

The Liberty Tree

A Screenplay by Charles Reuben

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Version: June 26, 1996

The Liberty Tree

**Written by Charles Reuben
Directed by Rudy Miera**

Friday, June 21, 7:30 p.m., \$3
Experimental Theatre at Popejoy Hall

Join UNM's Theatre & Dance Department for a
Dramatic Reading of an Upcoming Full-Length Movie
about one of America's Oldest and Coolest
Liberal Arts Colleges (St. John's College)!



Title: Portrait of Arthur Atherley as an Etonian
Artist: Sir Thomas Lawrence, England, 1769-1830
Credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Collection
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The Liberty Tree, Page 1
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

"THE LIBERTY TREE"

BOLD, WHITE LETTERING on black reads: LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM
OF ART, 1971

LONG SHOT - LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM - DAY

INTERIOR. LONG CORRIDOR, LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM. POINT-OF-VIEW

It is past closing time. The piercing sound of resonating foot-
steps echo against empty corridors hung with English master-
pieces. Pan from picture to picture. Soft background music:
Chopin's "Mazurka in A Minor (Op. 17, No. 4). Long shot, "THE
PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR ATHERLEY," (c.a. 1790-91) by Sir Thomas Law-
rence, English 1769-1830.

CLOSE-UP - "The Portrait of Arthur Atherley." Take note of pic-
ture' title, then sweep the entire canvas.

KIP ALLMAN'S VOICE

Dear Dad, I came across a painting in the Los
Angeles County Museum of Art that made a
striking impression on me. It was called "The
Portrait of Arthur Atherley as an Etonian" by
Sir Thomas Lawrence. I swear I could see the
reflection of my soul in his eyes. If he were
alive today, I'm sure we'd be friends. Tomor-
row my travels come to an end and I leave for
college: St. John's College in Annapolis,
Maryland, a school rich in tradition, like
the school Arthur Atherley attended. Unlike
my friends I have chosen to put my future on
hold and study the classics. By doing so, I
hope to become a gentleman, find God and get
laid. If I ever ignored your advice during my
childhood, please know that I am paying close
attention to your words now. Please write
soon. All my love, Kip.

FINAL SHOT - IMAGE OF SKY FROM PAINTING. DISSOLVE

EXTERIOR. BRILLIANT ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND SKY. AUTUMN DAY.

AERIAL SHOT of the docks, huge, ivy covered colonial houses, the
Naval Academy and finally, the campus of ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

FRAME ORNATE sign in front of the college that reads: "St. John's
College, founded 1696 as King William's School."

LONG SHOT of 400-year-old LIBERTY TREE (tulip poplar, 96' tall,
76' wide, with a girth at trunk of 26'). Pan close-up details of
the Liberty Tree and its cement-filled trunk and overhead wire
cables supporting massive limbs that seem to defy gravity as well
as death.

MEDIUM SHOT - KIP ALLMAN

Kip is standing at the base of the Liberty Tree, carrying two, large, old-fashioned leather suitcases and wearing a little backpack. He has little fashion sense, is working class and managed to qualify for this expensive, private liberal arts school with scholarships, grants and work study. His physique is much like Arthur Atherley's, with long brown hair, slender body, but awkward. He has just arrived at school and is confused. He is trying to look cool by smoking tobacco in an old, burly pipe. Inspired by the monster tree, he puts the suitcases down, reaches into backpack and pulls out a leather diary, sits crosslegged, and begins to write a poem.

MEDIUM SHOT - PAUL SEXTON

Paul approaches Kip on the red, cobblestone path. He is a mid 40-year-old liberal arts student, wears a Colonel Sanders outfit and has a clean shaven face. He seems a bit slow, almost retarded. Paul stands before Kip. Kip finishes his poem and looks up.

PAUL

Now that's a tree!

KIP

They don't grow them like that where I come from. Do you know anything about it?

PAUL

I probably know more about The Liberty Tree than anybody alive. I'm the gardener....Paul Sexton at your service!

KIP

My name is Kip, Kip Allman. I just got in from Los Angeles. I'm a freshman.

PAUL

(Sneaking a look at Kip's diary)
And a poet, too. I gather.

KIP

I mess around.

PAUL

That tree is over 400 years old. It has survived just about every punishment you can imagine. George Washington and Francis Scott Key used to party beneath that tree.

KIP

Didn't Francis Scott Key attend St. John's?

PAUL

Key is definitely our most famous alumni. He graduated in 1796. But most people here would probably agree that "The Star Spangled Banner" was, by far, the worst thing he ever wrote.

KIP

That poor tree looks like it is being held together with cables and cement.

PAUL

At the turn of the century, the Liberty Tree underwent massive surgery. All the decay was cleaned out and filled in with 55 tons of reinforced concrete. The cables help keep the branches stable.

KIP

Maybe they should just put it out of its misery.

PAUL

Nonsense. She'll be here forever. So, are you living on campus?

KIP

Yeah, Randall Hall, room 308.

PAUL

That's my room! We're roommates. Tell you what: I have to pick up an essay at the dean's office. Afterwards I'll show you to your room.

KIP

Cool!

PAUL grabs one of Kip's bags. The two walk out of the frame while the camera continues to pan grounds of college. Linger on open dorm windows and lounging students.

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT - McDowell Hall, ancient colonial nerve center of the college.

ZOOM TO FRONT PORCH, note name plate, "McDowell Hall." Pan to dean's office window. DEAN MARCUS CARROLL is gazing out the open window. He is thin, white-haired, with thick, black frame glasses, bushy eyebrows, impeccably dressed in a 3-piece black suit.

ANGLE DOWN to 17-year-old JEFFREY HYMN, lying beneath the dean's window. Slender, blonde-haired, creamy white complexion, talks with a lisp, wearing skimpy tank top and short, frayed blue jeans cutoffs. She is reading from a large volume of Aristotle and is

The Liberty Tree, Page 4
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

drinking a glass of red wine. She looks up at the dean and smiles. Dean coughs, looks away, embarrassed.

INTERIOR, McDowell Hall, office of the dean. Dusty, dry and academic. Pan bookcase, world globe, nautical instruments, etc. Sunlight creates bars of light against the dust as it pours through the window. Marcus buzzes secretary, EMMA PAGE, a no-nonsense, conservatively dressed, 70-year-old woman with lots of spunk.

MARCUS

Emma, may I please have a moment of your time?

ENTER EMMA. Marcus stands by the globe, twirling its surface.

MARCUS

I seem to have run out of things to do, Emma. There must be some desperate tutor or student who wants something out of me.

EMMA

(pondering)

No, you're all caught up. Why don't you just try to relax? You've been working nonstop for the past month.

MARCUS

I'm shocked. First day of school and nothing to do.

EMMA

Well, count your blessings. Something's bound to happen.

MARCUS

All right, I'll try to relax. Sorry to bother you.

EMMA

No bother. Call me if you need anything.

EMMA leaves room, closing door behind her. Marcus twirls globe one final time and walks to the window once again, his back to camera. Jeffrey, lying on her stomach, lifts her leg back in a sensuous pose. Marcus turns around, a sly smile on his face.

MARCUS

(to himself)

C'mon Marcus, act your age. You're too old for these shenanigans. Nothing worse than a grown man who can't handle a little free time.

The Liberty Tree, Page 5
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

Marcus walks to the bookcase. Extreme close-up of the 100 or so Great Books, in assorted, collector's editions. He pulls out one dusty, leather, oversized book, opens it, concentrates on text and then unconsciously walks to his desk. He slowly sits down in his creaky, leather chair and turns a few pages. The clock begins to tick loudly and he falls asleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE. Long shot of Greek ruins, columns, etc. PLATO and ARISTOTLE, lounging under blue skies, in green, flowery meadow. Aristotle is portrayed as a blonde-haired, blue-eyed 14-year-old boy and Plato is an old, bearded man. Both are wearing togas, garlands, etc. They are busily writing away on scrolls of papyrus with goose quill pens, seated back to back.

ARISTOTLE

Hey Plato, I think I've come up with a good one. Wanna hear it?

PLATO

I'm all ears.

Plato and Aristotle turn to face each other.

ARISTOTLE

OK, here goes.

(stands up, slowly, dramatically)

One swallow does not a summer make. And so too: One day does not make a man blessed and happy.

(pause, then anxiously)

So....what do you think?

PLATO

(irritated)

What did I tell you about poets?

ARISTOTLE

You told me the only good poet is a dead poet. But....

PLATO

No buts about it. There's a special circle in Hell reserved for people who write poetry. Who do you think you are anyway? Homer?

ARISTOTLE

No, I wouldn't presume....

PLATO

You want to hear some really good stuff?

ARISTOTLE

Go for it.

Plato stands. Aristotle sits admiringly, drapes arms around legs.

PLATO

Now, if you take away all physical movement from a living being, what is left for it to do but contemplate? Therefore, the activity of the gods, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative. And, among men, that which is most similar to contemplation must be the true nature of happiness.

ARISTOTLE

What's that supposed to mean?

PLATO

It means, if you want to be happy, you need to meditate.

ARISTOTLE

I'd rather get laid.

PLATO

(laughing)

Sex is like a bucket with holes in it. You can pour water into it all day long and it will never get filled. Trust me: Meditation is the key to happiness.

ARISTOTLE

That's easy for you to say: You can barely get it up anymore. Me: Sex is the only thing I think about these days....and nights, especially nights.

(thoughtful pause)

What do you mean by happiness, anyway?

PLATO

When nothing troubles your soul, Aristotle: Neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor any pleasure. When your soul is alone by itself and takes leave of the body and reaches out toward God.

Plato sits down. Aristotle snuggles close. Dark clouds fill sky and lightning illuminate them. Plato puts his arm around the boy. Aristotle snuggles closer. A huge clap of thunder is heard. Brilliant flash of light fills the screen and all goes black.

THE DEAN'S OFFICE. Marcus is slumped over his book, facing the door. The sound of a foot smashing against the door twice can be heard. Suddenly the door breaks open. A cloud of dust and debris fills the air. Colonial woodwork and molding are strewn about in disarray. Dust settles and two BLACK PANTHERS are standing at the

doorway, carrying machine guns and dressed in black leather jackets, pants and berets.

PANTHER #1

Wake up, Honky! We're taking over.

MARCUS

Who are you, what do you want?

PANTHER #2

We're the Black Panthers. We're here to send a message to the capitalistic pig oppressors of America.

MARCUS

(Striking thoughtful pose)

And how do you hope to accomplish this?

PANTHER #1

Armed with freedom and guns, we will fight for the perpetual peace of all mankind.

EMMA

(Rushing into the room. Shocked)

What is going on here? Marcus, are you all right? Should I call the police?

MARCUS

Don't call anybody. Everything is all right. These people are our guests, Emma: They're from the Black Panther Party.

EMMA

(Nervously)

Welcome to St. John's College. Can I get you anything?

MARCUS

Yes, this does seem to be a valid question: What exactly do you want?

PANTHER #2

We want freedom. We want power to determine our destiny.

PANTHER #1

We want an end to the robbery by the white man of the Black community.

PANTHER #2

We want education that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society.

PANTHER #1

We want land, bread, housing, education,
clothing, justice and peace.

MARCUS

(Thoughtfully)

These are reasonable expectations from any
society. And if it were in my power, I would
grant each and every one of them. But I
can't. As a matter of fact, it's going to
take everything I've got just to get that
door fixed.

PANTHER #2

Forget about the damn door, Whitey! Just tell
me this: Where are all the cameras?

EMMA

The cameras? There are no cameras here.

PANTHER #1

And the reporters? Where are the reporters?

MARCUS

Oh, you mean the media? No media here. Jeez,
I can't remember the last time the press took
an interest in us. Emma, can you remember the
last time St. John's made the news?

EMMA

Must have been 1951, when we decided to let
women into the college.

MARCUS

Or maybe 1937, when St. John's fully embraced
the Great Books program.

PANTHER #2

(To Panther #1)

I told you we should have gone to the Naval
Academy. We could have raised all sorts of
hell there. Look, not one reporter. I thought
you called the papers.

PANTHER #1

I called the papers, the radio and the TV
stations. They all acted like I was making a
joke. No wonder they didn't believe me: This
place is a nut house.

EMMA

In 1961 Ripley's "Believe It or Not" featured
the Liberty tree in one of its comic strips.
Now that's media attention!

MARCUS

Look, I'm sorry we can't provide you with media attention but I was wondering if you could tell me what is responsible for all the ills that have afflicted mankind?

PANTHER #2

That's easy: White people are responsible for all our problems.

PANTHER #1

Drugs are the problem! Whitey is trying to numb the black man and make us forget our heritage.

PANTHER #2

It's the police. The pigs are beating the shit out of black men for walking down the street.

MARCUS

Gentlemen, I have to disagree. I don't think that these are the causes of society's ills.

PANTHER #1

Well then, what is?

MARCUS

(With a twinkle in his eye)
Original Sin.

PANTHER #1

That's it, I've had enough. Let's get out of here.

(The Panthers move toward the door)

MARCUS

No, wait!

PANTHER #1

What now?

Pulls a musty, old book from bookcase, hands to Panther #1.

MARCUS

Please accept this copy of Plato's "Republic" as our way of saying thank you for stopping by. In it, you will find the solutions to all your social problems.

PANTHER #1

(Accepts book)

We'll check it out, brother. Stay cool. Sorry about the door.

The Liberty Tree, Page 10
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

EXIT BLACK PANTHERS.

EMMA

(Admiringly)

You certainly put them in their place. I didn't think you had it in you.

MARCUS

I didn't think I had it in myself. OK, who's next?

EMMA

(Peeks outside)

It's Paul Sexton.

MARCUS

Show him in. And call maintenance about the door, will you please?

EXIT EMMA. ENTER PAUL.

Paul shyly enters and kicks away a little debris to find a comfortable space. He stands before the dean's desk with his hat held submissively between his hands.

PAUL

Hello, Mr. Carroll.

MARCUS

Hello, Mr. Sexton. Sorry about the mess. Welcome back to St. John's College. How are you?

PAUL

I'm OK. Life is treating me kindly...by the way, who were those men in the black leather jackets? I tried to say hello, but they just called me a bad name.

MARCUS

You needn't worry. They're gone. And they're not coming back. They were looking for trouble but found they came to the wrong place.

(Pause)

Say Paul: How long has it been since you first arrived at St. John's?

PAUL

I've been here 20 years.

MARCUS

20 years! Don't you think it's about time you graduated already?

PAUL

I can't do it, Mr. Carroll. I'm still haunted by the memory of getting beaten up on the back campus 19 years ago.

MARCUS

That was an unfortunate day, Paul. But, don't worry. You can stay here as long as you like. You have my word on that.

PAUL

(Pleading)

Back then, before the accident, I could handle just about anybody or anything that life threw my way. I just can't function in the real world anymore, Marcus. Don't make me go! I earn my keep!

