALLY: Mike...
MIKE: You said... *(To audience.)* She said... *(Gestures to blackboard.)* She said that Tristan and Isolde only fell in love when they slept with a sword between them, and since we didn't have a sword, she moved back into the women's dorm.
(Pause.)
SALLY: You make it sound so dumb.

MIKE: It was dumb. This whole course is dumb. No wonder they're no longer going to teach it. We had a good thing going till you took this course.

SALLY: It was not a good thing.

MIKE: It was the best.

SALLY: It was never love.

MIKE: I don't know what you call it, but we had...
(Pause.)

SALLY: What, what did we have?

MIKE: I won't say.

SALLY: Because you can't. Because you can't find the words. Because it wasn't love.

MIKE: I can find the words.

SALLY: Then let's hear them. Let's hear what we had.
(Mike says nothing; Sally turns to audience.)

SALLY: Oh you see? He can't even *talk*. We'd sit there, eyeing each other. I tried to get him to read. He wouldn't. He wouldn't read one of these books on this list. We had nothing in common, nothing to say to each other.

MIKE: We said a few things.

SALLY: Such as what?

MIKE: I know a couple of words you used to like.

SALLY: Such as *what*?

MIKE: Well there's one old Anglo-Saxon four-letter word you used to get a kick out of.
(Pause.)

SALLY: (Quietly.) That's not enough. (Pause.) I thought it was but it isn't.
(Pause.) There should be more than that.
(Pause.)

MIKE: (Raising his hand slowly.) May I ask one more question, Teach?

SALLY: No.

MIKE: Just one?

SALLY: Go back to your computers. I'll handle the class by myself.

MIKE: Just a little one.

SALLY: No. I think we may have gotten too personal, in public.

MIKE: This is strictly a practical question.

SALLY: Practical?

MIKE: Shall I renew our lease for the summer? You see, I can't afford to carry it by myself.

SALLY: We'll discuss it later.

MIKE: So should I let it go, and move in with the guys down the street?

SALLY: (Indicating audience.) This is blackmail.

MIKE: The landlord wants to know. Shall I tell him we'll be moving out the books, and the tape deck, and the loft that we built ourselves? What'll I tell him?

SALLY: Tell him I want more. There should be more. Even in the summer, there should be more.

MIKE: Then I'll let it go.

(Carroway comes back hurriedly down the aisle, talking as she comes. She carries her book.)

CARROWAY: Shoo! Shoo! Exeunt omnes! Goodbye, young lovers, whoever you are! Out of my way! Clear the track! Give me the stage! I have something to say!

(Sally and Mike exit quickly into the audience. Carroway turns and faces the audience, catching her breath.)

CARROWAY: Class! I have just been... (She searches for the words.) Magnificent! I have just been superb! Oh, I wish you all could have been there! I wish you had followed me to the new science building, and accompanied me into the conference room, and stationed yourselves along the walls like a Greek chorus! Then you would have heard me sing my swan song! Then you would have seen this contemporary Cassandra plant her feet and throw back her head and launch into her last full-throated threnody! (Comes forward.) Let me tell you what I said and did!

BURGESS: (Comes storming down the aisle, calling out to her as he comes.) I'd like to speak to you alone.

CARROWAY: (Drawing herself up.) I am teaching a class.

BURGESS: I would like a minute with you in private.

CARROWAY: This is my last class!

BURGESS: (Comes onto the stage.) You lied to them, out there!

CARROWAY: That was no lie!

BURGESS: You told them we were lovers!

CARROWAY: Which is true!

BURGESS: Not true at all!

CARROWAY: Ever since Plato we've been in love.

BURGESS: You're insane!

CARROWAY: As all true lovers are!

BURGESS: (To audience.) We never even met outside of class!

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* We never had to! Here's where we met! *(To Burgess.)* Here is our space!

BURGESS: *(To audience.)* The woman is mad!

CARROWAY: *(To Burgess.)* We were married here. We had children.

BURGESS: Oh God, oh God!

