

Quiz Bowl
"Pilot: All We Have is Now"

The bleachers on one half of the gym are pulled out, filled with students. A chyron reads "Fall Extracurricular Kickoff." Principal Pangu stands on the stage, talking into a mic.

PANGU

And last but certainly not least for
this year's fall extracurricular kickoff
extravaganza: well, we were supposed to
have a presentation from Vice Principal
Birch about keeping our priorities
straight this season. But it looks like
we're actually being visited by--
(not very well faked
surprise)
-- one of the Beastie Boys?!?

She applauds. The music for the Beastie Boys' song Girls starts to play from the speakers beside the stage. Birch, for some reason dressed like one of the Beastie Boys from the Sabotage music video (fake mustache, wig, aviators, suspenders, police badge) steps up onto the stage with attitude and then grabs the mic with a similar amount of attitude. A few of the students clap, desultorily. Instead of the regular lyrics to the Beastie Boys' song Girls, Birch sings:

Goals! All I really want is goals!
(every time he sings
"goals," we see "GOALS"
flash on the big white
screen behind him)
And in the morning it's goals!
Cause every evening it's goals!
(he dances around to the
music)
You don't need to balk!
Setting goals is not that awk!
I like how they com-pile!
Reaching goals that is my style!

We scan over some of the kids in the crowd: we see signs for the football, debate, and cross country teams. The kids sitting near them are absolutely unamused. Some look at their phones, some stare blankly off into the distance. Appears no one is learning anything about the importance of goals.

BIRCH

No other way!
Need a two point oh to play!
Prep for AP tests they're in May!
Listen to your teachers every day!
In study hall you should all stay!
Perfect attendance would be bae!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BIRCH (CONT'D)
 (more dancing to the
 music; birch is getting a
 bit huffy, sweaty)
 Goals! to do my homework
 Goals! For SAT Scores--

As he sings this last litany, we look at the members of the Quiz Bowl team, sitting under the "Quiz Bowl" sign. We pan across from right to left, one player's face to the next. The first four players' faces are glazed over like everyone else's. But then we pan over Jack and Mirna, where we stop. They are entranced, ecstatic. Eyes huge, mouths smiling hugely, their focus magnetically attached to every single thing that Birch does.

BIRCH (CONT'D)
 Goals! For good report cards
 Goals! And no detentions
 Goals! That's all I really want is
 goals!
 Do all I dare to do, I want goals!
 I ought to whip out my goals!
 Goals! Goals! Goals!
 (quickly running out of
 breath)
 Goals! Goals! Goals! Goals! Goals!
 (repeat until the end of
 the song)

Song ends. Birch pants into the mic. Mirna and Jack jump up and clap wildly. No one else responds.

OPENING CREDITS

INT. THE DOORS OUT THE GYM

Assembly's over, the students are leaving to their activities. The quiz bowl team walks out together.

MIRNA
 We'll get the buzzers.

Jack and Mirna start off through the crowd. The team captain, Dallin, played by the most Mormon-looking actor we can find, tries to catch up to them but is blocked.

DALLIN
 No, I'll--

They go on.

DALLIN (CONT'D)
 No stop-- I'll--

(CONTINUED)

They're already gone.

We rejoin Jack and Mirna a moment later, them walking through an empty hall.

JACK

What about like, Passive Aggressive Jeopardy? Where like when you say a wrong answer, the host just goes, "oh." Just: "oh." Totally neutral. Doesn't even tell you you're wrong. "oh."

MIRNA

(taking on the affronted voice of the duly passive aggressive contestant who would've been the person who got that question wrong)

Ah. I see. I'm just supposed to... okay. Just supposed to *know* that I'm wrong. Yeah. I should just, understand that. You aren't going to tell me that I'm wrong. No! Of course not. *You!*

Keep cutting back to Jack playing the host, just looking on at her, acting slightly surprised at the outburst like a person passive aggressively pretending to not have just been being passive aggressive with that "oh." would act.

MIRNA (CONT'D)

You're sooo thoughtfulll. Hey everyone, come look how nice and obliging and thought-ful Paul is being. He's not even telling me I got this question wrong even though I totally got this question wrong. AND

(she finds her gotcha, and a turn towards the actually accusatory as she says this)

and even though he's obviously 100% telling me that I'm wrong.