MARCUS

Yes, you do Paul. You're the best gardener this campus ever had, and you're not a bad student either. And oh, by the way, how is the old Liberty Tree holding up?

PAUL

She's in great shape for the shape she's in. Probably good for another 400 years.

MARCUS

This campus wouldn't be the same without the ol' Liberty Tree: Take good care of her.

PAUL

You can count on me, sir.

Marcus digs out a thick bound essay from a pile of paper on the desk.

MARCUS

(Changing the subject)

One more thing, Paul: I wanted to tell you that I was very impressed with your last senior essay.

PAUL

I'm glad you liked it. I wracked my brain on it all summer long. But I'd like to withdraw it immediately from any further examination: I'm not ready to graduate....yet.

MARCUS

I understand. The College is delighted to have you back as a student as well as the gardener. I hope that this year will be a

MARCUS (Cont)
rewarding one for you. So,
(Dean hands essay back to Paul)
what are your plans for this year?

PAUL
I'd like to repeat the freshman year again.

MARCUS
Nice choice. I hope you find your decision
rewarding. Keep up the good work. And stay
out of trouble. You know how you are....

Marcus and Paul walk to the door. They shake hands. Paul exits.
Marcus walks back to window, but Jeffrey is gone. He stares out
into space.

EXT. QUADRANGLE in front of RANDALL HALL.

Kip and Paul enter the quad and approach the entryway to the
dormitory. Rock music fills the air. COLLEGE KIDS are lounging
about, reading impressively bound texts in scholarly and provoca-
tive poses.

PAUL
Plato said that the unexamined life is not
worth living.

KIP
But Paul, can you truly say that the un-lived
life is worth examining?

REGINALD THOROUGHGOOD, a dandy type with thick, smug, east coast
accent, is demonstrating a Euclidian proposition to the beautiful
Jeffrey Hymn, by drawing it on the pavement in chalk.

REGINALD
Therefore the diameter BC bisects the paral-
lelogram ACDB. Does that make sense, Jeffrey?

JEFFREY
(Dreamily)
Reggie, all this studying is making me hun-
gry. Why don't we head down to the Colonial
Kitchen and split a nice, juicy veal parme-
sean?

REGINALD
But dinner's only in an hour! Let's study a
bit longer.

JEFFREY
OK, but go slower.

The Liberty Tree, Page 13
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

SEBASTIAN COMBS, a sporty Englishman with thick accent and meticulous dress, is sitting with his colleague BERT FELLOWS, an ancient, yet vigorous professor. Fellows' clothing is a bit threadbare, and he has a long, skinny, brown cigarette dangling from his mouth.

SEBASTIAN

So this lady walks into a bar and calls out
to the bartender, hey Smitty, lemme have a
beer! Bartender, looks at her and asks,
"Anheuser Busch?" She looks back in astonish-
ment and yells, "Oh fine...and how's your
dick?"

FELLOWS takes a moment to reflect and snorts his approval amidst a cacophony of coughing and hacking. TOM HUBBLE, a long-haired freshman, is drunk, addressing the people in the quadrangle from the open Queen Anne windows on the second floor of Randall Hall.

TOM

Fellow Johnnies: Lend me your ears. I have
just written a poem about The Liberty Tree.
Would anybody care to hear it?

AN ENCOURAGING CHEER persuades Tom to continue.

TOM

Open your eyes and look at that tree
Tell me now, what do you see?

Now that you have classified that tree by

Kingdom
Phylum
Class
Order
Family
Genus
and Species

Now that you have measured its volume, stud-
ied its core, analyzed its composition and
calculated its lifespan
And now that you feel you are finished
And there is no more to see:

I say:

Open your eyes and look at that tree.

CROWD CHEERS. Paul turns to Kip.

PAUL

See, you're not the only poet at St. John's.

Kip and Paul enter doorway of Randall Hall.

The Liberty Tree, Page 14
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

INTERIOR. MAIN HALLWAY, RANDALL HALL. Kip and Paul enter. The Beatles' song "Revolution" is blaring. Sign on the wall reads: "BEWARE: You are now entering THE GHETTO. Randall Hall: Haven for Behavioral Basket Cases. Population: 41 + 1 Resident "Head" Elevation: Very High."

KIP
Pretty wild bunch of kids here.

PAUL
I've never had trouble with anybody.

Kip and Paul climb to the third floor up the creaky, wooden steps, past a couple common rooms. In the first room, a group of students are dressed in loin clothes and war paint, beating drums and playing flutes. In the next, a young freshman girl stands before an easel, painting a canvas. In yet another, a young dancer practices ballet. Kip and Paul approach the door to their room.

PAUL
And now....drum roll please.

Paul opens the door into a room with a small hardwood floor, bunk beds, large open window with a view of the back campus. There are two desks wedged into the small room. It is very neat. The radio is blaring a news report.

KIP
Nice. I like it. Kinda reminds me of Van Gogh's "Bedroom at Arles."

PAUL
Top bunk OK?

KIP
That's fine. Say Paul, would you terribly mind turning down your radio a bit?

PAUL
Sure, no problem.

Kip starts unloading his things. He sets a sealed letter on a desk, which Paul opens when Kip isn't watching. He starts reading it.

PAUL
Well, lookee here, you made the papers.

KIP
I beg your pardon?

PAUL

Listen.

(He reads a news clipping)

Jeremiah (Kip) Allman, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Allman of Los Angeles is a member of the freshman class of St. John's College, Annapolis, Md. St. John's program is centered in the 130 Great Books of Western Civilization. With a student-faculty ratio of eight to one and student population of 300, St. John's classes involve a discussion method rather than lectures and testing....

KIP

Cool. Where'd you get that?

PAUL

Here. In your letter. And look, a check for \$200. This is your lucky day.

KIP

(Angrily)

You read my mail! I can't believe you opened my mail!

(Grabs letter back)

What's the matter with you?

PAUL

I'm sorry. Did I do something wrong?

KIP

Yes! You don't go around reading other people's mail!

PAUL

Oh, I'm really sorry. But you know, sometimes I do things that don't make much sense to people.

KIP

What do you mean?

PAUL

Well, you see, I got beaten up once, a long time ago.

KIP

What did you say?

PAUL

In the back campus. Three black men jumped me.

KIP

When was this?

PAUL

About 20 years ago. I was a freshman, just like you. They beat me up so bad I was in the hospital for a month. When I got out, everything was different.

KIP

How so?

PAUL

I just can't seem to think straight. Everybody's always on my case. I don't mean to upset people, I just do. I'm really sorry I read your letter.

KIP

All right, just don't let it happen again. Look, what you say we party. Got a joint? How about a beer?

PAUL

Oh, I don't touch the stuff. But there are plenty around here who do and I'm sure they would be delighted to turn you on.

KIP

Well, maybe later. I've got 200 pages of Homer to read by tomorrow. I really should get to work.

PAUL

I won't bother you.

Kip jumps on top bunk bed, lays on stomach and starts to read. Paul turns up the volume on the radio.

RADIO

President Nixon has announced that by April 15 there will be no more than 434,000 American soldiers in South Vietnam. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced....

KIP

Paul! What's the deal here? I'm trying to study.

PAUL

(Turns the volume down)

I'm listening to the news. Don't you like to listen to the news?

KIP

Not when I'm studying!

PAUL

(Dreamily)

I like to listen to news. Financial, business, entertainment...any kind of news. 24 hours a day. I'm not happy unless I know exactly what's going on everywhere.

KIP

That's nice. But you're going to have to wear a headphone, at least when I'm around.

PAUL

(Excitedly)

What you say we listen to some hard-driving rock'n'roll?

KIP

Fuck'n-A, turn it up!

PAUL

(Darkly)

Just kidding. I hate rock and roll. I was testing you. I don't see how you can study when listening to rock'n'roll but you won't let me listen to the news.

KIP

That's different! The news has words.

PAUL

So does rock'n'roll.

KIP

Look, I don't want to argue with you. Let's just keep the radio off. OK?

PAUL

Fine.

They are quiet for a few seconds. Pages are turned.

KIP

It's kinda stuffy in here, don't you think?

PAUL

Feels all right to me.

KIP

Well, wouldn't you like some nice fresh air?

PAUL

No.

KIP

Fine.

A few seconds more of silence. Then Paul begins to crack his knuckles.

KIP

Christ! What is that noise?

PAUL

My knuckles. Is that bothering you, too?

KIP

As a matter of fact, it is.

PAUL

Well, they won't be bothering you any more. I've cracked them all.

KIP

There's still your neck. We can crack that next!

PAUL

I beg your pardon. Do I sense some hostility?

KIP

No. Just kidding.

PAUL

Good, because I think I'm going to meditate. We don't need any bad vibes floating about, do we?

Bell atop McDowell Hall begins to clang vigorously.

KIP

What's that all about?

PAUL

Convocation. It's time for you to sign The Great Book.

KIP

What "Great Book?"

PAUL

You'll see. Hurry! Don't be late. They're waiting for you.

As scene comes to a close, camera zooms in on Paul, sitting alone in the middle of the room, meditating.

INTERIOR. Great Hall of McDowell Hall. Room is filled with nicely dressed students. PRESIDENT WHITEHEAD, a distinguished, elderly

gentleman, and Dean Carroll presiding. Both are wearing black robes, decked in ermine, precious jewels and other appropriate, academic paraphernalia. Kip sneaks into the room and finds a seat next to JEFFREY HYMN. They talk softly. President Whitehead is presiding at the front of the hall, before a podium.

WHITEHEAD

There are some who say that St. John's College is a school frozen in time. And it is true that the curriculum has remained relatively unchanged throughout the centuries. We still study ancient Greek. We read the classics. Textbooks are not used. There are no lectures and there are no grades.

KIP

Hi! Did I miss anything?

JEFFREY

Yeah, alot of boring speeches. What's your name?

KIP

Kip Allman.

JEFFREY

I'm Jeffrey, Jeffrey Hymn. Pleased to meet you.

KIP

Jeffrey? That's a boy's name.

JEFFREY

Yeah, well my dad wanted a boy.

WHITEHEAD

But there are certain things that have changed, and changed for the better. In 1951, we realized that women were here to stay and we became co-educational. In 1937 we chose the books that eventually became the core of our curriculum....

JEFFREY

(Sizing up Kip)

So, have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into your life?

KIP

What?

JEFFREY

Are you saved?

KIP

Are you kidding? I haven't even thought about it.

JEFFREY

Aren't you concerned with what's going to happen to you after you die?

KIP

Actually, Jews don't believe in an afterlife. Heaven and hell are right here on earth.

JEFFREY

Well, I feel really, really sorry for you. Personally, I can't wait to die so that I can experience the joy of salvation.

KIP

You don't strike me as the kind of person that needs to be saved.

JEFFREY

We're all sinners in the eyes of God. Jesus Christ died for our sins.

WHITEHEAD

....Even the social lives of St. John's students, especially Freshmen, have changed dramatically. I came across a document, written in 1920, that outlined the rules for the Government of Freshman. Among the rules were the following: When an upper classman enters the room, stand at attention and speak when spoken to....Freshman are not allowed to speak to girls, unless they have been properly introduced. All freshman have to carry matches at all times. And: Freshmen will come at once when they are called and will drop everything they are doing.

(He puts down the ancient document)

You will be relieved to know that the treatment of Freshmen has vastly improved since 1920.

KIP

Well look, what do you say you and I get together afterwards for a beer?

JEFFREY

I can't. I have 200 pages of Homer to read. I don't think you heard a word I said about Jesus. Are you trying to pick me up?

KIP

I'm just trying to get to know you better. I think I like you. And besides, you know what Aristotle said....The unlived life is not worth examining.

JEFFREY

Are you for real? First of all, the quote is "the unexamined life is not worth living" and second, that was said by Plato. Excuse me please, I don't feel very comfortable sitting here with you.

Jeffrey glares at Kip, picks up her things and moves to another vacant seat, a few rows away. The chair next to Kip is now empty. Kip looks back to the chair again and seated there is 14-16 year-old Arthur Atherley, appearing exactly the way he does in his portrait: Ambiguously androgynous.

ARTHUR

Smooth move, Kip. I can see you're going to be keeping your virginity for some time.

KIP

What? Who are you?

ARTHUR

Oh, c'mon now. You know who I am. Guess.

KIP

That's not possible. You look exactly like a "The Portrait of Arthur Atherley" by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

ARTHUR

At your service.

KIP

You mean you're Arthur Atherley?!

ARTHUR

The ghost of Arthur Atherley. Nobody can see me except for you. You can think of me as your guardian angel, if you like.

KIP

My what? What do you want?

ARTHUR

The question is: What do you want? But I already know what you want. You want to, and I quote, One: Become a gentleman. Two: Find God and Three: Get Laid. How old are you anyway?

KIP

Eighteen.

ARTHUR

And you haven't got laid yet? Oh, that is priceless. But it does make sense. I mean look at yourself. You don't care about your appearance: You are UG-ly. You have no tact and you're kinda boring to be around.

(Confidentially)

Hey Kip, that Jeffrey is a babe! Can you possibly imagine what it must be like to have that pair of legs wrapped around your neck?

KIP

I beg your pardon?

ARTHUR

Y'know: Make the beast with two backs. But maybe you prefer to do the Portuguese pump, if you know what I mean. But no matter.... you'll be lucky if she ever talks to you again.

KIP

Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't guardian angels supposed to be supportive?

ARTHUR

Not this one.

KIP

Well, do you have anything of value to offer?

ARTHUR

You may not believe this but at one time even I had trouble getting laid. But this little book solved everything.

(Hands Kip a dusty book)

KIP

"The Art of Love," by Ovid.
(Hands book back to Arthur)

ARTHUR

Lesson number one.

(Finds a place in the book)

Under no circumstances have your hair curled, or powder yourself. Dress simply, for you are a man. Wash yourself, get tanned, wear clean clothes, take the tartar from your teeth, and don't galumph around in shoes that are three

ARTHUR (Cont)

sizes too large for you. In any case, don't stagger around smelling to high heaven. Leave the more subtle toilet refinements to females.

Kip turns to Arthur, but all that remains is an empty chair. He has disappeared.

MARCUS

You are now about to join a proud tradition of St. John's students. You 65 freshman are about to sign a register which dates back to the College's inception. Please step up to the podium when I call your name, bow or curtsy to President Whitehead, sit down at the table and inscribe your name in the register. Ahmed Ahmadi.... Mary Alger.... Unavoidably detained.... Kip Allman....

As the names are called, each student walks up to the podium, bows or curtsies to the President, who sagely acknowledges their gesture, shakes their hands and congratulates them. They then sit down at the table and write their names into the register. After calling each name, if the student is not present, the dean says "unavoidably detained." When Kip approaches the President, he does not bow.

WHITEHEAD

You're supposed to bow, Mr. Allman.

KIP

I'm sorry, Mr. Whitehead. I just don't feel right about bowing to you.