CARROWAY: Oh admit it. Think of Plato, think of the Symposium. *(She recites from memory.)* "There are those people who are pregnant in soul, and give birth to ideas. And these people maintain a much closer communion than the parents of children. They share between them children more beautiful and more immortal." *(She looks at him.)* That is how we were in class, and you know it. *(Pause.)* And that is what Plato calls love. *(Pause.)* And we based the course on it. We taught it. And it's true. *(Pause.)* Or if it isn't, then this whole semester has been one long lie. *(Pause.)* So say what you think.

BURGESS: *(Turning slowly.)* I think you're a silly academic old maid. I think you made a fool of yourself, and of me, and of my wife, in front of the entire Curriculum Committee. They're still laughing out there, at both of us. And I think they're laughing in here as well.

CARROWAY: *(Aghast.)* No.

BURGESS: Yes. I'm sorry, but it's true. And now I think we should dismiss the class. And when you've recovered your wits, I am going to insist that you write an open letter to the university in general, explaining your remarks and apologizing for them.

CARROWAY: *(Reeling.)* No, no, no. *(She staggers off the stage.)* Someone...Sally...Help me. Please.

SALLY: *(Rushes to her aid. Shouting to Burgess.)* You are a stupid, stupid, STUPID MAN! *(Sally helps Carroway down the aisle and out.)*

BURGESS: *(After a long pause; to audience.)* Oh look: she barged, she barged into the meeting. In the middle of some remarks by Professor Blum of Biology, the door burst open and she barged right in. She insisted on joining the meeting. And she insisted on sitting next to me. I was at the far end, but she insisted. People had to get up and make room for her. Somebody had to get another chair. Professor Segal, who uses crutches, had to move over for her. So she could sit next to me. *(Pause.)* But that wasn't enough. Oh no. Before Professor Blum could resume his remarks, she leaned across me and in loud whispers demanded that my wife give her back her book. My wife, when she finally understood, complied. But not before Professor Blum had lost

his thread, and everyone in the room was watching this ludicrous little scene!

(Pause.) But even that wasn't enough for your Professor Carroway. Suddenly she was on her feet, launching into a monstrous defense of this course. She said that she, that I, that you had learned more about love this term than we had ever known before. She recommended that every student in the university be required to take it. She recommended that every faculty member take it. She recommended particularly that my wife take it. And she said if we all took it, the world would be a far, far better place!

(Pause.) And then she walked out, edging her way out around the table, as we all sat stupefied and watched her go.

(Pause.) I rose to reply. But I couldn't make myself heard. Because of the laughter. Gales of laughter, waves of laughter, even old Professor Kurtz, of Physics, who has never cracked a smile, was shaking in his chair. And so I too, like your dear, dear Professor Carroway, had to edge my way out of that room. And come here.

SALLY: *(Appears in the aisle.)* Professor Carroway is dying.

BURGESS: Professor Carroway is not dying.

SALLY: She says she's dying. And I believe her.

BURGESS: She is naturally upset...

SALLY: She is dying the modern death. She is dying spiritually.

BURGESS: Where is that student? Where is that Mike?

MIKE: *(Calling out from the back.)* Right here!

BURGESS: Go find out what the story is, Mike.

MIKE: O.K. *(He goes out.)*

SALLY: *(Coming angrily onto the stage.)* I know what the story is. The story is—you killed her.

BURGESS: Because I asked for an apology?

SALLY: Because you voted against her tenure.

(Pause.)

BURGESS: What makes her think that? Those meetings were secret.

SALLY: She said she could tell. By the way you behaved. *(To audience.)* He voted against her contract. Which, of course, made others vote against it. She has a book, and two articles, and won the teaching prize three years ago, but now she's going to die. At Mount Holyoke.

BURGESS: All right. I voted against her. But I got Holyoke to take her on.

SALLY: You traitor!

BURGESS: I had to. She's not for around here. She needs some small, quiet, conservative place in the country...