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA (CONT'D) JACK

That little "oh." you just I didn't say anything.
gave me. I'm not *the stupidest* ...
person alive, Paul, I know ...
what that means. Like you'd ... I didn't say anything.
ever say "oh" if I'd gotten ...
the question right. ...
(taking a second to really ...
mimic him) ...
"oh." Just like that. ...
Way to tell me I'm wrong by ... I didn't say anything.
not telling me I'm wrong. So ...
that *Paul* still gets to be the ...
good guy. Paul always has to ... I didn't say anything.
be the good guy. -- WHICH you ...
know is a sign of an actually ...
good guy. The compulsive need ...
to *seem* like a good guy. ...
That's not an impulse ...
exclusively shared by ...
assholes. That's not you being ...
an asshole. That's Paul being ...
a good guy. Paul's always a ...
good guyy.

JACK (CONT'D)
I didn't say anything, Natalie!

They look at each other normally.

JACK (CONT'D)
Yeah, like that.

LATER

3 INT. HALLWAY

Just a moment later.

JACK
Which way's...?

MIRNA
Courtyard?

JACK

Yeah

(pause a beat while they
walk on)

The Hoth kids all go to the courtyard
after school, right?

MIRNA
Yeah, but: Hoths are fine.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

I was just saying.

They walk on.

It does seem like-- like it'd be a lot of work to be a Hoth. Cuz they're always wearing all that *stuff*. They always have all that gear. Seems like so much work-- and every day. Probably have to wake up... twenty? minutes early just to put on their whole--

MIRNA

I dunno. I bet Hoths have a system-- I'm sure they have a system.

JACK

(nodding, raising eyebrows reasonably)

Mmm, yeah, actually: makes sense. Guess, like take everything off in the same place, leave it together, can just kind of step into it in the morning.

They turn, walk through a door, and start down the stairs.

MIRNA

Of course, the real way, like the actual long way to the storage room would be by the theater, but I didn't think...
(trails off)

JACK

Yeah...

(looking straight ahead)

It... it does: it still hurts...

MIRNA

Ff--Fuck it! Anyone who doesn't enjoy a musical about the life and death of Sylvia Plath, just's shit *for them*. Boring ass jerk ass--

JACK

They didn't even let me finish the song.

QUICK CUT

Flashback. Three adults sit tucked behind a table to the side of the stage, a chyron reads: Theater Department Student Submissions Day.

(CONTINUED)

Jack stands in the middle of the stage wearing a very bad wig of long, black hair (the only difference from his normal attire). He stands before a chalkboard on which he's written "Silvia Plath: THE MUSICAL!"

JACK

(singing)

Jazz hands! Turn on the gas! Jazz hands!
Turn on the gas!

(each time he sings "jazz hands," he does big jazz hands; each time he sings "turn on the gas," he mimics grabbing the knob of gas stove with his right hand and turns it 180 degrees, exaggeratedly)

Jazz hands! Turn on the gas!

The judge sitting in the middle of the table yells "NO. No."

BACK TO THE HALLWAY

They walk for a bit.

JACK

They're doing Midsummer Night's Dream.
Cop-out.

MIRNA

It's like-- not *actually* good. Like for a Shakespeare-- it's just because there are like kids in it. It's because-- They teach it to you in seventh grade. -- Just because there's like, nothing to it. -- It's something that they can teach to you in *seventh grade*.

They've reached the bottom floor. They go through a door and out into the courtyard.

JACK

(nodding to the corner)

Hoths.

The Hoth kids are all standing around huddled in one corner. They all, as their name implies, wear those big puffy white jackets and snowpants that the rebel forces wore at the Hoth fortress in The Empire Strikes Back. Some of them wear ski goggles. At least two or three of them have those chunky binoculars they used in the movie.

(CONTINUED)

Mirna waves at them. A couple Hoths wave back. One of those floating black drones pops around into view. Jack nods at them too.

JACK (CONT'D)

(not so glum anymore)

It's funny about Shakespeare that he was just like, upper middle class. Wasn't some unappreciated genius we had to discover later. No-- they knew all about him. They knew he was Shakespeare... but all that just meant was you got to get to be exactly upper middle class. Greatest ever in the game-- and you could buy a kind of comfortable house in the suburbs. -- The guy who wrote literally all the plays that you'll ever read-- that meant you got to-- that you could buy some annuities. -- *Tony Hawk* has like a way better life than Shakespeare ever did.

They've crossed the courtyard, gone through the door at the other end, and walk through another hallway.

MIRNA

No, really, it's the opposite; William Shakespeare is bisexual excellence.

JACK

Okay, well: okay.