WHITEHEAD

(To entire freshman class)

Please don't be shy. You're not bowing to me, you're bowing to St. John's College.

KIP

I suppose I can live with that.

Kip bows, sits down and writes name in register.

MARCUS

Anthony Chavez....Unavoidably detained.

Cut to end of convocation. Last names are being read.

MARCUS

Jason Vandenberg....and David Zucker.

WHITEHEAD

By signing this ancient register, you have committed yourself to a study of the seven traditional liberal arts: The trivium of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic, as well as the Quadrivium of Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music. Facio Liberos Ex Liberis Libris Libraque. Congratulations, you are now officially members of St. John's College.

Students cheer. Fade out.

EXTERIOR, BACK CAMPUS. Sunny day. Kip is standing before the open door of the boathouse in the backcampus. It is a neat, little colonial structure, in harmony with the rest of campus, with a sloped, wooden boat ramp leading into the College Creek.

KIP

Hello! Anybody home?

INTERIOR, BOAT HOUSE. Spartan interior is full of ropes, sails, wet suits and six highly polished, 14-foot "Laser" sailboats. Kimo, the boat steward, is busy sanding the hull of a crippled boat. Kimo is a tall, strong, well-tanned student who has spent his life on the water. He is in his early 20's. He puts down his work and approaches Kip.

KIMO

Can I help you?

KIP

Yeah, I heard I could learn how to sail here. My name is Kip, Kip Allman.

KIMO

I'm Kimo and this is the St. John's Armada. We have six 14-foot sailboats here, better known as "Lasers," but before I can allow you to sail, you will need to pass some tests.

KIP

Hey! I thought there were no tests at St. John's!

KIMO

There are here.

MONTAGE SCENE set to Wagnerian maritime music. Kimo quizzes Kip about each part of the boat. Next, Kip is sliding a sailboat down the tracks of the wooden boat ramp into the water and begins rigging the boat. He wears a life preserver and wetsuit. Kimo watches from the beach in both frustration and approval. Everything that can go wrong, does go wrong. Kip tips over, he turns

turtle, he gets caught in irons.

Eventually, Kip gets the hang of sailing the small craft. As the music begins to fade, Kip has mastered the creek and is allowed to take his boat into the Chesapeake Bay. Dramatic shots of Kip sailing confidently in a strong wind follow. Voice over of KIP'S FATHER narrates throughout this montage.

KIP'S FATHER

Dear Kip: It has been a couple weeks since you left for St. John's and I imagine that you are now vigorously ingrained in your studies of the classics. You are also engaging in social activities and it is this point I wish to address.

(Pause)

The true pleasures of a gentleman are those of the table, but within the bounds of moderation, good company, and sprightly, gallant conversations with women of fashion and sense. These are the real pleasures of a gentleman which occasion neither sickness, shame nor repentance. Whatever exceeds them becomes low vice, brutal passion, debauchery and insanity of mind. Love Dad.

As this monologue comes to an end, Kip confidently docks his Laser at the boathouse. Kimo greets him.

KIMO

Well, it looks like my job has come to an end.

KIP

How so?

KIMO

You've passed all the tests. Here's your Bay Card. You now have my permission to sail in the Chesapeake Bay and here's your very own key to the Boathouse.

KIP

Cool!

INTERIOR. McDowell Hall. Late Afternoon. Kip is cleaning a classroom, wearing cutoffs and T-shirt. He has a dust mop, bucket, sponge, etc. He is working industriously, whistling some cheerful song. He straightens a chair and, when he looks away, Arthur Atherley appears. Arthur is wearing the same clothes as in the portrait. He is leaning back in his chair, stroking a small cigar he is preparing to smoke. He carries the book, "The Art of Love" with him.

ARTHUR

(Referring to the blackboard)

You missed a spot.

KIP

Oh, it's you again.

ARTHUR

I thought you'd be happy to see me.

KIP

See you, yes. Listen to you, no. You're sure a lot different than I ever imagined.

ARTHUR

Well, we can't all be Mona Lisas. They say I was a spoiled brat. It's hard to capture that in oils, I suppose.

KIP

So, what brings you here?

ARTHUR

I just wanted to see how the aspiring little gentleman was coming along. Gotten laid yet? Find God?

KIP

No, but I learned how to sail!

ARTHUR

That's good, every gentleman should know how to sail. I'm sure your father would be impressed. I'm sure that's exactly why he sent you here.

KIP

All right then, why did you go to Eton College, Arthur? Why did you become an Etonian?

ARTHUR

(Slowly and patiently)

Because that's the kind of thing rich, young gentleman did back then. You see, it works this way: My grandfather studied politics and war so that my father could study navigation, commerce and agriculture, in order to give me financial luxury to study painting, poetry, music, and philosophy.

KIP

Interesting way of looking at things.

ARTHUR

You, on the other hand, come from a middle class upbringing. You should be out learning how to fix things. You can't afford this school and neither can your parents.

KIP

I've taken out loans, I've won scholarships and, as you can see, I'm even earning money to pay for this school.

ARTHUR

(Dusting a spot on the desk)

Well, they don't seem to be getting their money's worth.

(Pause)

That girl you're so fond of: Jeffrey Hymn. She's working class, too: Works in the library. You two might make a nice match. Too bad she hates your guts.

KIP

She doesn't hate me!

ARTHUR

(Ignores Kip's protest, opens his book)
Lesson number two: If your mistress is preoccupied, don't be impatient. In a short while she will change her mind and be good to you. Obey her in whatever she bids you and remember to side with her in all matters of discussion. Be cheerful in her joy and weep with her sorrow; in short, become the mirror of her moods. If you play games with her, have the discretion to let her win. No matter what the pastimes, see that you are less skillful than she is. This is a most important matter.

When Kip looks up from the book, Arthur is gone. Kip shakes his head in dismay and continues to clean the room.

EXTERIOR. Back campus, next to Iglehart Hall (the gymnasium). Early evening. Kip, having cleaned the classrooms, is taking a walk. He meets up with TOM HUBBLE who is practicing Tai Chi on the grass. Kip watches Tom for a few moments, until Tom finishes his particular exercise, and focuses his attention on Kip.

KIP

I enjoyed your poem, the one you read from the balcony of Randall. "Open Your Eyes and Look at that Tree!" Good stuff.

TOM

Thank you. I was kinda loaded at the time. My name's Tom.

KIP

I'm Kip. I recognize you, you live on my floor.

TOM

Do you write at all?

KIP

I just mess around a little. As a matter of fact, I wrote a poem about The Liberty Tree, too. Wanna hear it?

TOM

Maybe later.

KIP

So....you're pretty good at that, what's it called?

TOM

Tai Chi. I've been practicing it for years.

KIP

Never got into it myself. I'm more of a racquetball kind of guy.

TOM

Oh yeah? I could handle a game now. You up for it?

KIP

Sure! Let's do it!

INTERIOR, the white-washed wooden racquetball courts of Iglehart Hall (The Gymnasium). Kip and Tom are having an intense game of racquetball. Tom plays in his bare feet. The game is shot in slow motion, like a ballet, with both players heroically climbing the walls and making spectacular moves. After some footage of them playing racquetball, the two jog around the 6' wide, banked wooden track, which is built 12' above the basketball court. EXTERIOR, gymnasium. Finally done exercising, they are hot and sweaty, and head back to Randall Hall.

KIP

That was great!

TOM

Hey Kip, are you going to the Seducer's and Corrupter's Ball tonight?

KIP

I wouldn't miss it for the world.

TOM

Well, what you say we get dressed and go to dinner? Race you back to the dorm!

KIP

You're on!

Kip and Tom race back to the dorms.

INTERIOR, DINING HALL, Randall Hall. The dining hall is lavish in its Queen Anne details, with huge windows, velvet draperies and portraits of past St. John's Presidents hanging from the walls. Tom and Kip, freshly showered and dressed, set their trays of food on a table in the dining room. Among assorted students at the table is Jeffrey Hymn and Reginald Thoroughgood.

KIP

Mind if we join you?

REGINALD

Not at all, have a seat.

KIP

Thanks!

Kip and Tom vigorously dig into their meals. Kip is eating like an animal.

JEFFREY

We were discussing the origin of the word "barbarian."

REGINALD

I can see we need to speculate no further. We have just been joined by the real article!

TOM

I believe the Greeks referred to everybody who wasn't Greek as Barbarians.

REGINALD

Well ac-tu-ally, I do believe that the word barbarian is distinctly different than most derogatory name-calling.

JEFFREY

How so, Reggie?

REGINALD

I suppose that the word "barbarian" was at first uttered onomatopoeically. It referred

REGINALD (Cont)

to people who enunciated words only with
difficulty and talked harshly and raucously.

(Pause)

Say, why is everybody drinking that awful red
punch?

Students are lining up at the punch machine. Some are staggering.

KIP

(Talking with his mouth full)

So Reginald, are you saying that the people
which the Greeks referred to as "barbarian,"
walked around saying, "bar, bar, bar, bar?"

REGINALD

(Distracted)

Yes, crudely put. The name barbarian was
originally applied to describe foreigners who
pronounced words harshly. Then it was used as
a general ethnic term.

JEFFREY

I think Kip eats like a barbarian too, don't
you? And he talks like one, too. He has
heathen beliefs, as well.

TOM

He's a barbarian, all right.

KIP

(Messing his hair, loosening his shirt)

BAR!!! BAR!!! BAR!!!

Tom joins in with Kip yelling, "BAR! BAR! BAR!" Jeffrey and
Reginald join in. Gradually the whole dining room is yelling,
"BAR! BAR! BAR!" They are beating the tables. Resident head
assumes a central position and clangs on his glass with a spoon,
attempting to gain control and attention.

RESIDENT HEAD

QUIET! I want your attention! SHUT UP!

Room eventually quiets down.

RESIDENT HEAD

It has come to my attention that somebody has
spiked the punch with Everclear!

Heckles follow.

STUDENT #1

Who made you the head of the vice squad?

STUDENT #2

Aw, give it a rest!

STUDENT #3

Throw the bum out!

STUDENT #4

Get a life!

STUDENT #5

Tell it to the judge!

RESIDENT HEAD

This is a serious infraction of the rules. Whoever is responsible for this will be suspended. Now, I'm asking you one more time, who spiked the punch?

There is dead silence.

TOM

I can not tell a lie, I spiked the punch.

Another brief space of silence.

KIP

He lies! I spiked the punch.

REGINALD

No, if the truth be known, I spiked the punch.

JEFFREY

No, I spiked the punch!

STUDENT #4

No, I spiked the punch!

STUDENT #5

No, I spiked the punch!

STUDENT #6 & OTHERS

No, I spiked the punch!

After it is clear that the Resident Head is getting nowhere, he angrily throws his napkin on the table.

RESIDENT HEAD

The next time this happens, you can be assured that somebody is going to be in big trouble.

Resident head leaves table in disgust. Students cheer. Tom assumes a prominent position in the dining hall. He knocks a knife against a glass to gain attention.

TOM

Quiet! It has come to my attention that there is a new young poet in our midst. I met him today, his name is Kip Allman. He claims to have written a poem in celebration of our very own Liberty Tree. Does anybody care to hear it?

STUDENT #1

Bring on the poet!

STUDENT #2

Let's hear what he has to say!

KIP

(To dining hall, which quiets down)
I call this poem, "The Liberty Tree."
(He clears his throat)
Liberty Tree, your limbs hang so wearily
From a trunk that can hardly support your weight,
Countering the winds with wire-like crutches,
Delaying the end predestined by fate.

Go to the home of your dead companions
The cobblestone street and horse-drawn cart
Surely the world can go on without you
'Cause nobody likes a creaky, old fart.

Suddenly the room fills with cheers as Kip is lifted atop a swarming crowd of students.

KIP

Where are you taking me?

STUDENT #1

To the inner circles of Hell!

STUDENT #2

(Begins a chant)

On-Air, Goo-Nay, Soph-Roe-Soo-Nay!

KIP

(To Tom)

What the hell does that mean?

TOM

It's Ancient Greek. On-Air means Man. Goo-Nay means Woman. Soph-Roe-Soo-Nay means Temperance! Kip, I think you have been picked as a sacrifice to the gods!

The Liberty Tree, Page 33
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

The students that are carrying Kip are now crying "On-Air, Goo-Nay, Soph-Roe-Soo-Nay!" in unison as they carry him out of the dining hall and Randall Hall.

EXTERIOR SHOT, Chase Stone Dormitory. A banner announces, "Seducers and Corrupter's Ball" and a smaller sign over the doorway declares, "Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter!" Kip is carried into the party room which is transformed into the inner circles of Hell, using pyrotechnics, costumes and props. Stereo is playing a dark, funeral dirge. Kip is carried to, and set before Satan.

SATAN

And who do we have here?

STUDENT #1

A freshman, sire. He is guilty of mocking The Liberty Tree.

SATAN

Is this true, my son?

KIP

I'm afraid it is, my Lord: I meant no harm.

SATAN

The Liberty Tree is one of my dearest friends. And is this all you are guilty of? Have you not held lust in your heart, as well, my son?

KIP

Lust preoccupies my heart, mind and soul.

SATAN

And have you consummated your lust?

KIP

Only in my dreams. I confess, father of Darkness: I am a virgin.

STUDENTS CHEER and marvel at Kip.

SATAN

Then you shall be offered as a sacrifice to the gods! Let the party begin!

MUSIC: BRICK HOUSE by The Commodores. Kids put Kip down and everybody starts to dance. A girl gestures to Kip, inviting him to dance, but he declines, instead he downs a few quick beers and gaining confidence, approaches JEFFREY HYMN, who is playing the wallflower.

KIP

Would you like to dance?

JEFFREY

Sure, why not?

Kip and Jeffrey begin to dance. The next song is a slow dance.

KIP

I'm really sorry if I offended you at the convocation.

JEFFREY

Don't worry about it. I was a little on edge. I get....fanatical about my religion sometimes: I've got to work on that.

KIP

You ready for classes to start?

JEFFREY

Ready as I'll ever be.

KIP

(Drunkenly)

I've got to tell you something, Jeffrey. I've loved you ever since I laid eyes on you.

JEFFREY

Oh, don't be ridiculous. We just met!

As this discussion is going on, an intoxicated midshipman appears on the sidelines, dressed to impress with immaculate uniform, insignias, etc. He approaches Kip and Jeffrey.

MIDSHIPMAN

May I have the pleasure of this dance, Miss Hymn?

JEFFREY

Not now, Billy.

MIDSHIPMAN

Oh, c'mon. For old time's sake.

KIP

The lady says she doesn't want to dance. Leave her alone.

MIDSHIPMAN

(Collars Kip)

Well, what do we have here?

KIP

Get your hands off me. Don't you know St. John's women are off limits to mindless midshipmen?

JEFFREY

(To Kip)

Who made you the welcoming committee for St. John's College?

(To the Midshipman)

Don't listen to him. You come here whenever you want.