BURGESS: Says me! She has no sense of where we are! *(To audience)* She wanted to stop with *Wuthering Heights*, you know. "It's all there," she said. "We needn't go farther than that." But as you know, it's not all there. We're way beyond that. Marx, Freud, Darwin—they mean nothing to her. Science, mathematics, she holds them totally in contempt. I had to beg her to teach Lawrence. And you might remember what a disaster that class was.

SALLY: So you're sending her away.

BURGESS: We had to. Can you imagine her here for twenty more years?

SALLY: I can imagine her here forever!

BURGESS: She's too *much*, Sally!

SALLY: She's too much for *you*, Professor Burgess.

MIKE: *(Comes down the aisle.)* Professor Burgess...

BURGESS: How is she, Mike?

MIKE: She's O.K.

BURGESS: Of course she is.

MIKE: She's sitting in the lounge, smoking like a chimney.

BURGESS: Thanks, Mike.

MIKE: And sir: your wife is waiting outside. She says she has the car and she wants to go home.

BURGESS: Then that's it, class. There's my ride. *(He grabs his briefcase and starts off.)*

SALLY: You're running out?

BURGESS: I have to.

SALLY: Without even apologizing to Professor Carroway?

BURGESS: I'll talk to her on the way out.

SALLY: No! It should be here! Up here! In front of all of us! Unless you don't have the courage!

BURGESS: *(Pause. Burgess sighs and comes back on stage.)* All right. Tell Professor Carroway I am waiting for her to return. For mutual apologies. And mutual goodbyes.

SALLY: Gladly! *(She exits hurriedly down the aisle.)*

BURGESS: *(Calling out.)* And Mike...

MIKE: Yes sir.

BURGESS: Ask my wife to wait in the car while I say goodbye to Professor Carroway.

MIKE: O.K. *(Exits up the aisle.)*

BURGESS: *(To audience.)* You see? The course ends with the wife waiting

offstage. We've forgotten wives in this course. We've forgotten marriage. *(Goes to the blackboard.)* Where is the *Odyssey* on this list? Where is Dickens? Where are the Penelopes, the Andromaches, the Portias? How can we talk about love and not talk about marriage? My God, what have we been *doing* for the past four months? Stumbling around in the dank fog of adultery. I'm beginning to breathe again. I'm beginning to—where's that Mike?

MIKE: *(In back.)* Here, sir.

BURGESS: Mike! Come up here, Mike! I want a *man* up here!

(Mike comes up onto the stage.)

BURGESS: Come on, Mike. I want a buddy, I want a pal, I want a little male bonding to go on up here. *(He gives Mike a chair.)* Sit down, Mike. No, I'm serious, pal, sit down.

(Mike does, awkwardly.)

BURGESS: Now we're talking about marriage, Mike. That's the topic on the table.

(Mike nods.)

Now look at me, Mike. Look at me carefully.

(Mike does.)

I'm a married man, Mike. You know that.

(Mike nods.)

BURGESS: Now answer this question, Mike, and answer it frankly. Do I seem happy, Mike?

(Mike looks at him.)

Come on, Mike. Be frank. Do I seem happy?

MIKE: No.

BURGESS: You are right! I am not happy. Not here, not up here I'm not. But *there*, out there, where my wife is, there I'm happy, Mike. I am eager, Mike, I am desperately eager to walk out of here, and get into that car, and kiss my wife, and hug my children in my own home! There's where I'm happy, Mike. Do you believe it, Mike?

MIKE: Well I...

BURGESS: Believe it, Mike. Believe it, for God's sake.

MIKE: O.K.

BURGESS: Take another tack. You live with Sally, don't you?

MIKE: Well we—

BURGESS: Sure you do. All you kids shack up. I know that. "Let copulation thrive!" I'm all for it.

MIKE: Thanks.