MIRNA

Just this ugly, weedy-ass hick, finished-- like-- middle school, but he went there, he made it: hometown too small to even get the plague; the way to London, and getting all the way to the number one ranked art guy; have sex with a younger nobleman, have sex with that nobleman's sexy-ass milf mistress-- then you retire and drink til you die.

(emphasizing each syllable
in "bisexual")

Bi-sex-u-al excellence.

JACK

Bisexcellence.

MIRNA

Exactly.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA (CONT'D)

Shakespeare's as much a part of bi culture as iced coffee and not being able to sit on chairs the right way.

JACK

(suddenly in the
incredibly breathy voice
of a "think of the
children" parent)

But-- ahh!-- we must get rid of all this postmodern neomarxist multicultural garbage-- postcultural, multimarxist, neo modern-- post Marxist cultural multi-neo-- garbage, and go back to the serious things, the virtuous things, *the enduring things*. -- Like the sexcreep Shakespeare. Godless atheist nihilist pervert Shakespeare.

MIRNA

The syphilitic, balding bisexual William Shakespeare, and his little art pop projects-- gender bendy, boys dressed as girls dressed as boys art projects.

JACK

Yes-- I may have not read any one single book in the last fifteen years except for the six most racist Dr. Seusses, but it's very important to me about Shakespeare. How dare you waste my child's schooltime by teaching them anything before William Shakespeare. Single golden earring in his one ear afficianado, William Shakespeare.

MIRNA

Oh yeah, he was just a litte-- Shakespeare, lover of good morals and ethical obedience. Mr. Carnal Forbearance himself, Shakespeare. Actual virtue slut William Shakespeare.

JACK

I need to get these children into costume! as girls dressed as boys kissing boys in the woods ASAP, or these children might start having questions about gender.

MIRNA

-- If they let you do Twelfth Night or As You Like It.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
(realizing)
Yeah-- It's always-- They're always just
gonna do
(sighs out)
Midsummer Night's Dream

Music sting.

LATER

INT. HALLWAY

They're walking up the stairs. Jack's carrying the black case with the buzzers.

MIRNA
Sometimes when I'm doing it, I like to listen to music. In the background of the video I'm watching or whatever. -- Because it's not like, what? I'm gonna listen to the dialogue? in a porn video? -- And sometimes, especially if I choose like a longer song-- like eight minutes or something-- or if I'm particularly... *ready*, I'll finish in just that one song. -- And then, when I'm done, and I go back to the tab with the music to pause it, I'll see that it's only like, six minutes and forty three seconds of the way into the song. -- And I realize: *that's* how long it took me. *That's* exactly how long it took me to finish-- six minutes forty three seconds is how long. I have just accidentally timed myself... and it was only six four three -- Which is just: *that's* how fast I am? -- Under seven: that seems fast, right-- kinda too fast, right? Like it's... disappointingly fast.
(beat)
But then-- then suddenly, I get, like, a swell of purpose, and it: it rises up in me, the certainty. The instant, absolute certainty: "I can beat 6:43. I can beat that. Easy. 6:30. *Six flat*. Let's go--"
(no but actually)
"Let's go! Let's **Go!**"

They've gotten to their floor. They go through a door and start walking up the hall.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
(nodding along)
Yeah. I get that-- Because I only do it
to Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.

MIRNA
Oh, Wagner's good for it. Suitably
bombastic.

JACK
Yours are bombastic?

MIRNA
Entry of the Gods into Valhalla.

Jack nods, impressed.

MIRNA (CONT'D)
And so sometimes I'll look up the music
on youtube, because whatever. And
there's the normal other recommended
videos. Because the algorithm doesn't
know what I'm doing. And-- occasionally--
- the suggestions have some random
something that's too good-- too
alluring-- to just not watch. -- So even
though I'm in the middle of it, I have
to see this other thing. I can't not. I
mean: when else am I going to think to
look up "The Top Ten Moments of Al
Borland from Home Improvement?"

They've gotten to the room where the team practices. The rest
of the team is sitting in a semicircle of desks waiting for
them.

DALLIN
Gosh! What took so long?!

Jack and Mirna walk in, over to the less full side of the
room, on the other side of Dallin.

JACK
We were talking about how Mirna
developed complicated feelings for
Richard Karn.

Music sting.

BREAK

7

INT THE PRACTICE ROOM

7

The players are arrayed around one student, Aditi, at the front reading questions and keeping score on the overhead projector. Jack and Mirna sit way off the side, as far away as the cords on their buzzers will allow. Among the wall decorations is a poster that says "'KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!' - Michel Foucault"

ADITI

(reading)

Benedict Arnold has become synonymous
with betraying one's side for Americans.
Who was his counterpart on the Briti--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

Andre

ADITI

Yes

(making a tally, then
reading:)

A 1997 movie was made out of the story
The Dead from which--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Dubliners, Joyce

ADITI

Yes

(tallying; reading)

What number

(Jack and Mirna set down
their buzzers)

Is 56 less than 5 factorial?