MIDSHIPMAN

Who you calling "mindless?"

KIP

Sorry, did I touch a sensitive chord? Truth hurts doesn't it?

MIDSHIPMAN

Why, you little....

Midshipman rips the shirt off Kip's body. Surrounding students intervene and separate the two. Satan collars both and walks them to the door.

SATAN

What the hell you think you're doing? I don't want to see either of you in here again! OUT!

EXTERIOR, Chase Stone. SATAN throws Kip and the midshipman out the door. Jeffrey runs after the midshipman and Kip calls after the two.

KIP

(To Jeffrey)

I didn't know you two were a couple!

JEFFREY

You moron. He's my brother!

KIP

How was I supposed to know?

JEFFREY

(Venomously)

You might have asked. You're lucky, he could have killed you! Besides, who I dance with is none of your fucking business. I can take care of myself!

KIP

I'm sorry! Is there anything I can do?

JEFFREY

Yeah, just leave me alone!

Kip walks silently away in the distance, a bottle of beer clutched in his hand. Back at The Seducer's and Corrupter's Ball, the music and raucous partying starts up again.

INTERIOR, Mellon Hall (The Science Building). Night. Inside the pendulum pit. A drunk and disheveled Kip Allman is lying on his back as the pendulum, with its giant brass ball and 50' cable (suspended from the ceiling) describes circles over the intoxicated youth. A six pack, less one beer, is sitting beside him. He is playing a flute and the music echoes sadly against the pendulum pit's walls. The beer, partially gone, is sitting beside the boy, from which he occasionally sips. Arthur Atherley suddenly appears opposite Kip, carrying his little book on Love. He takes a seat next to Kip and tries to prop him up.

ARTHUR

You're smashed. How many beers have you had?

KIP

I'm on my eighth. Here, have one.
(Throws Arthur a beer)

ARTHUR

Thanks. Here, sit up.
(Helps Kip up. Opens beer.)

KIP

I've got a confession to make.

ARTHUR

Oh yeah, what's that?

KIP

I love you.

ARTHUR

What? You barely know me.

KIP

I swear, if you were flesh and blood, I'd want to make love to you. And I'm not even gay!

(Pause)

But damn! You're so attractive!

ARTHUR

Well, don't get any ideas: I'm straight as an arrow. I have a secret as well.

KIP

What's that?

ARTHUR

I love you, too. Y'know, in a respectful way.

KIP

You do? Why?

ARTHUR

Because you're not just into making money. You're attempting to preserve a noble tradition. I like that.

KIP

Yeah, some progress I'm making.

ARTHUR

You're doing fine. Which brings us to lesson number three.

KIP

Huh?

ARTHUR

Listen up: Before all else, make up your mind that there is no woman alive who cannot be won, and then decide quite definitely that you are the man to win her. You may believe she does not want you. You are mistaken. Deep within her heart she wants to yield. So be of good faith and you cannot fail. Are you listening, Kip Allman?

KIP

I'm kinda tired.

ARTHUR

Well, then get up and go to sleep.

KIP

Maybe I wasn't made for women. Maybe I am gay? Has that occurred to you?

ARTHUR

Yes, of course. But you're different than most people I've met. I can't quite figure it out. Here let me help you up.

Arthur helps Kip rise.

INTERIOR, Kip and Paul's Room, Randall Hall, 2 a.m. Kip fumbles with keys outside his door and enters room. Full moon brightly illuminates the room. Everything is super tidy and Paul has placed coordinating bedspreads on both bunks. The radio is tuned to the news station, although Paul is fast asleep.

RADIO

....The American campus is undergoing a striking change: militancy and violence are in good measure giving way to passivity and personal introspection, and the revolutionary impulse seems to have largely spent itself.

Kip takes the coordinating bedspread off his bunk, folds it neatly and places it on Paul's desk. Kip turns off the radio and opens window. Paul stirs and wakes.

PAUL

Hey, what's going on? What's all the ruckus about?

KIP

We've got to talk.

PAUL

(Checks clock)

It's 2 a.m., can't this wait 'til morning?

KIP

No, we've got to talk now.

PAUL

OK, what is it?

KIP

We've been roommates now for almost a week. I don't think this is working out.

PAUL

What's the problem?

KIP

You are: You're driving me crazy.

PAUL

How so?

KIP

Well, first you read my mail. Next, you have the news radio turned on all day and all night long....

PAUL

The news relaxes me.

KIP

You've got this thing about cracking your knuckles....

PAUL

Look, everybody's got some sort of nervous habit. You bite your fingernails.

KIP

You start to meditate, just when I'm trying to relax.

PAUL

No law against meditating.

KIP

You keep the window closed all the time.

PAUL

Well, it's nippy out there.

KIP

And now you put a tacky matching bedspread on my bunk.

PAUL

I thought you'd like it, I was just trying to be nice.

KIP

I'd really prefer you just mind your own business.

PAUL

You were such a nice boy when we first met. Now you're turning into some kind of monster.

KIP

You don't like me? Maybe you'd like to move out?

PAUL

No way, man! I was here first! Besides, I've been at St. John's for 20 years, and this is my first room with a real view. So, if you don't like it here, you move out!

KIP

(Strips off clothes, preparing for bed)
I'm not moving out, no way.

PAUL

I'll tell you what. If you move out first thing tomorrow, I'll give you \$100.

KIP

No way!

PAUL

Make that \$200.

KIP

No!

PAUL

OK, then deal with it. Good nite already.

KIP

Yeah, right.

PAUL

And don't move around so much in your bunk.
If you're going to jerk off, do it in the
bathroom or wait 'til I'm not around, OK?

KIP

(No response)

PAUL

OK?

KIP

All right.

PAUL

Well then, good nite.

KIP

Good nite.

INTERIOR, Kip's dorm room, 10 a.m. (next morning). Kip wakes and notices how late it is. Paul is long gone, his bunk neatly made. Kip throws on a sexy pair of shorts and t-shirt and bolts out of his room. He runs down the staircase and out of the dorm.

EXTERIOR, Kip runs across the quad and into McDowell Hall.

INTERIOR, McDowell Hall. Kip, out of breath, runs up three flights of stairs and into an old classroom. Class of about 15 students, including Reginald, Jeffrey, Tom and Paul, are seated around a large worm-eaten, oval-shaped table with a window overlooking the front campus. BERT FELLOWS is the presiding tutor. He is in his late 60's, has a sallow face and is a chain smoker of long, brown cigarettes. Note: When kids talk, they do not raise their hands. The atmosphere is casual. Kids lean back on their chairs, some smoke, but they are all reasonably serious.

KIP

Sorry I'm late....I was unavoidably detained.

REGINALD

More like hung over, I'd say.

TOM

Hey Kip, did you get lucky last night?

BERT

Mr. Allman, we were just discussing Euclid's first definition, "semeion estin, hou meros outhen," or "a point is that which has no part." What do you think Euclid meant by that?

KIP

I think he meant that a point was the smallest building block in the universe, like an atom.

REGINALD

More like an electron, don't you think? Atoms, after all, can be broken down into smaller parts.

JEFFREY

It is absolutely clear to me that when Euclid uttered the word "point," he was referring to God.

TOM

No, a point is more like a part of God, the definition states....

BERT

Excuse me, Mr. Hubble, could you please tell me what you mean by the word "definition?"

TOM

Sure. There are certain things you just can't prove, and definitions are one of them. You have to take them on faith, because they have no existence outside of their just being there. We all know what a point is, but we have a hard time explaining it.

REGINALD

So Mr. Hubble, are you saying that your understanding of the word "point" is identical to my understanding of the word "point?"

TOM

Exactly.

PAUL

(Interrupting)

For my part, I think a point is a non-entity. It is nothing. It may very well be less than nothing because we can imagine the concept of nothing and that makes it something.

JEFFREY

What exactly is your point, Mr. Sexton?

Class laughs.

REGINALD

I don't see how you can have a small part of nothing. You either have it or you don't.

BERT

Then perhaps it would make more sense to define a point as "that which is indivisible into parts."

REGINALD

I can live with that.

TOM

Euclid insists that you accept his definitions, postulates and common notions, whether you truly understand them or not.

REGINALD

Even if they're not true?

TOM

Of course they're true, Reggie....I mean Mr. Thoroughgood: Like who's going to argue that the whole is greater than the part or that parallel lines meet?

REGINALD

(Condescendingly)

And yet, under certain circumstances, parallel lines can meet, right Tommie....I mean Mr. Hubble?

JEFFREY

How so?

REGINALD

(Demonstrating with a globe.)

Lines of longitude on a globe are parallel at the equator, right?

JEFFREY

That's true.

REGINALD

Well, when extended they meet at the poles!

BERT

Very true, Mr. Thoroughgood, but we're jumping the gun here. We must imagine ourselves in the third century B.C. The earth is flat and the sun circles around us, rising in the morning and setting in the evening. Geometric propositions are proven with a stick drawn in the sand, or in our case, chalk on a black board. So then,

(He draws in a generous amount of smoke)
Who would like to prove the first proposition of Euclid, for our delight and edification?

(Silence)

Miss Hymn?

(Holds out chalk)

JEFFREY

(Reluctantly)

All right.

(Walks to blackboard. She works from memory)
I will construct an equilateral triangle on a finite straight line. Let AB be the given line.

(Draws and labels line AB)

I will now construct an equilateral triangle on this straight line. First draw a circle using A as the center and a distance AB....

TWO-SHOT. Kip leans over to Tom. They speak softly.

KIP

That Jeffrey's one hot babe.

TOM

You can say that again.

KIP

This guy, Fellows, he's pretty tough.

TOM

Oh no, he's actually one of the more mellow professors. He even has a sailboat! They say Fellows has got an I.Q. of 160. They also say---and I've heard this from some fairly reliable sources---that during his younger days he found an old Spanish Galley sunk in the Chesapeake Bay. During a scuba dive he found treasure....and I mean lots of it!

KIP

And what did he do with this "treasure?"

TOM

Nobody knows.

Fellows clears his throat, commanding silence.

JEFFREY

(The completed diagram is on the board)
...Therefore the triangle ABC is equilateral
and it has been constructed on the given
finite straight line AB. Q.E.D!

Class cheers.

BERT

Excellent work, Miss Hymn. Outstanding job!

JEFFREY

Thank you, Mr. Fellows.

TOM

What exactly does Q.E.D. mean?

REGINALD

Latin. Quod Erat Demonstrandum: Literally,
"being what it was required to do." It was
Euclid's rubber stamp of truth.

BERT

(Interrupting)

That's all the time we have for today. I'd
like you all to have propositions two, three
and four prepared for next class.

(Kids collect their books and leave)

INTERIOR, THE GREAT HALL, McDowell. First floor. The entire
Freshman class is gathered together, standing before a stooped,
elderly tutor, ELIOT GOLDSMITH. They have just completed singing
from Handel's Messiah, "The Hallelujah Chorus," and are expecting
a compliment. Kip and Jeffrey are standing side by side, speaking
softly.

ELIOT

That was the most abominable rendition of
Handel I've heard in all my life. After you
sang "The Lord shall reign forever and ever,"
I began to question my monotheism.

KIP

(To Jeffrey)

Y'know, he's Jewish.

JEFFREY

Who's Jewish?

KIP

Goldsmith, our music tutor.

JEFFREY

So?

KIP

Well, don't you think it's kinda strange that a Jew is teaching us all this Christian music?

JEFFREY

No stranger than your being a Jew standing right next to me. Or that Irving Berlin wrote "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." I think, secretly, you Jews all wish you were Christians.

KIP

I don't think so. Hey Jeffrey, I'm really sorry about the other night at the Seducer's and Corrupter's Ball.

JEFFREY

Oh that. Well, I accept your apology. You're lucky my brother didn't kill you.

KIP

And look, I was just kinda wondering....

JEFFREY

Yes?

KIP

I was wondering if you'd mind taking me to Church with you Sunday?

JEFFREY

Is this a joke?

KIP

No, I'm really serious. Maybe my soul needs cleansing. But if you don't think it's right....

JEFFREY

No, it's absolutely fine.

KIP

Then it's a date!

JEFFREY

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KIP

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No, it's absolutely fine.

KIP

Then it's a date!

JEFFREY

Well, I wouldn't call it that, but sure, I'd be happy to take you along.

KIP

Cool.

ELIOT

We will now attempt to sing, not butcher, Faure's requiem, which in English translates as: "Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death in that awful day when heaven and earth shall be moved, when Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire." Now, take it from the top.

THE FRESHMAN CLASS

(Make this sound nice.)

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna

ELIOT

Fantastic! Keep on going!

THE FRESHMAN CLASS

In die illa tremenda;

ELIOT

It's a miracle! Don't stop!

THE FRESHMAN CLASS

Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra

ELIOT

It's a miracle!

THE FRESHMAN CLASS

Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Eliot falls down and weeps.

ELIOT

I've never heard anything so beautiful in my life!

JEFFREY

Hey Kip! I've never seen you so enthusiastic. You were singing that like you really meant it!

KIP

I do really mean it. It really gave me a thrill. My forefathers would roll over in their graves however.

JEFFREY

Well, I'm impressed.

KIP

Say, what do you say we get together after class?

JEFFREY

Sorry, no. I have 200 pages of Plato to read.

ELIOT

OK, quiet down now. Let's take it again, one more time, from the top.

Fade out as kids begin to sing.

EXTERIOR. Long shot, sunset over McDowell Hall, 8 p.m. The bell in the belltower of McDowell Hall is ringing furiously. Students pour out of their respective dorm rooms and excitedly file into McDowell Hall in preparation for "seminar."

INTERIOR. McDowell Hall, third floor. A room filled with about 15 students and two tutors. Englishman SEBASTIAN COMBS and a young, lanky American professor named Ted Skimmer. Skimmer is dressed awkwardly, nerdishly and Combs looks his usual, cavalier self.

SEBASTIAN

The question for this evening seminar is: Do you think Socrates was correct in making homosexual relationships against the law?

KIP

(Bluntly and passionately)

No! Socrates was an old man and he did it, in the Symposium, with Alcibiades who was only 14 years old. What right does Socrates have to outlaw homosexuality when he's having sex with a boy?

TOM

Mr. Allman, In the "Symposium," Plato wrote that Alcibiades and Socrates slept together one night. But he also said that Socrates did not respond to the boy's invitations. Socrates might have wanted the boy, but he didn't seduce the boy. Nor did he allow himself to be seduced. I would say Socrates and Alcibiades were all just very good friends and leave it at that.

REGINALD

Yeah right, that's what they all say.

SEBASTIAN

In Plato's Republic, one gets the impression that heterosexual love is as worthless as homosexual love. Plato describes sexual relations as a violent pleasure that can never completely fill a person's soul, except perhaps momentarily.

REGINALD

Plato would say that nobody can ever get their fill of sex. It's like trying to fill a bucket with a crack.