MIKE: Well we—
BURGESS: You're not happy, she's not happy, and it's a mess, Mike. Admit it.
MIKE: O.K. I'll admit that.
BURGESS: It's a mess, and now I'll tell you how to clean it up, Mike. Marry her.
MIKE: Back off.
BURGESS: *Marry her, Mike!* That's where it's ultimately at, my friend. Get married, buddy. Go seek thyself a wife. There is a richness, a thickness in the married state which goes far, far beyond the excruciating self-tortures we've been inflicting on ourselves this term. Get married, Mike. Commit yourself to continuity. Have babies. Join the human race.
MIKE: I'm too young to die.
BURGESS: Die? You *live*, man! You stretch, you expand, you grow. Do you know the Rolling Stones, Mike?
MIKE: Of course I know the Rolling—
BURGESS: My kids introduced me to the Rolling Stones. My wife introduced me to paddle tennis. They bring things *in*, Mike. Oh there's a resonance in domesticity which all those books will never teach you. Wed her, and bed her, and make her thine forever.
SALLY: *(Comes down the aisle.)* Professor Carroway wants to teach *Wuthering Heights*.
BURGESS: Tell Professor Carroway I will simply shake her hand and say goodbye.
SALLY: I'll tell her you refuse to teach *Wuthering Heights*. *(Exits up the aisle.)*
BURGESS: See, Mike? How they turn sour? Now listen: go tell my wife that I have just sung her a love song. Ask her to wait a little longer. And then get that girl to marry you.
MIKE: I'll speak to your wife. *(He exits up the aisle.)*
BURGESS: *(Alone; to audience.)* I'll wait a few more minutes for Professor Carroway. *(Pause.)* I can't just walk away. *(Pause; looks around.)* Actually, I have to say I've grown a little fond of this room. *(Pause.)* This...space. *(Pause.)* We've had some good times in here, haven't we? All told. *(Sits on the desk, maybe.)* Some special times. *(Pause.)* Never, never in all my years of teaching have I taken such...risks. *(Pause.)* Remember the class on *Madame Bovary*? Oh my God, what

a class! We flew, we flew in that class! We touched the stars in that class! We—*(Pause.)* It was too much, of course. Much too much. I had to take an aspirin when I got home. I had trouble getting to sleep after *Madame Bovary*. *(Pause.)* Well. Next year I'll be in administration, won't I? Oh boy, I'll tell you, we'll be making some major changes in the curriculum. Some real innovations, right on down the line. *(Pause; sadly.)* And I'll probably never teach again.
(Sally and Mike enter simultaneously in the aisle.)
SALLY: Professor Carroway—
MIKE: *(Simultaneously.)* Your wife—
(They glare at each other.)
SALLY: Professor Carroway says it's *Wuthering Heights* or nothing.
MIKE: Your wife says she can't wait around all day.
(Pause.)
BURGESS: Tell Professor Carroway I am willing to spend a few moments on "Wuthering Heights".
SALLY: Good. *(She goes out up the aisle.)*
BURGESS: *(To Mike.)* And tell my wife...*(Pause.)* Tell my wife...*(Pause.)* Just tell her: please.
MIKE: O.K. *(He exits up the aisle.)*
BURGESS: *(To audience.)* That it is, then. Just a quick crack at it. For old time's sake. It won't be *Madame Bovary*. I'm getting a little too old for *Madame Bovary*.
SALLY: *(Appears in the aisle.)* Professor Carroway is ready to teach.
(Carroway comes slowly down the aisle. She carries her book. She mounts the stage carefully, taking her time. Then she speaks quietly and carefully.)
CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* We thought, as a kind of coda on the course, we might read and discuss the final confrontation between Catharine Earnshaw and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. *(To Burgess.)* Are we agreed?
BURGESS: Agreed.
CARROWAY: *(Opening her book; to Burgess.)* I have my book. You can look on with me.
BURGESS: No, no. *(Rummages quickly in his briefcase.)* I think I brought my own. *(He pulls out a bright paperback edition which should contrast with her old leathery volume.)* I did bring my own.
CARROWAY: I begin on page one ninety-six.

BURGESS: For those who have the Norton Critical Edition, we're on—

(He shuffles through the pages nervously.) One thirty-two.

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* Cathy is dying because of Heathcliffé...