Dallin buzzes.

DALLIN

64

ADITI

Yes

(reading:)

This photographer of the Civil War--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Matthew Brady

(CONTINUED)

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

Repealed by section 2 of the fourteenth amendment, this is the colloquial name for the 1787 agreement about the counting of slaves in calculating states'--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

The three fifths compromise

ADITI

Yes

JACK

(to Dallin, as Aditi's
tallying it)

Would it still count if I called it the six tenths compromise? Like how in a math question, where you can give any number that's just equal to the one in the answer, something that would simplify down to 3/5ths? The 36... 60ths compromise? Or the 312/520ths compromise?

DALLIN

Uh, I don't think--

MIRNA

Three fifths is such a dweeby fraction to choose. Old ass dorks trying to be *precise* with it.

JACK

Yeah. Can't pretend it was just like an accident, like you wrote down and didn't think about it.

DALLIN

Guys--

JACK

(affecting an offhand
voice; shewing away with
his right hand)

Like you obviously thought about it. You argued about it, for days, probably.

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA

(with a very well *actually*
voice)

Actuallllly, I think it's more like
8/13ths.

(pointing at an imaginary
paper on the desk in
front of her)

Keep doing the math over and over and I
just keep getting 8/13ths.

JACK

(assuming a stentorian
voice, maybe even
bringing his fist down on
the desk)

If the great state of New Hampshire
stands for one thing, it's that the true
number is really 11/18ths.

DALLIN

OKAY GUYS-- can we get back? Can we--
okay?

Jack and Mirna are stopped. After a moment, Aditi proceeds.

ADITI

(reading)

"To lose one parent may be regarded as a
misfortune; to lose both looks like
carelessness" is a line said by Lady
Bracknell--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

The Importance of Being Earnest, Wilde

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

Alfred Pierpont Langley was given
\$70,000 in government grants to develop
technology to fly--

Dallin buzzes.

DALLIN

The Wright Brothers

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADITI (CONT'D)

"The reviews of my art will be bad--
they always are-- but the reviews of the
after-party will be great." This is,
supposedly, a quote from which
Pittsburgh-born painter, printmaker, and
phot--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Andrew Warhol

ADITI

Yes.

(reading)

Martin Luther was called by Charles V to
this meeting in 1521--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

The Diet of Worms

ADITI

Yes.

As she's tallying, Dallin turns to them and starts to
lecture:

DALLIN

You see, you guys. When you actually,
like, don't... mess around-- and when
you're actually here, present, at
practice. And how good you can--

MIRNA

(to Jack; it's like she
doesn't notice Dallin)

Is your mom going to be here later? Or
do you think we have to find a ride
somewhere else after practice?

JACK

Oh, I dunno actually. I did not ask. --
Go see?

They both get up, start to leave.

DALLIN

C'mon, guys-- you don't need to both go
leave and ask Jack's mom if she can--
couldn't you just text her or something?

(CONTINUED)

JACK
(to Dallin, as if he
hadn't just been talking
at them)
Dallin-- what time is Coach Putterman
getting here?

DALLIN
He said 4-- but that doesn't mean--

JACK
(laughing)
Not til 4?!

DALLIN
But you still need to be--

They're walking again.

DALLIN (CONT'D)
Really-- Jack-- Mirna-- Jack--

They're out.

Walking up the hallway.

JACK
My favorite thing about Luther is how he
came up with Protestantism while he was
in the middle of actively taking a shit.
Came up with a new religion while he was
dropping a two-two.

And wrote about it. Like he didn't
realize that'd be weird: *So I was on my
squaty potty, **pushing** one out-- and I
realized: salvation is by faith alone.*

MIRNA
(mimicking clenching her
abs, grinding her teeth)
Oh fuck, oh god-- big one!
(grabbing Jack's arms
tightly)
Oh shit dude-- oh man-- I can't
(whipping sweat from her
brow, taking short
breaths like a pregnant
woman having
contractions)
Ahhh--
(all in one breath)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA (CONT'D)

Justification in the eyes of heaven
can't be mediated by any external
entity-- whew whew whew--

(all in one breath, again)

all that matters is an individual's
relationship with god.