JEFFREY

Well Reggie, I mean Mr. Thoroughgood, it may very well be the case that nobody can get their fill of sex. But nonetheless, nobody has the right to say who can and cannot have sex, so long as both parties are willing participants. In the end, it doesn't matter whether sex is legal or not. People are going to do it anyway. And as far as homosexuality is concerned, animals do it all the time, particularly ducks. It's not right to call queer ducks unnatural, is it?

Camera pulls out of seminar classroom window and is replaced with a long shot of McDowell Hall topped with a full moon. In the distance can be heard the voices of students as they jump into the discussion.

STUDENT #1

Your point is well taken, but....

STUDENT 2

Let's get back to the original question....

FADE OUT.

INTERIOR, Randall Hall, angle down, top of the third floor stairway banister. It's a little bit after 11 p.m. by the clock on the wall. Kip, Tom, Reginald and Jeffrey are cheerfully reaching the top floor of the dorm after the seminar.

TOM

Jeffrey, that comment about homosexual ducks was priceless.

JEFFREY

Well, it's true. I grew up on a farm. A lot of those animals used to get it on, and it wasn't just the ducks.

REGINALD

What the hell, it's the 70's! Guess it's all right so long as the animals stay within their own species.

KIP

What did Plato have to say about bestiality, anyway?

TOM

I don't know, you'll have to ask his sheep.

KIP

What you say we pick up a six-pack and party down?

TOM

Not tonight. I've got two pages of Oedipus to translate and 300 pages of Aristotle to read.

REGINALD

Sorry old chap. I've got a 20 page paper to write.

JEFFREY

I need some sleep. I'm going to turn in. G'nite everybody.

Everybody calls out good nite.

KIP

Hey Tom, can I have a word with you?

TOM

Yeah sure, what's up?

Others depart.

KIP

My roommate, that Sexton fellow. He's starting to get on my nerves.

TOM

That's not what I hear. He says you're driving him crazy.

KIP

Well then, we're both driving each other crazy. What can I do about it?

TOM

I don't know Kip. There are no empty rooms on campus. I'd say you're just going to have to learn to live with him.

KIP

Would murdering Paul Sexton be considered justifiable homicide?

TOM

(Laughs)

I guess the jury would have to decide that question.

Kip and Tom walk to the door of Kip's room.

KIP

He's so neat and orderly, it's disgusting. He's such a clean-cut, all-American guy, it's enough to make me puke. He doesn't like music and has an insatiable lust for the news. He isn't happy until he knows exactly what is going on in every corner of the world.

TOM

Who woulda thought?

KIP

(Getting passionate)

He doesn't swear. He doesn't seem to like women and he doesn't take much interest in men either. He constantly bothers me about smoking my pipe, about the music I listen to and about the way I keep the window open at night.

TOM

My god, he sounds like a monster!

KIP

He's a snob and although he has never gone out of his way to hurt me, I just don't like him. Beneath his goody-goody exterior, there lurks something genuinely nasty; something that stinks to high heaven.

They reach Kip's door.

TOM

Oh look Kip, Paul has left you a note!

KIP

(Reading aloud)

Meditating....Do not disturb until midnight, please. Unless it is an emergency, in which case, tap me on the shoulder and wait two to three minutes. Signed Paul.

(Pause)

That asshole.

TOM

Well Kip ol' buddy, ol' pal, I think it's
time for me to split. Oedipus and Aristotle
await!

KIP

Yeah, right.

Tom departs. Kip opens door slowly. Suspenseful music.

INTERIOR, Kip and Paul's dormitory room, Randall Hall. Midnight.
Kip opens the door and walks up to Paul.

KIP

(Speaking Softly)

Hey Paul, wake up. We've got to talk.

No response.

KIP

Paul, snap out of it. We need to come to some
kind of understanding.

No response.

KIP

All right, have it your way. Hmmm, kinda
stuffy in here.

Kip walks to window and opens it, allowing a fresh breeze to
enter. He strips off all his clothes, grabs a bath towel and
exits dorm room, on his way to shower. Kip seems happy and is
singing "Liberate Me" from Faure's Requiem. His voice can be heard
in the hallway as he makes his way to the community bathroom.

KIP

Liberate me, Domini, de morte aeterna, in die
illa tremenda.

Meanwhile, as Kip is singing, Paul awakens and looks around in a
shifty, devious manner. He walks to the window.

PAUL

Asshole!

Paul slams the window shut. Fade out. He exits dorm room.

INTERIOR. Hallway, third floor Randall Hall. Paul walks briskly
to the bathroom.

INTERIOR. Shower. Kip is merrily singing away.

KIP

Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.

INTERIOR. Outside Kip's shower stall. Paul quickly removes Kip's towel from its hook, without Kip noticing.

KIP

Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

INTERIOR. Kip turns off the shower. His hand gropes outside the stall for the towel but finds none. He pokes his head outside the stall.

KIP

Oh fuck.

(Yelling)

Hey! Is there anybody out there? I need some help!

No response.

KIP

Shit!

INTERIOR. An embarrassed Kip runs down the hall to his room. He tries the door knob, but it is locked. He hammers on the door with his fist a few times.

KIP

Lemme in! Paul, are you in there?

INTERIOR. Kip runs to the stairway, then descends to the second floor and knocks furiously on the head resident's door.

RESIDENT HEAD

Come in!

INTERIOR. Kip opens the resident head's door, only to see the room packed with about a dozen students, including Jeffrey, Tom, Paul and Reginald. They are lounging about leisurely, eating popcorn and watching "Star Trek."

TV SET (Voice of Scotty)

....Captain! The Dylithium crystals overloaded and I cannot stop the damn thing from overheating! The ship's gonna blow in five seconds!

Resident Head turns volume down.

JEFFREY

Hey! What's the big idea! Turn it up!

TOM

Woah! Check it out.

REGINALD

Have you no decency! There's a woman present!

JEFFREY

Lookin' good, Kip!

KIP

I've been locked out of my own room. By him!
(Points to Paul)

PAUL

Now, now. I can't help it if you forgot your key. You know we agreed to lock the room when either of us left.

KIP

But I was taking a shower!

PAUL

I didn't know that. I didn't even hear you come in. I was meditating.

KIP

Bullshit! And he took my towel, too!

RESIDENT HEAD

Is this true, Paul?

(He throws a towel to Kip)

Here Kip, you can borrow mine.

PAUL

(Cracking knuckles)

Absolutely not. But I did see Kip's towel folded neatly on his bed. He must have forgotten it. Must be all that marijuana he's been smoking lately.

KIP

(To Paul, irritated)

Fuck you.

RESIDENT HEAD

All right, quit bickering. Y'all give me a headache. Paul, let Kip back in his room, OK?

PAUL

Sure, no problem.

RESIDENT HEAD

And Kip, I don't want you leaving your room in the future without your key. Understand?

KIP

But...

RESIDENT HEAD

No buts! Do you understand me?

KIP

Yes sir.

RESIDENT HEAD

Fine. Then why don't you just go and dry yourself off. I'll see you in the morning.

Kip leaves room and closes door.

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT, Randall Hall, morning. Sun is rising.

INTERIOR SHOT, Randall Hall, Kip's bedroom. Kip awakes, stretches and notices that Paul is gone. Paul's bunk is neatly made and the radio is on.

RADIO

....The James Bond craze has ended but James Bond movies live on. But there is a new James Bond now, Sean Connery having wearied of the role....

Kip jumps out of bed and turns the radio to rock 'n roll.

KIP

Fuckin' asshole.

Kip walks to the window and opens it and walks to his bed. He throws on some casual clothes.

KIP

Wait, I have an idea! I'll get that son of a bitch.

Kip walks back to the window and closes it. He sings to himself.

KIP

Dum dee dum dum dum....

OVER THE SHOULDER SHOT. Kip walks to his desk and pulls out a distinguished-looking pipe from his pipe rack. He pulls out a tin of pipe tobacco and fills it to the rim. He lights the bowl and begins to produce copious quantities of smoke.

Arthur Atherley appears suddenly, lying on Kip's upper bunk.

ARTHUR

Naughty, naughty. You know Paul doesn't like it when you smoke in the room.

KIP

Fuck him. Fuck you, too!

ARTHUR

Why, that's no way to talk to your altar ego.
Just for that I'm not going to give you your
next lesson in love.

KIP

Good.

ARTHUR

Keep this up and I'll go away forever.

KIP

Good.

Kip begins to blow smoke in Paul's bedsheets.

ARTHUR

What, in heaven's name, are you doing?

KIP

I've had it with Paul. I'm going to smoke him
out.

ARTHUR

You mean like a bug? Like a common pest?

KIP

Yes, precisely.

ARTHUR

Well, that's a real gentlemanly way to act! I
can see that St. John's College is molding
you into a regular, upright, model citizen.
Don't forget the closet.

KIP

Good idea, thanks.

Kip proceeds to blow smoke into the closet.

ARTHUR

All that talk about being a gentleman before
you arrived here: How exactly do you define
"gentleman," Kip?

KIP

I don't.

(Reflecting)

A gentleman keeps his weight on his elbows
when he screws. I dunno. Your guess is as
good as mine.

ARTHUR
(Laughs)

How would you know? You're still a virgin!

KIP
And you're a ghost. A figment of my imagination. I'm going to close my eyes. Count to three and when I open them, you'll be gone. One....two....three.

ARTHUR
Surprise!

KIP
You still here? Man, what does it take to get rid of you?

ARTHUR
I'll go when I feel like it, and not a moment sooner. So, what are you going to do on this beautiful Sunday morning, Kip ol' boy?

KIP
I'm going to Church.

ARTHUR
Not a bad idea: The way you've been acting lately, it's clear your soul is going to burn in hell. But wait a minute, you're Jewish!

KIP
I'm going to Church with Jeffrey Hymn. It's kinda like a date. Sort of.

ARTHUR
Now you're talking! Ovid would be proud of you.
(Picks up Book of Love, begins to read)
How favorable is this crowded place for Love!
Sit close beside your loved one; the stalls are narrow, so she cannot prevent that you accidentally brush against her; the closeness of the place makes her acquiescence utterly unnecessary.

(Closes book)

Kip finishes smoking the room. He replaces the pipe.

KIP
I've got to get outa here before Paul returns.

ARTHUR

You can't go to church wearing that! Now, take off those rags. If I can't turn you into a gentleman, at least I can make you look like one!

Scene ends with Arthur helping Kip get into his Sunday best.

EXTERIOR SHOT, Episcopal Church: Old building, made of stone in traditional old English style. Music: Pie Jesu from Faure's "Requiem" song by a boy.

INTERIOR SHOT, Episcopal Church. Pan sanctuary to a two shot of Jeffrey and Kip, dressed to the hilt. Kip slowly reaches over to hold Jeffrey's hand. Jeffrey politely plucks Kip's hand from her own and places it into his lap. Music ceases. A moment of silence.

MEDIUM SHOT of the minister, decked in all of his finery, assuming the pulpit, addresses the congregation:

THE MINISTER

All over the face of the earth the avarice and lust of men breed unceasing divisions among them, and the wounds that tear men from union with one another widen and open out into huge wars.

TWO-SHOT of Kip and Jeffrey, whispering.

KIP

Jeffrey, what do Christians mean when they call Jews, "stiff-necked?"

JEFFREY

They mean you're stubborn and obstinate: You won't even listen to the other side.

KIP

So what does Christianity have to offer that Judaism doesn't?

JEFFREY

The life of the Jews was dictated by laws, hundreds of them. Jesus told us just to love one another. Can't you see: Love is the answer and Jesus is love!

KIP

Well, Christianity seems to have been the cause of more bloodshed than any other religion.

JEFFREY

I'm not talking about religion, Kip! I'm talking about Jesus and I'm talking about your soul.

Kip reaches for Jeffrey's hand once more but this time she doesn't resist.

THE MINISTER

....Murder, massacres, revolution, hatred, the slaughter and torture of the bodies and souls of men, the destruction of cities by fire, the starvation of millions, the annihilation of populations and finally the cosmic inhumanity of atomic war: All describe the divisions among men..... Christ is massacred in His members, torn limb from limb; God is murdered in men. Please rise: Let us pray.

Congregation rises. Resume boy solo of Pie Jesu from Faure's Requiem. Fade out on image of Jesus hanging from the cross.

INTERIOR. Hallway of Randall Hall. Noon. An extremely irritated Paul is moving a massive footlocker out of his room. Kip approaches in his Sunday best, having just returned from Church. He is in reasonably good spirits as he approaches Paul.

KIP

What's going on?

PAUL

I'm moving out. You are one sick puppy.

KIP

Oh really? Have I offended you?

PAUL

You know what you did. You've crossed the line Kip. You may have won this battle, but you will never win the war.

KIP

Where are you going?

PAUL

I'm moving downstairs. A room opened up.

KIP

You will be sorely missed.

PAUL

(Disgusted)

I don't know how you can sleep at night.

KIP

I sleep fine at night. And I'll sleep even better now that I don't have to listen to your fucking news reports or your cracking knuckles.

PAUL

I'm telling you Kip, this isn't over.

Paul drags his footlocker down the hall. An exuberant Kip walks into his room.

KIP

Yes! My own room! My very own room!

He begins rearranging furniture. Tom walks in.

TOM

Hey Kip, is it true you've got your own room?

KIP

Yep!

TOM

(Calling into the hall)

Hey everybody! Kip's got his own room!

VOICE OF JEFFREY

Cool!

VOICE OF REGINALD

No fair! Why should he get one and not me?

VOICE OF RESIDENT HEAD

Shut up, Reginald! Kip will eventually get a new roommate. This is only a temporary arrangement.

Jeffrey, Tom and Reginald enter Kip's bedroom, bearing gifts. The bunkbeds are separated and made into one large bed. Reginald has brought a large bottle of wine and glasses, Tom, a three-foot bong and a case of beer and Jeffrey has grapes. The four spend a few moments rearranging the furniture, hanging a poster or two, and when things seem tidy they lounge about and begin to party.

TOM

I've got to hand it to you, Kip. You've got your own room. You're the only freshman on campus who's done that!

JEFFREY

That Paul's really pissed at you.

KIP

Enough about Paul. This, this is my very first private space. This is my castle. And you are my very special guests.

TOM

Bong?

KIP

Don't mind if I do. Thanx.

TOM

No problem.

Kip takes a bong. Washes it down with a beer. Bong makes the rounds, but Jeffrey doesn't smoke.

KIP

So, what do y'all think of St. John's now that we've been here a couple weeks?

REGINALD

I think I can handle four years of this. No problem.

JEFFREY

Suits me fine. I wish we'd finish up with all these Pagan worshipers, though. I can't wait to study the word of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

REGINALD

Hang in there, Jeffrey. Before you know it, you'll have more New Testament than you can stand.

KIP

Don't you guys ever get tired of reading all these Great Books?

TOM

What do you mean?