BURGESS: *(To audience.)* Not *just* because of Heathcliffé...

CARROWAY: *(Grimly.)* She *thinks* because of Heathcliffé. And that's the important thing. What she thinks.

BURGESS: Yes. All right. Yes.

CARROWAY: *(To audience.)* Heathcliffé, after years of separation, has found his way to the dying Cathy's room. *(She reads.)* "And he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face..."

BURGESS: *(Looking at his book.)* Where are you? I have no idea where you are.

CARROWAY: *(Reading.)* "There was no prospect of ultimate recovery...She was fated, sure to die."

BURGESS: Ah. Found it.

CARROWAY: Then read.

BURGESS: *(Reading.)* "Oh Cathy! Oh my life! how can I bear it?" was the first sentence he uttered, in a tone—

CARROWAY: Just read Heathcliffé. *(Calling out into the audience.)* Sally! Come up here and read the Narrator!

(Sally comes up the aisle; Carroway turns to Burgess.)

CARROWAY: So we can concentrate on the dialogue.

(Sally comes up onto the stage; Carroway hands her the book.)

CARROWAY: Read there, Sally.

SALLY: *(Reading very prosaically.)* "And now he stared at her so earnestly that I thought the intensity of his gaze would bring tears into his eyes. But they—"

CARROWAY: *(Interrupting; knowing it by heart.)* "They burned with anguish. They did not melt." *(With passion, to Burgess.)* "You have broken my heart, Heathcliffé. You have killed me—and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live, after I am gone?"

(Pause. He looks at her, enrapt. Then quickly searches his book for the response. She turns to Sally.)

CARROWAY: Read.

SALLY: *(Reading.)* "Heathcliffé had knelt on one knee to embrace her..."

CARROWAY: *(To Burgess.)* Do it.

BURGESS: I'm not going to—

CARROWAY: *(Quickly.)* Go on, Sally.

SALLY: *(Reading.)* "Heathcliffé had knelt on one knee to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair and kept him down."

CARROWAY: *(Reciting from memory.)* "I wish I could hold you till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you suffer? I do!"

MIKE: *(Enters down the aisle.)* Professor Burgess...

(Burgess comes to the edge of the stage, leans down. Mike whispers something to him. Burgess looks upset.)

CARROWAY: What's the matter?

BURGESS: Nothing.

CARROWAY: I said what's the matter?

BURGESS: My wife wants me to know she's watching in the rear.

CARROWAY: Good! Excellent!

(Mike retreats down the aisle; Carroway begins to recite again.)

CARROWAY: "Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, 'That's the grave of Catharine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago...I've loved many others since. My children are dearer to me than she was.' Will you say so, Heathcliffé?"

BURGESS: *(Reading very quietly.)* "Don't torture me until I'm as mad as yourself."

CARROWAY: Louder. People can't hear.

BURGESS: *(Very loudly.)* "DON'T TORTURE ME UNTIL I'M AS MAD AS YOURSELF!"

(Pause.)

CARROWAY: Read, Sally.

SALLY: *(Reading.)* "The two, to a cool spectator, made a strange and fearful picture."

CARROWAY: Skip to "She retained..."

SALLY: Um. *(Finds the place.)* "She retained in her closed fingers a portion of the locks she had been grasping..."

CARROWAY: *(To Burgess.)* Read.

BURGESS: *(Reading desperately.)* "You know you lie to say I have killed you. Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness that while you are at peace, I shall writhe in the torments of hell?"

CARROWAY: "I shall not be at peace."

(Mike again comes hurriedly down the aisle. Burgess again comes to the edge of the stage. Mike whispers to him, then leaves.)

What now?

BURGESS: My wife has just left.

CARROWAY: Run after her.

BURGESS: Yes!...No!...Yes!...Oh my God, why, why am I here? I've just missed my ride! I'll probably miss a meal! There will be hell to pay when I get home!

CARROWAY: The shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds.