JACK

Yeah I mean like: what'd he eat? --
That's the problem with German food: so
backed up you end up **breaking**
Christendom in two. -- Could save a half
a billion lives in religious wars if
this one guy had just eaten a soup once
this week.

MIRNA

(affecting a mom voice)

Eat your vegetables, children, or you
too might start a five hundred year war
over all of Europe.

JACK

Everyone else around him is like, we
love all the individual experience of
the divine stuff-- but can you please,
with all the-- the poop shit--

MIRNA

You're scaring the hoes, man.

JACK

And he's just So I was pooping and
thinking about the holy spirit and
pooping, and then now that I've finished
pooping I've written all my pooptime
meditations I had while eliminating
waste material from my bowels and
they're--

MIRNA

(quickly)

The 95 feces--

JACK

Ah-- Yes. Okay.

They get to the social studies department office. It's empty.

MIRNA

Teachers' lounge?

Jack nods. They start off in the other direction.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

And Martin's always writing about the devil appearing to him while he's on the toilet. Their confrontations. -- Not on like, essential theological matters of great, subtle argumentation or whatever: just pure insults. Totally all insults. -- With imagery of shit mostly. Like ne time he says he told the devil that he was going to stick the devil up his butt, take the devil out of his butt, and then use the devil as a pen. Because, while there would not be any ink on the top of the devil, his head, would then be covered, in lots of, another substance, that has just about the same color of ink.

(as he goes on dragging
out this explanation, he
comes to talk slower,
haltingly; he pauses
before each new addition,
every clause becomes like
a "and one more thing"
bit)

And it has something of the consistency, at least a little of like the spreadibility, of ink, that substance that would be the residue of Martin Luther's butt and buttcheeks. And it has a similar dark-toned color, which would help you to read it on parchment, parchment of that yellow hue that paper had back then in the 1500s, the contrast of the dark writing fluid with the lighter color of the background paper making for the best way to most readably share texts--

MIRNA

Damn. No one ever comes to me when I'm on there. -- Should stop looking at my phone, I guess.

JACK

Yeah. Maybe we *don't* need to find a ketamine hookup. Just eat a bunch of dairy, get in some strudel, let it sit there for a week; and then you finally let yourself go-- and see *past the beyond*.

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA
(nodding)
Yeah.

They walk on. After a moment, though, Mirna suddenly pinches her eyes down.

MIRNA (CONT'D)
Where's a good strudel place though?

JACK
(in disappointed
realization)
... oh... yeah.

MIRNA
(huffingly)
Now we need a strudel hookup.

They walk on for a second, sullen. Then,

MIRNA (CONT'D)
I feel like 80% of the things in
Protestantism are-- are good. Like
they'll say three cool things, but then
one thing that's just like: these people
should not be allowed around children.
Take away *their* kids-- they should not
be near kids. Like:
(a gentle, voice full of
enlightenment)
*We all vibrate with each our own touch
of divinity. --And-- All time is
redeemed by love.*
(quickly now, matter-of-
fact)
And of course trans people are just
demons shifting their earthly forms.

JACK
Yeah-- that's all religion. Like
(assuming a gentle voice
of absolute
enlightenment)
*The beauty we see in the world is just a
reflection back to us of the beauty we
ourselves emanate out into it. --And --
And-- Universal love is our souls' way
of expanding out to encompass the whole
cosmos. -- That strange, wondrous sense
of transcendence we feel sometimes is
nothing less our souls directly
experiencing the divine, which is, of
course, itself.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (CONT'D)
(quickly now, matter-of-fact)
And Armenian people smell like shit.

MIRNA
(in an Alan Watts voice)
Light implies dark. Self implies other.
Black implies white.
(not in an Alan Watts voice)
And I'm gonna fart on your Frosted
Flakes, Nathan.

They get to the teacher's lounge. There's maybe someone using the copier, but it's otherwise empty.

JACK
Maybe she's already left. -- Or, maybe:

MIRNA
Right, maybe she *was* in the teacher's lounge when we went to the social studies office, but: she went back to the office as we were coming to the teacher's lounge.

JACK
She might've just gone a different route.

MIRNA
Yeah. We did take the long way.

JACK
(nodding)
Yep, yep.

They walk back the other way.

Mirna starts humming vacantly. Then:

MIRNA
(in time + in tune with the melody she was just humming; stresses are in bold)
Fart on your **Frosted** Flakes.

They walk on like this.