KIP

I mean don't you just want to go to the library and take out a copy of the "The Hobbit" or "Mary Poppins?"

TOM

I must confess, I've been thinking about checking out a copy of "Peter Pan." I know that story back and forth, but you know something: I never actually read the book.

KIP

I just want to read a children's book, Tom. Something that doesn't carry some profound meaning. I've never read "Winnie the Pooh." I've always wanted to read that book.

JEFFREY

I read it. I highly recommend it.

KIP

I'm getting tired of reading things that twist and contort my mind in every conceivable direction. I'm sick of reading great books: For once I'd like to read a good book. Jesus. They say these are the happiest days of our lives. If these are the happiest days of our lives, I'd sure hate to see what things are going to be like in ten years.

JEFFREY

Well Kip, if that's your attitude, then why on earth did you come to St. John's?

KIP

(Sucking in a bong)

Because I've always been interested in the ultimate goal of what the fuck's going on.

(And begins to cough)

Fuck it: I'm going sailing.

JEFFREY

What a coincidence! That's what I'm doing, too!

KIP

That's nice. Does anybody want to go out with me?

There are no takers.

KIP

All right, then off I go. You're all welcome to stay. I'll be back for dinner. Wait....one more for the road.

Kip takes another bong.

EXTERIOR. Cut to front door of Randall Hall. Door opens and Kip exits dormitory. Moments later, Paul exits the dormitory, in silent, secret pursuit of Kip.

BACK CAMPUS. Kip approaches the boat house, unlocks the big roll-up front metal door and enters building. Paul is still in pursuit and continues to follow, unnoticed by Kip and hides under

the boat ramp. Paul accidentally makes a loud noise. Kip hears the noise and investigates, but finds nothing. After Kip has rigged his boat and put on a wetsuit, he lowers the boat halfway down the ramp, using the motorized, wheeled cradle. At the last minute he remembers to grab a life preserver and runs back into the boathouse. While Kip's back is turned, Paul reaches up from under the ramp and removes the bailer plug from the stern of Kip's boat.

Kip launches his boat and makes a long run deep in to the Chesapeake Bay. Air starts bubbling out of the hull and water starts trickling into the boat, but Kip doesn't notice. Kip's father reads a letter to his son.

KIP'S FATHER
(Voice Over)

Dear Kip, I suppose by now you are getting well-ingrained in your studies. I hope they prepare good meals for you, because good food is the foundation for good work. Wit and wisdom are a product of good health, so govern yourself accordingly.

Kip's boat practically flies with the wind. For a while, at any rate. The hull is now almost completely filled with water and the boat has slowed down to a crawl, eventually not responding in any direction. Kip is far from shore and begins to worry. He looks down at the rudder. He sees water seeping into the hull.

KIP'S FATHER

A word of caution, Kip. Be careful how you get involved with the various women on campus.

KIP

Oh my God, the bailer plug's gone!

Kip is cold. The sun is getting lower on the horizon. The wind is beginning to pick up and howl. The boat falls to its side, turns turtle and Kip is clinging desperately to the daggerboard.

KIP

Help!

KIP'S FATHER

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The captain of the gate
To every man upon this earth
Death commeth soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than by facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods!

KIP
(Sadly, to himself)
So this is how it will all end.

Arthur Atherley appears suddenly, sitting calmly on the boat. He is wearing a sexy, old-fashioned, full-length bathing suit.

ARTHUR
You should be so lucky.

KIP
What?

ARTHUR
Only the good die young, Kip. You're going to end up in some nursing home somewhere. Look! In the distance....A ship! A ship!
(He promptly disappears)

Sure enough, approaching at a rapid clip, is an older, finely crafted wooden sailboat. And at the helm is no other than Kip's math tutor, Bert Fellows, surrounded by a bunch of scantily-clad very young and beautiful female students, including Jeffrey Hymn. The students are pointing in a combination of horror and delight at the unfortunate boy. Bert begins to circle Kip's craft.

BERT
Ahoy! Mr. Allman, are you all right?

KIP
Yes! I'm fine.

BERT
What happened?

KIP
My bailer plug must have fallen out. My boat is sinking!

BERT
You just can't trust the Tupperware on the market these days! They don't make 'em like they used to! Stick with wood! Better yet, give up sailing altogether: It doesn't seem to suit you.

KIP
I'll be glad to just get out of this alive!

BERT
Oh, you'll be fine. Just stay with the boat. I radioed the Naval Academy. They should have a motorboat out here in no time at all. Matter of fact, here it comes now!

EXTERIOR, long shot, a huge Navy motorboat with enormous engines appears out of the distance, piloted by no other than Jeffrey Hymn's brother, the midshipman who had beaten up Kip at the Seducer's and Corrupter's Ball. He pulls up beside Kip's boat.

KIP

Man, am I glad to see you!

MIDSHIPMAN

Hey, I know you. You're the kid who tried to pick up my sister!

KIP

Nonsense! You must be thinking of someone else.

MIDSHIPMAN

No. I never forget a face. Listen, I'm sorry about that. You see, I've got this temper....

KIP

Don't worry about it. All is forgiven. Now, about the boat....

MIDSHIPMAN

Yeah, right. Let's see what we can do about getting you back in one piece.

EXTERIOR, the boat house. Kip's boat is being towed to the dock by the motorboat which is clearly straining against the load. Kip and the midshipman are in the motorboat. Kimo, the boat steward, has arrived at the scene and is watching in disbelief. Kimo helps the midshipman dock and unties the sailboat.

KIMO

Damn Kip, you're a one-man disaster area. What happened?

KIP

My bailer plug disappeared. I sank! This guy saved me!

KIMO

Well, you're lucky. Let's get this boat on the cradle and back into the boat house. It's almost time for dinner.

(To the midshipman)

Thanks for your help!

MIDSHIPMAN

No problemo! What are neighbors for?

Midshipman powers up the motorboat and zooms away. Meanwhile, Kip and Kimo get the sailboat settled on its cradle, turn on the motor and watch as the boat struggles up the ramp. Loud creaking can be heard and the sounds of boards stressing under the load.

KIP

It sure is taking long for that boat to get up the ramp.

KIMO

What do you expect? There must be a ton of water trapped in that hull.

KIP

Well, I can't imagine what else can go wrong now. Jeez, I wonder how we're going to get all the water outa there.

As Kip utters these prophetic words, the creaking of the ramp's floorboards and the axle's squeaking becomes overwhelming.

KIMO

Take cover! She's gonna collapse!

Suddenly, the entire ramp collapses under the weight of the boat. Then, the axle of the cart which is holding the boat splits in half and goes right through the bottom of the hull. Hundreds of gallons of sea water gush out of the boat. There is a moment of silence.

KIMO

Well Kip, does this answer your question?

INTERIOR. Cut to math class, McDowell Hall. Bert Fellows is kicking back in his chair, a long, brown cigarette dangling from his lips, a weary look on his tired, wrinkled, sallow face. Kip is looking well-groomed and self-assured.

BERT

Sooooooooooooo, who would like to present the next Euclidian proposition for our de-light and edification?

(There is a space of silence)

How about you, Mr. Allman? You've never demonstrated a proposition before. You've sunk your boat, but no....no I don't recall you ever demonstrating a proposition.

KIP

Mr. Fellows, I just need to say something here. I want to thank you for helping me out on the Bay, and I'm wondering if there's anything I can do to repay you?

BERT

Oh, there is, there is! By demonstrating Euclid's proposition 47, Mr. Allman, popularly known as the Pythagorean Theorem. Will you do it?

KIP

Yes....yes sir. I'll do it.

Kip walks to blackboard, picks up chalk and begins the demonstration, from memory. He is unsure of himself, not totally prepared, but determined to succeed.

KIP

In right-angled triangles, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other two sides.

(He pauses. Takes a deep breath)

Let ABC be a right-angled triangle having the angle BAC right....

Dissolve.

Fade in on Kip finishing up the proof, with the completed diagram drawn on the blackboard. Kip is a mess. His hair is now tangled and his clothes are disheveled. He looks the part of the mad scientist, on the verge of some great discovery.

KIP

....therefore the whole square BDEC is equal to the two squares GB, HC and the square BDEC is described on BC. Therefore,

(Triumphantly)

The square on the side BC is equal to the squares on the sides BA, AC. Q.E.D!!!

The class rises and gives the boy a standing ovation.

BERT

Atta boy, Kip!

REGINALD

Way to go! I didn't think you had it in you!

TOM

You're awesome man!

JEFFREY

Euclid woulda been proud!

KIP

I couldn't have done it without you, Mr. Fellows!

BERT

Nonsense, Mr. Allman. You did it all yourself.

(Pause. Mysteriously.)

It is clear that knowledge cannot be transmitted from me to you.

KIP

What do you mean?

BERT

Why Mr. Allman. All I can do is produce condensations and rarefactions in the atmosphere that will incidentally enter your ear and wiggle your tympany.

KIP

Well then, thank you for wiggling my tympany.

Class laughs.

BERT

You're very welcome, Mr. Allman. Now then
(Addressing class, coughing)
History tells us that Pythagoras sacrificed an ox after he discovered his legendary theorem. Do you have any idea how large an ox is?

No response from class.

BERT

An ox is a big animal. Due to time constraints I was unable to share with you the sacrifice of an ox that would have been appropriate on completing Book One of Euclid's Elements, so I had to tend to the matter myself.

JEFFREY

Oh yuck!

BERT

(Smiling, in a cheerful spirit)
I had meant to save a little for you, but regretfully, without your restraining presence....well, even now I can hardly believe I ate the whole thing!

Class laughs.

REGINALD

We'll forgive you.

The Liberty Tree, Page 68
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

BERT

Well, actually I did come across a few crumbs that may possibly have been worth saving, which I scraped together as best I could, and here they are.

Fellows walks to a table which is covered with a clean, white cloth. He dramatically pulls the sheet aside to reveal a great big tin of brownies that has the completed diagram from proposition 47 neatly drawn in icing. In the middle of the triangle is drawn an ox and beneath the figure is printed the word "ox" in ancient Greek: "O BOUS".

BERT

May the sacrifice of this ox, of which you now partake, remind you of the wonder of a world that has Proposition 47 true about it, and also remind you of the value, hard to measure in oxen, of such truths. God speed in Book Two!

Class cheers!

TOM

Let's eat!

Fade out.

EXTERIOR. Under the Liberty Tree. Afternoon, partly cloudy sky. Long shot. Two students are fencing daintily on the grass, in clean, white protective fencing suits and wire helmets. An awkward Kip, carrying lots of books, and a hostile Paul are walking toward each other and meet in front of the tree.

PAUL

Enjoying your own private room?

KIP

Oh yeah. How do you like your new room?

PAUL

I don't. My new roommate is crazier than you.
(Changing subject)

Oh Mr. Allman, I think I found something you lost.

KIP

Really!? What might that be?

PAUL

This. Look familiar?

Paul reaches into his pocket and pulls out the white bailer plug from Kip's boat. Close up of plug.

PAUL

I believe this fell out of your craft.

KIP

(Getting angry)

Hey, where did you get that? That's the
bailer plug from my boat!

PAUL

I took it.

KIP

What do you mean you "took it?" You son of a
bitch, I nearly drowned!

PAUL

Pity you didn't. You really ought to check to
see if the bailer plug is in place before you
head out to sea.

KIP

I'm gonna kill you!

Kip is furious. He throws his books on the ground, walks up to
the fencers and grabs their foils.

KIP

Excuse me, I need to borrow these for a
minute.

FENCER #1

Hey, what's the big idea!

Kip removes the foils' safety tips and throws one of the weapons
to Paul, who smartly catches it.

FENCER #2

Hey, you're not supposed to remove those
tips!

KIP

(To Paul)

I've had it with you, Paul Sexton.

PAUL

(Calmly)

You're messing with the wrong person, Mr.
Allman. I've been practicing the art of
fencing since I was six. You don't stand a
chance, farm boy.

KIP

It is you who doesn't stand a chance. Now,
will you fight or not?

PAUL

I'll fight. But I hope your health insurance is paid up because you'll need it. On guard!

Paul Sexton is an accomplished swordsman. Kip doesn't have a clue, except for what he has seen in the movies. Paul advances, retreats, lunges and parries like an expert, utilizing minimum effort and optimum efficiency. Kip slashes and thrusts sloppily, becoming exhausted in no time. Paul maintains his composure while Kip gradually loses his. Occasionally Paul makes a good hit, effectively ripping Kip's clothing, and sometimes his skin.

PAUL

Take that. And that. And that.

Kip's clothes are shredded. He is sweating profusely.

PAUL

(Laughing heartily)

Ready to give up yet?

KIP

I will never surrender!

A crowd gathers around Kip and Paul, hooting and hollering.

PAUL

(Solemnly)

I'm done playing games. Prepare to die.

EXTERIOR. Cut to back campus. Tom Hubble is practicing a performance of a scene from a Greek play with a few other students. Tom is wearing a Greek toga with a garland and the others are also decked in traditional costume.

TOM

(Dramatically, Raising Arms)

It is written that when the red drops have been spilled upon the ground they cry aloud for fresh blood. Only Zeus knows where the keys to his thunderbolts are locked. May Zeus pound his fist upon the unbelievers, ohay, smash their skulls!

Suddenly, a huge bolt of lightening rips across the cloudless sky, accompanied by a deafening crash of thunder.

EXTERIOR, the Liberty Tree. Long shot, slow motion. The bolt of lightning solidly hits an enormous dead limb near the top of the tree, creating an explosion and isolated fire. The huge limb finally breaks off with much bravado.

Close up, Kip Allman looking upward at the branch. Follow branch as it falls downward, in Paul's direction.

KIP

Paul! Look out!

Kip leaps into the air and tackles Paul, throwing the two about six feet from where the branch lands and splinters into a hundred pieces. Paul is on the ground; Kip is on top of him.

KIP

Paul, are you all right?

PAUL

(In disbelief)

You saved my life!

KIP

Is anything broken?

PAUL

I'm fine. Why did you save me?

KIP

I don't know.

PAUL

I thought you hated me.

KIP

I thought I did too.

PAUL

No, you really hated me. Do you remember why?

KIP

No, not really. Can you remember?

PAUL

No, I can't. Does this mean we can be friends?

KIP

(Helps Paul up, dusts him off)

Sure, why not, Pal? Wanna get a beer? I'm buying.

PAUL

No. I don't think so. But thanks anyway. I need to be alone. I have alot to think about.

KIP

OK.

Kip reaches forward and hugs Paul closely. Paul resists momentarily, then hugs Kip. Then Paul wipes away a tear and walks away.

The Liberty Tree, Page 72
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

Bert Fellows approaches, a long cigarette dangling from his mouth. He looks at a bloody Kip in astonishment.

BERT

Mr. Allman, are you all right?

KIP

I'm fine. Thank you. Just taking some fencing lessons.

BERT

Maybe you'd better stay away from fencing as well. I don't think that suits you any more than sailing. Just my opinion. Take it or leave it.