BURGESS: No. She laughs. She laughs at you. She laughs at me when I mention you. Oh woman, what have you done to me? You have seduced me. With books! We have bathed in them, we have rolled in them, we have wallowed in them like lascivious Turks! Right now I should be home! I should be sitting at the kitchen table, talking to my wife, holding a cool beer, with beaded bubbles winking at the brim!

CARROWAY: Keats!

BURGESS: Yes, KEATS! And Shelley! And Brontë. Oh Lady, you are holding me in thrall! You're dragging me down! I'm drowning!

CARROWAY: Then swim to administration. Lie panting there, on that desert island.

BURGESS: What else can I do?

CARROWAY: (*Closing her eyes, reciting.*) "Heathcliffe, forgive me. Come here and kneel down. You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than any harsh words! Won't you come here? Do!"

SALLY: (*Reading.*) "Heathcliffe went to the back of her chair."

BURGESS: (*To Carroway, carefully.*) I'll come up to Holyoke. Commute. Once a week. So we can still teach the course.

CARROWAY: (*Shaking her head.*) Go on, Sally.

SALLY: (*Reading.*) "He leaned over, but not so far as to let her see his face..."

BURGESS: Or you could come down here. Be a visiting lecturer. I could arrange it.

CARROWAY: Go on, Sally.

SALLY: (*Reading.*) "She bent round to look at him; he would not permit it; turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace, where he stood, silent, his back toward us."

BURGESS: (*Burgess has followed these directions almost instinctively.*) All right. I'll do what I can to have you reinstated here. I'll cite Affirmative Action. I'll get something going.

CARROWAY: "Oh you see, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of my grave. *That is how I am loved!*"

BURGESS: What do you want then?

CARROWAY: (*Now reciting more to herself.*) "Well never mind! That is not my Heathcliffe. I shall love mine yet and take him with me—he's in my soul."

BURGESS: Would you tell me what you want, please?

CARROWAY: "And the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it."

BURGESS: For God's sake, woman, tell me what you *want!*

CARROWAY: (*To Sally.*) Read.

SALLY: (*Reading.*) "In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair."

(*Carroway does.*)

"At that earnest appear, he turned to her, looking absolutely desperate."

(*Burgess does.*)

"His eyes wide, and wet at last, flashed fiercely on her, his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held asunder; and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catharine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive."

(*Sally looks up from her reading. Burgess and Carroway are kissing frantically. The book slowly lowers in Sally's hand. Softly.*)

SALLY: Professor...Carroway.

(*Then suddenly the bell rings for the end of class. Carroway breaks away from the embrace.*)

BURGESS: (*Huskily.*) I meant what I said about getting you back here.

CARROWAY: Don't be silly. (*She begins briskly stacking her books.*)

BURGESS: I want to teach this course again.

CARROWAY: Once is enough, I think. (*To audience.*) Now the examination topic. I think you should write on Plato. (*To Burgess.*) Is Plato all right with you? We began there, we should end there.

(*Burgess nods vaguely. She turns to the audience again.*)

CARROWAY: Plato it is, then. The end of the *Symposium*. Where Socrates suggests that tragedy and comedy are ultimately the same thing. (*To Burgess.*) I think that should tie the knot, don't you?

(*Burgess again nods vaguely. Carroway finishes stacking her books.*)

CARROWAY: Sally, would you like to discuss Plato with me in my office?

SALLY: I—I'm not sure where my book is.

MIKE: *(From the aisle.)* I think it's in the apartment.

SALLY: *(To Carroway, with a shrug.)* I better go see.

(She gives Carroway back her copy of Wuthering Heights, and exits with Mike, down the aisle.)

CARROWAY: *(Gathers her stack of books lovingly in her arms. She holds out her one free hand to Burgess.)* Goodbye, Professor Burgess.

BURGESS: *(Mechanically shaking hands.)* Goodbye, Professor Carroway.
(Carroway exits briskly down the aisle. Burgess stands on stage watching her as the lights dim on the stage.)

END OF PLAY

Seminario Multidisciplinario
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Public Affairs

Part Two
THE OPEN MEETING