But suddenly, Jack's eyes bulge. He looks at her-- thoughtfully-- importantly. Then:

(CONTINUED)

JACK
(to the same melody)
Awake to beauty, **awake**.
(nodding to Mirna,
vigorously)

MIRNA
(singing)
Or I'll **fart** on your **Frosted** Flakes.

Now starts a montage of them walking, thinking up ideas,
trying them out.

CUT TO

JACK
Shine your **light** to the **world**,
You are **divine**.
But **if** you are **poor**:
Fuck you I got **mine**.

CUT TO

MIRNA
Beauty is the **world**
Celebrating god.
But **all** people **know**
Fuck up that dude **Todd**.

CUT TO

MIRNA (CONT'D)
Okay, so putting: that all together--
Give me a measure.

Jack hums the tune. After one measure, Mirna joins in with:

MIRNA (CONT'D)
All we have is **now**,
All's forgiven,
The **universe** is **one**,
Cuz **men** own **women**.

JACK
(nodding)
Yeah, that's it.

They turn to go.

Music sting.

BREAK

8

INT. THE PRACTICE ROOM

8

Jack and Mirna are back, sitting where they were before, everyone answering questions. We see the clock: it's 4:12.

ADITI

(reading)

She took photographs across America of--
approximately-- 100 boots in different
arrangements and sent them as postcard--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Eleanor Antin.

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

Seward's Folly--

Dallin buzzes.

DALLIN

Alaska, 1868

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Debussy

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

This pre-Socratic philosopher proved the
value of paying attention to nature
when, after his tracking of weather
patterns indicated that there would be a
plentiful olive harvest, he bought up
all the olive presses ahead of time and
then made a fortune selling the--

Jack buzzes

JACK

Thales

(pronounced Tay-lees, but
let the actor go nuts)

(CONTINUED)

ADITI

Yes

(before she starts reading
again:)

JACK

Of course the best Greek-- maybe my
favorite philosopher of all time maybe,
was Empedocles. He

(getting quicker and more
offhanded as he goes: he
does not care about this
stuff)

saw the cosmos as divided between life
and death, giving Freud a pattern for
seeing the universe.

(but now intently)

But-- but-- the reason--

DALLIN

Jack!

JACK

--he's the best is how he died. Because
he died-- he killed himself by, in order
to prove something he'd said, jumping
into an active volcano. Lept to his
instant death in a pit of fire-- just to
make a point.

MIRNA

(impressed)

Yeah that is: performing philosophy to
the fullest. Suicide by magma, for the
args. Okay. I respect that.

DALLIN

Mirna don't--

JACK

Exactly. Really hard to care about any
other philosopher after that.

MIRNA

Yeah. It's like

(patronizing)

"wow, Hegel, you really care a lot about
all this phenomenology stuff, don't
you."

(very patronizing)

And you stayed up all night writing a
little pamphlet on it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA (CONT'D)

Isn't that great, great-- but, uh, wait a sec: would you throw yourself into a mountain made out of fire to prove it? No? No: for sure you wouldn't? Just a clean no for you? Well then..."

(does the jerk off motion with her hand, maybe even accompanied by a mouth fart?)

DALLIN

Okay, fine. Great. Can we get back t--

JACK

Like can you imagine being the other guy, whoever the guy he was arguing against? Standing on the rim of a volcano watching Empedocles' sandals finish liquifying, just like

(drops voice deeper, shruggingly matter of fact)

"I don't care. Still right."

MIRNA

Empedocles is a lot better than his cousin: Pedocles. The philosopher of pedophilia.

JACK

Well that's all the Greeks, actually.

DALLIN

OK OK OK-- guys. Can we just-- can we? Okay?

Jack and Mirna stop. Dallin gestures to Aditi to start again.

ADITI

Okay...

(reading)

Name the year in which these three events took place: Albert Camus won the Nobel Prize for Lit--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

1947

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADITI (CONT'D)

This was the name for the CIA's covert mission to attempt to assassinate Fidel Cast--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

Operation Mongoose.

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

A personality disorder is named after this Greek figure, known f--

Mirna buzzes.

MIRNA

Narcissus

ADITI

Yes

JACK

Oh, I thought it was gonna be Pedocles.

ADITI

(reading)

The United States had three presidents during the course of this year.

Dallin buzzes.

DALLIN

1841

ADITI

Yes

(reading)

The man who shot Robert F. Kennedy--

Jack buzzes.

JACK

Sirhan Sirhan. Supposedly.

ADITI

What?

DALLIN

Ignore that.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

RFK's own children asked for them to do
a new investigation.