Bert departs. Arthur Atherley appears and puts his hand on Kip's shoulder.

ARTHUR

Well I must admit, I am impressed.

KIP

Oh hi, Arthur. Good to see you.

ARTHUR

I think I can now say that I have accomplished my task. Imagine: You risked your life for somebody you despise! I can see that you have truly earned the title of gentleman. Congratulations!

KIP

Thank you. Is that all it takes?

ARTHUR

That's all it takes.
(He grabs an abandoned foil)
On your knees.

Kip gets down on his knees.

ARTHUR

As a loyal subject of Her Majesty, The Queen of England, I hereby pronounce you "Gentleman Kip, Lord of Serendipity."

Arthur gently taps Kip's shoulder. When Kip looks up, Arthur is gone.

KIP

(Crying out to the sky)
But what about finding God? What about getting laid?

Camera pulls away from Kip, standing alone beneath the Liberty Tree.

EXTERIOR, long shot. McDowell Hall. Night. A full moon hangs over the building.

Framing shot, third floor McDowell Hall, through the window. Atop the seminar table is a candle which softly illuminates the room. Half a dozen kids are sitting around the table with BRAHMACHARI BILLY sitting in the middle. Incense wafts through the air. Music: Ravi Shankar on the sitar. Billy wears a long, black button-down robe, a white collar, an orange silk scarf that is printed in ancient Sanscrit, and a gold ring on his finger. He speaks with a thick, east Indian accent. Students have ornate editions of the Bhagavad-Gita set before them. Tom and Kip are present as well as a few other students.

BRAHMACHARI

It is written in the Bhagavad-Gita, "Pleasures derived from the contact of the senses with sense-objects are subject to the law of beginning and end, hence they become the cause of sorrow."

(Pause)

Now, with spine erect and eyes closed, let us meditate on the glory of that effulgent Reality, from whom the whole universe is projected. May he enlighten our minds. Aum, Peace, Amen.

A moment of silence and meditation. Kids are sitting up straight, eyes closed, with their palms upright, index finger and thumb touching. Pan faces.

BRAHMACHARI

Brahma-a-nan-dam
Pa-ra-ma su-kha-dam
Ke-va-lam gyan a mur-tim.

Another moment of silence. Close up of Brahamachari.

BRAHMACHARI

I am God, naught else but God. Verily, I am Brahman, the Cosmic Reality. Imperfection is not a quality of my consciousness. I am Consciousness, Existence, Bliss Absolute. I am Eternal, I am Free, I am That I am, there is no change in me. Aum, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, Hari Aum Shanti.

Students shake themselves free of meditation.

KIP

Can you tell me, Brahmachari Billy, how to attain happiness?

BRAHMACHARI

He who is completely devoid of all selfish desires, free from sense-identification, and who has attained the realization of universal oneness by overcoming his ego, alone attains peace even while living on this earth.

KIP

But I've tried meditating. It's hard work! And nothing seems to happen.

BRAHMACHARI

Do not try to storm the gates of heaven, Kip. Finding true happiness may take many lifetimes: I never promised you a rose garden.

Arthur Atherley appears at Kip's side.

ARTHUR

You're just wasting your time here. Find some other extracurricular activity. This guy is most definitely not going to help you get laid. And as far as helping you find God, he's right: It's going to take you several lifetimes....four million more to be exact, before you're going to find God.

KIP

That's crazy!

ARTHUR

So why not have a little fun now? Go for the gusto!

KIP

Who says I'm not going to find God?

ARTHUR

God sez. And you know why?

KIP

No, why?

ARTHUR

Because you're a democrat.

KIP

I beg your pardon?

ARTHUR

Remember your Plato. It's there, right in The Republic. He says, and I quote:

(Arthur picks up a fancy book)

"The democrat lives through the day indulging in the appetite of the hour; and sometimes he is lapped in drink and strains of the flute; then he is for total abstinence and tries to get thin; then again, he is at gymnastics; sometimes idling and neglecting everything, often he is at politics, and starts to his feet and says and does anything that may turn up; and, if he is emulous of any one who is a warrior, off he is in that direction, or of men of business, once more in that. His life has neither order nor law; and this is the way of him...this he terms joy and freedom and happiness."

(Puts down book)

That, Kip Allman, is why you will live four million more lifetimes on this planet.

Arthur disappears.

BRAHMACHARI

Now then, if there are no more questions, let us meditate.

Fade out on close-up of Kip as he closes his eyes and begins to meditate.

EXTERIOR. Long shot, Randall Hall. Early evening. Spectacular Turner-esque sunset forms the backdrop of the dormitory.

Framing shot. Kip is meditating on the fire escape in a red union suit (with button-up back flap) and big down booties. Through the window Jeffrey, Tom, Reginald and a couple others are happily partying. Jeffrey is sipping red wine from a wine glass and the rest are drinking good Mexican beer. The gurgling of a bong can be heard, as well as the attended exhaling and inhaling of smoke and air. Tom sticks his head out the window and interrupts Kip's meditations.

TOM

C'mon in here Kip, the night is young! It's not the same without you.

KIP

I no longer wish to follow in the ways of excess and human attachment. I must, regretfully, pass.

TOM

Well then, how 'bout a lil' sausage stick?

Tom thrusts a sausage stick in his face.

KIP

Oh please, give it a rest Tom: I have renounced the desire to eat flesh, especially that stuff. Don't you know foods which are excessively bitter, sour, saline, hot, pungent, dry and burning will produce sickness, pain and grief?

TOM

You can say that again, Kip ol' buddy ol' pal: Indigestion's a drag. This stuff will kill you.

Music abruptly comes to a halt. There is silence.

KIP

But do not let my own attempt to ascend into heaven and forego all human suffering come in the way of your own enjoyment of earthly delights. Please, party on.

INTERIOR. Kip's bedroom. A fully uniformed police officer named O'MALLEY, stands at the doorway. He seems to ignore Tom as he valiantly attempts to push the bong, marijuana and paraphernalia under Kip's bed. The voice of Kip continues unabated from outside the window.

KIP

....and though you may wallow in the mud like swine....

Cop looks at Kip as though the comment were directed maliciously toward him.

KIP

....you simply do not know what you do. In the end remember: I have nothing but the greatest love....

Kip appears at the window and begins to climb in.

KIP

....for all of you.

He grasps the situation.

KIP

What the fuck is going on here?

O'MALLEY

Are you Kip Allman?

KIP

Yeah.

O'MALLEY

Good. You are under arrest.

KIP

What?!....Why?

O'MALLEY

For the murder of Paul Sexton. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

Cop walks up to Kip and places him in handcuffs.

KIP

Tom! Get ahold of Brahmachari Billy! He should be at McDowell Hall! Tell him what's going on here!

TOM

Right away, Kip!

KIP

(Grabs sausage stick)

And gimme that sausage stick. I'm starving.

The cops escort Kip out of the room, down the hall and down one flight of stairs. As they pass by the second floor, camera gets a glimpse of an open door and Paul laying perfectly still on his back. A few hysterical, as well as fascinated students are gathered around him.

STUDENT #1

Yeah, he's dead all right. See, he doesn't respond when I stick a pin into his hand!

STUDENT #2

Or when I burn him with the lighter!

RESIDENT HEAD

All right, knock it off, will ya? Let's show the guy a little respect for once, OK?

STUDENT #1

You really think Kip did it?

STUDENT #2

I don't know. Seems a good possibility, the way they were at each other all the time.

INTERIOR. Police car. Kip is in the backseat, handcuffed.

KIP

This is a big mistake. I'm innocent: I didn't do anything wrong.

O'MALLEY

That's what they all say.

KIP

Jesus these handcuffs are tight. What's the matter with you people anyway? I couldn't hurt a fly! Do I look like a common criminal?

O'MALLEY

And what does a criminal look like?

KIP

Not like me, that's for sure. You call this justice?

O'MALLEY

Aw, save it kid. Tell it to the judge. I'm just doing my job.

Squad car speeds through bleak, impoverished neighborhoods, flashing on urban blight and decay, until finally they arrive at an equally depressing police station. Music: Libera Me Domine, from Faure's "Requiem," this time sung by a real orchestra and real baritone.

INTERIOR. Front desk of police station, 2:30 a.m. by a large round clock on the wall. Kip is fingerprinted and ushered into a small cinderblock holding room with metal door and small, wire-reinforced window. Kip is led to a seat in front of a desk and chair. Officer leaves the room. There is a microphone and tape recorder on the table. Screams and clangs of doors can be heard. The hours tick by...3 a.m., 4:30 a.m. Finally, a meaty plain clothes detective with crew cut comes in and sits opposite Kip. Faure's "Requiem" gradually fades out. Kip is a mess: Sleepy and agitated.

DETECTIVE

You don't know how long I've waited for this moment.

KIP

I beg your pardon?

DETECTIVE

You Johnnies think you've got it made, don't you? There, in your ivory tower school, drinkin' your beer, smokin' your dope, leachin' off the old man's money....

The Liberty Tree, Page 79
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

He removes Kip's handcuffs. Kip rubs his wrists.

KIP

Look: My wrists are swollen.

DETECTIVE

(Ignoring his comment)

You speak when spoken to, understand?
(Flips on tape recorder)

KIP

This whole thing sucks! I didn't do anything wrong!

DETECTIVE

You call murdering somebody "nothing wrong?"
How'd you do it? Arsenic? An overdose, perhaps?

KIP

(Screaming)

What are you talking about?

DETECTIVE

Oh, c'mon now, Mr. Allman. Everybody knows you and Paul Sexton hated each other. We even found this poem in your diary.

(Picks up diary, begins to read)

Keep away from me

and I will avoid you . . .

Let the hate flourish in our souls

until it blossoms like a red, red rose.

The hour of compromise is well over

And neither of us will know peace

Until the other is gone.

(Pause)

Mr. Allman, did you write this poem?

KIP

Yes I did, but....

DETECTIVE

Did you write this poem for Paul Sexton?

KIP

Yes I did, but....

DETECTIVE

Mr. Allman, admit it: You hated Paul Sexton!

KIP

Yes I hated him, but I wouldn't kill him!

Detective flips off tape recorder.

DETECTIVE

Now listen here, pretty boy. We're gonna stick you in a cold, damp cell with a 300 pound weightlifter named Bubba who's gonna make you his wife unless you start talking right now!

Detective flips on tape recorder.

DETECTIVE

Where were you between 8 and 10 p.m. this evening?

KIP

I was on the third floor of Randall Hall, meditating.

DETECTIVE

Why did you kill Paul Sexton?

KIP

I told you, I didn't kill him!

DETECTIVE

Enough!

Detective slams fist on table. There is a pounding on the door.

DETECTIVE

What now? Come in!

O'Malley opens door.

O'MALLEY
(Sheepishly)

Uh chief, we have a problem.

DETECTIVE

Yeah what?

O'MALLEY

I really think we should discuss this in private.

DETECTIVE

Just tell me, OK?

O'MALLEY

All right. Y'know that dead kid, Paul Sexton?

DETECTIVE

Yeah, what about him?

O'MALLEY

Well, it turns out that he isn't quite dead.

DETECTIVE

What exactly do you mean he "isn't quite dead." He's either dead or he isn't.

O'MALLEY

Paul Sexton put himself into some kind of deep trance. That Indian fellow, Brahmachari Billy, he snapped him out of it. Said Sexton reminded him of Edgar Cayce, whoever that is. So you see, chief: Mr. Allman had nothing to do with it.

DETECTIVE

Did Sexton have a pulse?

O'MALLEY

No.

DETECTIVE

Was he breathing?

O'MALLEY

No.

DETECTIVE

That is strange. Were there drugs involved?

O'MALLEY

No, this Sexton guy was straight as an arrow. Didn't even drink coffee.

DETECTIVE

Then why the hell am I giving this kid the third degree?

O'MALLEY

Sorry chief, everything seemed to point in Mr. Allman's direction.

DETECTIVE

Sorry isn't good enough. Next time you call a doctor before you go pronouncing anybody dead, you moron. Do you have any idea how much trouble this could get us in?

KIP

Y'know, I could sue you for false arrest. My friend is the son of a supreme court justice.

DETECTIVE
(Angrily)

And I could bust you for just about every
narcotics violation in the book.

(Puts arm around Kip)

Don't fuck with me, buddy. I'll tell you
what: Don't say anything about what came down
tonight and I won't either. Deal?

KIP

Deal.

They shake hands.

DETECTIVE

O'Malley, why don't you see this kid safely
home?

Fade out.

INTERIOR. Police car, morning. Sun is coming up. Kip is sharing
the front seat with Officer O'Malley and writing furiously in his
diary.

O'MALLEY

Hey kid! You a writer or something?

KIP

I sometimes like to think of myself as a
poet.

O'MALLEY

(Laughing)

You're a poet but you don't know it!

KIP

(Irritated)

Yeah, right.

O'MALLEY

I wrote a poem once.

KIP

Oh yeah?

O'MALLEY

Yeah. It went like this: Roses are red,
violets are not, make a fast move and you'll
be shot.

KIP

Very clever.

The Liberty Tree, Page 83
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

Police car reenters historic Annapolis, with its cobblestone streets and Georgian buildings and St. John's looming in the distance.

O'MALLEY

OK, I told you my poem, now tell me yours.

KIP

OK.

(He shuffles some papers)

It's nice to come back to these proud, red brick halls
Of books and endless talk,
Of points and lines and dead languages
And things that don't really matter.

I got a taste of life and love
And learned the ways of men
And tasted the bitterness of hate
And those things that really matter.

So now I'm back to these dusty, old books
And the stories that they tell
Of men long gone, ideas and songs
And things that don't really matter.

O'MALLEY

That's good kid. Doesn't rhyme, but I like it.

Car approaches drop off point at the College.

O'MALLEY

Stay outa trouble kid. Nice meeting you.

Kip slams door. Fade out.

INTERIOR. Randall Hall, Kip's room. Reginald, Tom and Jeffrey are gathered in a circle. Incense is burning and candles are glowing. Soft music is playing on the stereo.

KIP

(Turning music down so he can speak)
I've called you here tonight because you are my best friends.

Reginald offers Kip an enormous glass bong. Kip clicks a lighter and dramatically inhales and exhales a hit.

REGINALD

I thought this might be serious so I brought some of my \$300 an ounce Matanuska thunderfuck, direct from Alaska. This stuff will knock your socks off!

Jeffrey pulls out a couple six-packs of Grolsch (with the ceramic caps) from a paper bag.

JEFFREY

Here's my offering to the cause.

TOM

Damn Jeffrey, what's the deal? You win the lottery or something?

JEFFREY

No, I've been doing some exotic dancing lately. I can make over \$500 a night!

REGINALD

Dancing? What kind of work is that for a nice, Catholic girl?

JEFFREY

Look Reggie, it's an income, OK? This is an expensive school. Not all of us are independently wealthy, y'know.

KIP

Which is precisely why I called you all here tonight. My dad has just been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and my family has run out of money.

(Kip's voice cracks. His eyes swell)

I'm going to have to leave St. John's at the end of the semester.

INTERIOR. McDowell Hall. Early morning. Music: Chopin's Mazurka in A minor. Kip is cleaning classrooms. He is sad and melancholy. He fondly touches the old, worm-eaten graffiti-engraved table and gets a chuckle from some academic graffiti scrawled on the blackboard that reads, "I think, therefore I am confused," "Nietzsche is Peachy" and "Don't Put Descartes Before De Horse."

INTERIOR. McDowell Hall. Math class. Day. Kids are studying astronomy now and the blackboard is filled with planetary illustrations from Ptolemy's "Almagest." Fellows is smoking his long brown cigarette, balanced precariously from his lower lip, with extended ash that seems to defy gravity. Kip is fast asleep.

JEFFREY

So, do you think that the ancient astronomers could actually see the signs of the zodiac?

Fellows reflects on this for a moment. Takes a long drag.

BERT

If you turn to page 244 of your Ptolemy text you will find that in the constellation of

BERT (Cont)

the twins, "the star in the left testicle of the eastern twin is located at $21 \frac{2}{3}$ degrees on the ecliptic." Now, to be perfectly honest, I can't say that I recognize any of the figures which Ptolemy says is pictured in the celestial heavens, such as rams, bulls, crabs and lions....let alone their testicles, shoulder blades, knees, calves or buttocks. And even if I could recognize them...that is, the twins...they'd probably both look like eunuchs to me."

Class laughs. Bert notices Kip.

BERT

Mr. Allman!

Kip snorts.

BERT

Mr. Allman! Wake up!

KIP

What the?

Kip looks around in a daze.

KIP

Oh, sorry.

BERT

Mr. Thoroughgood, I wonder if you would mind taking us through an explanation of the angles formed by the ecliptic and the horizon
(He takes a drag from his cigarette)
for our de-light and edification?

REGINALD

With great pleasure.

Reginald walks to the blackboard, grabs some chalk.

BERT

Mr. Allman, I would like a word with you. In private.

Jeffrey leans over to Tom.

JEFFREY

He's gonna get it now.

Bert and Kip walk to the window.

REGINALD

We will now show how we can get, for a given latitude, the angles formed by the ecliptic and the horizon.

Cut to Bert and Kip, speaking confidentially.

BERT

Mr. Allman, I've heard about your recent financial misfortunes and setbacks. I'll be honest: You're not the brightest student I've ever had but you are certainly among the most colorful. Let me give you a piece of advice. Are you listening to me?

KIP

Yes sir.

BERT

The solution to your problems lies in the very heart of the Liberty Tree. Right around where the branch fell off, that day you fought with Mr. Sexton. Do you understand?

KIP

Yes, I think so.

BERT

Good.

Bert clears his throat and addresses the class.

BERT

Please excuse me, class. I have to be somewhere far from here in the next hour. Mr. Thoroghood, will you take the helm?

REGINALD

Ay ay, sir.

BERT

Thank you.

Bert picks up his books and leaves.

JEFFREY

(To Kip)

That's odd. It's not like him to leave us on our own. I hope everything's all right.

KIP

That was strange.

REGINALD

(Clearing his throat)

Let the circle concentric with the ecliptic and situated in the moon's oblique plane be conceived as before, as moving from east to west about the poles of the ecliptic....

Suddenly, a women's piercing scream fills the air from outside. Class gathers around the window. There below, lying face up, clutching his chest, is Bert Fellows, dead from a heart attack. Sirens fill the air. Paramedics arrive.

WOMAN'S VOICE FROM OUTSIDE

He's dead! Mr. Fellows is dead.

JEFFREY

My God, this is awful. Did he have any children? A wife? Any family?

KIP

I think we were the only family he had. They say he could have retired years ago, but he stayed on because, I guess, he loved us.

EXTERIOR. Beneath the Liberty Tree. Full moon night. Crickets are singing. Kip has rigged a device with ropes, swing and pulleys to suspend himself from the highest branches of the Liberty Tree. He is being helped by Reginald, Jeffrey, and Tom. A security guard ambles along and the kids run away. When all is clear, Kip reaches the stump which once held the branch which almost fell on Paul Sexton. He chips away at a huge hunk of concrete and finally removes it. His face is illuminated with a golden, reflective light.

KIP

Treasure! My problems are solved! Thank you Mr. Fellows!

Kip scoops up a canvas sack filled with gold doubloons and pieces of eight.

KIP

(Whispering loud)

OK! Lemme down!

There is no response.

KIP

Jeffrey! Reginald! Tom! You guys there? You can let me down now! Oh mannnnnn.....

Kip's friends have all fled. He realizes that he has been abandoned, so he begins to work his way down the tree by himself. Fade out.

EXTERIOR. Long shot. Randall Hall. Winter. Snow is falling.

INTERIOR. Kip's private dormitory room. The financial crisis is over. Kip is now a gentleman of fashion, living in a smartly decorated space. Arthur Atherley, dressed exactly as his portrait, emerges from the shadows.

ARTHUR

I think you're a confirmed bachelor, old man.

KIP

What? What's that mean?

ARTHUR

I say I think you're gay.

KIP

I like women.

ARTHUR

Yes, but I think you like men more than women. Case in point: Myself. You could have made me a cute little girl. Instead you made me into a cute little man/child. You don't have to be Sigmund Freud to realize that this all means something.

KIP

You may very well be correct: I might be gay. But so what? Does it matter? Am I any less entitled to get laid?

ARTHUR

Oh no. It just helps to know exactly what you're looking for. You know, just a small detail.

KIP

Well, maybe I don't need your help anymore. Maybe it's time I just fumbled through this whole matter of life and love without your help.

ARTHUR

Then this is goodbye?

KIP

Go find yourself some other romantic poet to haunt. It's time for me to move on.

ARTHUR

I'll miss you.

KIP

I'll miss you, too.

They hug with great emotion. Arthur disappears into the shadows once again.

EXTERIOR, Back campus. Day. Spring. A warm and cloudless sky. The bell atop McDowell Hall is clanging furiously. A big banner by the boathouse shouts "REALITY WEEKEND." There are kegs of beer galore and hundreds of kids playing games such as Spartan Madball (300 drunken students, faculty and staff are on the soccer field at one time. There are two goals and one ball. The only rule is that a team must get the ball into the opponent's goal. There are many serious injuries), Ellipsoid Hurl (the egg toss) and the Ptolemaic Epicycle race (way too complicated to explain). Standing on a platform, drunk, is Tom Hubble, making an announcement, dressed as a Marilyn Monroe.

TOM

The Miss Sophrosunay contest will begin in 15 minutes. All entrants please assemble! Today's question will be: Is it better to be well hung or ill wed?

A bunch of giggling guys, dressed as women begin to assemble.

Back at the boathouse dock, a transformed Kip, dressed in fashionable clothes, new hairdo, etc., expertly sails his craft to the dock. He hops out of the boat and ties it down. Skimpily clad Jeffrey Hymn is lying sensuously on the boat's deck. She rises; Kip helps her out.

JEFFREY

Thanks for taking me out sailing, Kip. What do you say we go to the Miss Sophrosunay contest? It's just about to begin!

KIP

I'll be around in a minute.

JEFFREY

OK, see you there!

KIP

No, wait a minute!

JEFFREY

What's up?

KIP

No, nothing. Never mind.

JEFFREY

No tell me.

KIP

No. Forget about it.

JEFFREY

I can't forget about it. I can tell something's bothering you. Say it!

KIP

OK. It's like this: We've been friends since the beginning. Sure, we've had our ups and downs, but deep down, we've always gotten along....wouldn't you say?

JEFFREY

Oh yeah. We've gotten along great!

KIP

But you see, it's like this: I....I love you Jeffrey.

JEFFREY

I love you too, Kip.

KIP

Yeah, but I mean I really, really love you.

JEFFREY

Well, I really really love you, too.

KIP

What I'm trying to say is that I love you so much that I want to....want to....

JEFFREY

Kip, I do love you, but I don't love you like that. I'd do just about anything for you, but that doesn't include sleeping with you. I thought you were different than other guys. I thought maybe we could just be friends.

KIP

Friends?

JEFFREY

Yeah, friends. The most sublime expression of love in the universe. I thought you understood. But maybe I was wrong.

KIP

No, you weren't wrong. We are friends. Please forgive me, I'm a barbarian.

JEFFREY

(Tearfully)

Don't apologize. I understand. You think I don't have feelings? You think I don't stay up in the middle of the night dreaming of how it might be to share my bed with another person?

KIP

But it's different with me. I'm 18 years old. I've never done it with a girl before! I sometimes feel like just giving up the whole lousy game. It hurts so much.

JEFFREY

Kip, you've got to keep looking for your happiness, even if it hurts. Someday you'll find it....I know you will! You can't just duck away from life by trying to avoid those things that hurt you and then fool yourself by saying you're happy. You aren't. I'm not. I don't think anybody here is. You've got to get out and expose yourself until you find what makes you happy and just do what your heart tells you. Someday you'll find it...if you've got enough courage to look, that is. Here, let me give you a hug.

They embrace.

JEFFREY

Feel better?

KIP

Yes. Much better.

JEFFREY

Good. Now, I'm going to the Miss Sophrosunay Contest. Are you going to the waltz party?

KIP

Are you going to be there?

JEFFREY

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

KIP

Good. I'll see you there.

Jeffrey runs off. Kip starts loading the boat on the ramp. Dean Marcus Carroll walks by.

MARCUS

Mr. Allman! Is that you?

KIP

None other.

MARCUS

I wanted to congratulate you!

KIP

Oh yeah, why's that?

MARCUS

You have done what some of the greatest academic minds have failed in doing.

KIP

And what might that be?

MARCUS

Paul Sexton has informed me that he is ready to graduate this spring! After 20 years he's finally leaving St. John's! And he said you played a major role in his decision to leave!

KIP

No kidding? What's he going to do?

MARCUS

He's joining Brahmachari Billy's Ashram! Well then, I must be on my way. Just wanted to thank you.

KIP

Any time.

He continues to store his boat. The dean exits. As Kip loads his boat on a rack and stores away the sails, a voice comes out of the blackness of the shadows. It is Brahmachari Billy accompanied by Paul Sexton.

BRAHMACHARI

Kip Allman! Long time, no see! We've missed you at our Wednesday nite Bhagavadita Class!

KIP

Guess it was just a passing phase. I think I'll spend a while wallowing in my attachments. But thanks for reviving Paul Sexton from his trance. You saved my ass!

PAUL

Ass my ass. He saved my life, or should I say, he gave me a new life.

KIP

Paul! Dean Marcus says you decided to graduate from St. John's. Is this true?

PAUL

I'm outta here. If you know anybody who knows how to keep a 400 year old tree alive, tell 'em to give the Dean a call.

BRAHMACHARI

Paul has become one of my most devout students.

(Pause)

Kip, I want you to know that I love you more than anything. There is no mountain I would not climb and no ocean I would cross to help you if you called me.

KIP

(Laughing)

Doesn't that imply that you are attached to me?

BRAHMACHARI

I am not attached to anything or anybody. My only purpose in life is to help you realize God.

KIP

I bet you're attached to that gold ring you're wearing.

BRAHMACHARI

(Takes off ring, looks at it)

My guru gave this to me. It is solid gold. Gold represents the untarnished character and immortality of God. Here. It's yours, Kip. You can have it.

Kip reaches out, accepts the ring. Checks it out. And then hands it back to Brahmachari Billy.

KIP

Thanks. But I couldn't.

Brahmachari accepts it back and returns it to his finger.

KIP

Just what is the purpose of life anyway?

BRAHMACHARI

To realize God: There is no other. But you cannot storm the gates of heaven, Kip Allman. Exercise patience. Meditate. If you are sincere, someday God will come to you.

Brahmachari and Kip hug. Brahmachari walks away. Kip finishes storing the boat, walks outside into the sunshine. He turns toward the back campus and hundreds of students, reveling in the spring weather, chanting "On-Air Goon-Ay Soph-Ro-Soon-Ay!" Spartan Madball game is in full force, a stack of 30 students cover the unfortunate person who has the ball. Half a dozen male students, dressed in drag parade around the grounds. Tom approaches Kip, dressed as Marilyn Monroe. They hug.

TOM

Hey you big midwestern farm boy, you got a roll of quarters in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?

KIP

Just glad to see you, buddy. Damn! You look good enough to eat!

TOM

What you say we sneak into my room and catch a buzz, big boy?

KIP

Maybe later. I'm going to the Waltz Party for a bit.

Kip walks toward the dorms. Tom scratches his head.

TOM

Waltz parties! I'll never figure that guy out.

EXTERIOR. Establishing shot, McDowell Hall. Day. "Roses from the South Waltz," by Johann Strauss. The two Black Panthers who appeared at the beginning of the movie are walking down a cobblestone path, this time with no weapons, but rather, books.

BLACK PANTHER #1

Keep your eye out for Dean Marcus. I want to give him this book by brother Malcolm. Do you think he'll talk to me? I got some questions about that Socrates fellow.

BLACK PANTHER #2

I don't know why he'd want to talk to you. You busted his door! Wait, look over there....I think I saw him slip into the library! After him!

EXIT BLACK PANTHERS.

INTERIOR. Great Hall, McDowell Hall, shot from the balcony. Roses are draped everywhere. About a dozen nicely dressed couples are circling their way around the dance floor to the music of Johann Strauss. Others crowd the hallway. Jeffrey Hymn is drinking a cup of punch on the sidelines. Kip, dressed in a tuxedo, approaches her.

KIP

May I have the pleasure of this dance?

JEFFREY

It is entirely my pleasure.

They begin to waltz.

JEFFREY

What are these three goals of Kip Allman that everybody's talking about?

KIP

Isn't anything sacred around here!

JEFFREY

(Ignoring Kip)

Now let me get this straight: You wanted to become a gentleman, get laid and find God? Is that right?

KIP

Something like that.

JEFFREY

Did you happen to find God, by any chance?

KIP

No. No I didn't.

JEFFREY

Well, would you like to go to Church again this Sunday and look with me?

KIP

Are you trying to pick me up, Jeffrey Hymn?

Volume of music increases and credits roll. Pull back on camera to frame the Great Hall and it's waltzers. As things draw to an end, the dignified voice over of Kip's father can be heard over the music.

The Liberty Tree, Page 96
Charles Reuben, June 26, 1996

KIP'S FATHER

Dear Kip, Homer was admired for his poetry for 2500 years without the loss of a single syllable. During this time palaces, temples, castles and entire cities were decayed, demolished and destroyed. Poetry is the fruit of genius. It is the product of slow and painstaking work. Above all else remember: The rock that the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone. We look forward to seeing you again this summer. Love Dad.

THE END