DALLIN

You can just ignore tha--

Coach Putterman (large, in ruffled teacher clothes, with a
completely unkempt beard) comes in while Dallin's saying
this. We see that it's 4:16.

PUTTERMAN

Oh, hello everyone.

(sarcastically, as he's
walking up; Aditi joins
the rest of the kids)

Please, please, don't let me interrupt
your conversation. It seems like an
interesting conversation. Please, do go
on. I wouldn't want to break up your
conversation with my silly little quiz
bowl practice. Even though this is our
designated practice time.

DALLIN

They were saying something-- it's not...

PUTTERMAN

Oh, please tell me. -- What is it that
interrupted practice. -- What is it
that's so urgent.

DALLIN

They--

PUTTERMAN

(interrupting, in
facetious hamminess)

Surely something that I as the coach
could help with. Surely something that
should be brought to my attention.
-- These sort of urgent issues ought to
be brought to the coach first, before
anyone. -- So tell me.

DALLIN

(waiting a moment after
Putterman's done; then,
slowly:)

Well, they--

(embarrassed)

they were saying something about that
Sirhan Sirhan didn't really assassinate
Robert Kennedy.

(CONTINUED)

PUTTERMAN
(surprised)
Oh, well,
(holding up his hand;
pause)
There are-- Questions. On that one. --

Jack nods.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)
It's always been-- It's not like certain agencies of the United States government *didn't* want him dead. It's just a total accident that the exact people that the US secret intelligence forces would have some reason to want eliminated, those are the exact people that end up getting executed.

Jack nods in agreement.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)
-- Just random that this guy who's promised to look into the circumstances of his brother's imperfectly explicable assassination: he just happens to end up shot too? -- A man, who, by the way, RFK: he went after the mob, the intelligence agencies allies of long-standing. The people they worked together on the Castro thing-- the Castro thing that members of the CIA will curse JFK for not going through on-- Yeah, the CIA would have never assassinated a democratically elected foreign leader. -- I mean, that this literally their job: to assassinate the foreign leaders of Guatemala, and Congo, and Chile, and Indonesia and Vietnam, and--
(stops himself-- he's not going to let the damn kids get him off topic this year)
But-- No-- No
(shaking his head, coming out of it)
No, No-- We-- This season: this season. That's exactly my point. Not this season. -- We will not, be getting distracted this season like that. We will not be letting ourselves get off on-- on tangents like that this season. To start off, we...

(CONTINUED)

Puts his bag on the desk. Stays standing behind it.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

We need to begin this year by talking about how we finished last year, and what is to be expected of us this one. We can't just slot in, get into practicing, the same, all of it, as last year, and think that we're going to just shrug into winning. Hang out and get a quizmaster county championship-- Last year -- Last year, you made semifinals, but lost. -- Fourth place of 24 schools; in a county where that's especially competitive, one of the best quiz bowl counties in the country, where every child-rearing adult has a master's degree-- at least. -- So 4th out of 24: pretty good. Top 83rd percentile. Really just a pleasing finish. *Pleasing*. And hey-- only lost to the magnet school. Lost to Calvert, came in behind Longfellow and Thomas Frederick, two of the best schools in the state-- in the country. Not bad. We could just do everything the same this year and do just as well this year.

As he's gone on, the students get more and more into it. (The other players-- we don't see Jack and Mirna's reaction for a while).

And hey-- maybe we even get lucky with seeding and actually come in third this year. Get a trophy. Do a little ceremony with the principal when they put it into the trophy case and everything. That wouldn't be pretty good, wouldn't it?

(hammy:)

Or-- *perhaps*: what if we don't do everything exactly the same as last year just to lose. What if we don't waste all our practice time talking the whole thing. If we could maybe possible do some studying outside of practice time; at lunch, at home. Maybe this year we could learn to actually buzz well-- **think**-- not just buzz whenever. Not just hand points to the other team.

(very hammy:)

"Here, you have the points. Take the points.

(doing a "take them away from me hand gesture")

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

We don't want the points. We're fine with the points that we have. Who needs every point all the time? Who even needs points? Who needs any point ever? What does it even mean to need a point anyways?"

Or: could we actually try? Do work?

(serious)

Because that's what Calvert does, I can tell you. And that's what Longfellow does. And Thomas Frederick.

(hammy)

How about we could-- maybe, ya know, because we're on the team already and everything, we're already going to be here for *this* much time every Wednesday afternoon: perhaps we could use this time, actually? Really finally put some--
- Because I'd like to-- Would anyone mind if we won the championship this year.

We scan the players faces right to left, a mirror of the first scene (their reactions to VP Birch): one face and then the next. But this time, everyone's enlivened. Their faces avid. Their eyes only on Putterman. Until-- we get to Jack and Mirna. They are absolutely unenthused. What the fuck is this man saying?

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

(Quickly)

-- Weekly reading assignments this year: Dallin, the Qu'ran. Mirna: Myra Breckinridge. Jack: Portnoy's Complaint.--

(normally)

And We will all, each of you, write fifty original questions every week. One whole question round of new material for every Monday. -- And speaking of which: we will practice three times a week after school: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday--

Jack and Mirna look at each other with wide-eyed distress.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

and on weekends when we don't have tournaments, and at lunch before tournaments and tv games. And we will become the best team in this whole damn county. -- And anyone who doesn't want to do all that, well: there's the door. You can leave.

(CONTINUED)

Jack and Mirna look at each other.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

Anyone who doesn't want to try not to waste a whole year of practices.

Jack and Mirna looking at each other again.

PUTTERMAN (CONT'D)

Anyone who's happy just chilling here a couple hours a week.

Jack and Mirna nod at each other, pick up their backpacks and start to the door.

Anyone who doesn't want to win, doesn't care about the count-- wait, what are you two...?

JACK

Oh-- you... you said if didn't want to do all that stuff, we should leave.

MIRNA

And we are ~not~ doing that stuff. So...

JACK

Yeah: we can't give away our time to things we hate. All we have is now.

They turn to look at each other, nod thoughtfully, and walk towards the door.

PUTTERMAN

What?! What the fuck-- No don't-- Don't just quit quiz bowl-- Quit?-- Fuck?--

Jack closes the door behind them.

Jack and Mirna walk down the hall for a beat.

Then,

JACK

It's weird how Shakespeare was right about... everything-- and he also didn't know that dinosaurs existed. Like if you met a 42 year old man with Shakespeare's idea of the world, who thought that, like, the universe had been around for 6000 years, and that our bodies are entirely ruled by weird liquids, and also: what the fuck are genes? But then he showed you something he'd written and it was King Lear.

(CONTINUED)

MIRNA

Yeah--

(in a voice of obvious
obliviousness)

*I'm pretty sure that spiders are demons
and that elephants don't exist-- also,
here's Macbeth.*

JACK

Yeah

They go on.

Pass the camera.

Their backs to us now, they walk down the hall.

Cue that song "Here is Where The Story Ends" by The Sundays.
This is how the episode closes. Because now is the close of
the episode. And so here is where the story ends. (We play
"Here is Where The Story Ends" at the end of EVERY episode of
the show.)

END CREDITS

POST CREDITS SCENE-- IN FRONT OF A BLACK CURTAIN

Jack and Mirna stand in front of a black curtain next to a
four-leg stool. The mise en scene should resemble a "Now You
Know" PSA as much as possible.

MIRNA

We've had a lot of fun tonight.

JACK

But what isn't fun is the CIA
assassinating members of the Kennedy
family and pinning it on a scapegoat.
And that's... **really** seems like that's
what happened to Sirhan Sirhan. **Really**
seems like the CIA had this guy killed.
Because, everything: **all** the facts point
to a cover-up.

MIRNA

And-- And: for just Some Reason-- the US
government still deems the documents
about the Kennedy assassinations too
dangerous to let them be de-classified.
Whenever those documents are supposed to
be released the government announces
that they just can't this time, would be
too disruptive-- try again maybe in a
few years.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

-- Yeah, nothing weird happened. And also yes of course we can't let anyone know even the slightest bit of what happened. -- It's nothing weird-- Nothing weird. -- but if you find out what it was then we have to kill you on the spot.

MIRNA

It's actually because-- we can't make those documents about the Kennedy assassinations public because we-- we don't want foreign heads of state to know what it looks like when we aren't about to murder a head of state, you see. We need to kind of keep them guessing, you know, kind of all the time-- so that they're always thinking, *Hey, they could be getting ready to off me. Better do... a lot of trade. Right now. Or... might be murked up.*

JACK

Yeah-- Yeah: The problem is really how much those documents show the CIA **not** killing presidents. That's what it is. Obviously.

They break their characters as CIA defenders.

MIRNA AND JACK TOGETHER

(together, in a kind of flat affect, like it's a well-known, often-repeated motto, like "Now You Know")

Do the research. Be in the know.

JACK

Together, we can change the world together.

They stand there and smile at the camera, maybe even cross their arms in satisfaction, having *done their part*. A Now-You-Know-ish jingle plays.

END