

HACKETT
by
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TEASER

EXT. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A mid-century modern number built to churn out geniuses for the New Frontier. There's a Marquee planted in the lawn reading: "Women's History Month". Over this we HEAR,

A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
...these breasts. These breasts are
not his breasts.

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME TIME

ON STAGE - A zaftig FEMINIST TEACHER, 59, dressed in ethnic bangles and dashiki is reveling in her "Vagina Monologue" inspired poetry as she fondles the indicated body parts.

FEMINIST TEACHER
...they are my breasts. These
loins, so warm and fertile, these
loins are mine alone...

KIDS IN THE AUDIENCE

Are frozen in justified horror. Even the...

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

looks nauseous.

ANGLE ON - PRINCIPAL AUDREY DOVER, 29, seated in the back row. She exudes amazing authority for someone so young and attractive. She scans the audience and leans into the woman next to her, MISS OATS, 23, a SUNNY DISPOSITIONED TEACHER who sits with her passel of SPECIAL ED KIDS.

AUDREY
(annoyed; sotto)
So where's our brilliant Mr.
Hackett this morning? Off to
collect another Pulitzer?

MISS OATS
The new English teacher? Gosh.
Haven't seen him.

Miss Oats smiles ahead, pulling an EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENT'S hand out of his pants, sweetly placing it back on his lap.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT/BEDROOM - SAME TIME

We PAN across a pink shag rug littered with bottles of scotch and overflowing ashtrays. We come to a futon to reveal THOMAS HACKETT, hovering around 40. Under the road wear, there is still something IRREPRESSIBLY CHARMING AND SEXY about him. A PUDGY LOCAL GIRL, 25, is wrapped in the sheets next to him. He GROANS as sunlight penetrates his heavy lid. He pries open one eye. Suddenly he bolts straight up in bed.

HACKETT

Holy crap, I'm late for school!

The girl sits up quickly, too, scurrying for her Walmart uniform dangling on the lamp shade.

PUDGY GIRL

Oh my God, so am I.

Hackett stops. A cold chill.

HACKETT

(please say no)
High school?

PUDGY GIRL

(no, silly)
College.

Hackett's heart starts again.

PUDGY GIRL

(impressed)
College?

HACKETT

(kill me now)
High school.

CUT TO:

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT.ELEANOR ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL/FRONT LAWN - MORNING

Hackett's STALKING the sidewalk, yelling into a cell phone. His hangover is millennial.

HACKETT

...Howard, did you ask her about seeing the kids? And? Tell the Hound of the Baskervilles she'll get the money... Soon. I have a new book I'm working on... so it took three years to finish "Wild Song," it got me on the cover of Vanity Fair, didn't it? Naked. Fine. Tell her she can threaten me with jail all she wants. I'm already in the fifth ring of hell!

(beat, then)

Ohio!!

He flips the phone closed and turns, handing it to a TEENAGED GIRL leaning petulantly against a fence. We notice it's all BLING-BLING with pink rhinestones.

HACKETT

(pleasantly)

Thank you.

She rolls her eyes at his mid-life angst and contemptuously launches herself off the fence. We are left with the view of the JUICY LOGO across her butt. Hackett shakes his head.

HACKETT

(mock cheery)

Stay in school.

Hackett turns toward the school, pausing to correct the misspelling of "achievement" in "ACADEMIC ACHEIVEMENT AWARDS" on the school Marquee. This is a man who has reached the nadir of his life.

AUDREY (V.O.)

...and thanks to everyone who participated in this morning's assembly.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

There's a meeting in progress. Audrey is presiding. The DOOR opens. Hackett enters. He sees there's a meeting and starts to circle out.

AUDREY
(for Hackett's benefit)
And for those who missed the
Women's History Month kick off, it
was truly empowering.

Hackett stops. He knows he's trapped. But he's not going to find a seat without making his presence felt.

HACKETT
Yes, let the Pied Pipers of P.C.
rejoice. We have managed to reduce
BOTH Lincoln and Washington's
birthdays to but one day...usually
tacked on to a drunken ski weekend
that ends with some tweaker's brain
scraped out of an aspen tree...yet
now we can take an entire month to
revel in the napkin folding
achievements of Jackie O.
(snagging a donut)
Mmmm...custard.

There's general GRUMBLING and EYE ROLLING. This isn't the first such tirade they've endured. Hackett takes a seat next to an attractive petite woman, TAM, 27. This may be his only ally in the school.

TAM
(teasing)
Only three weeks and look at all
the little friends you've made.

HACKETT
My ass is already numb. What is
this?

TAM
They're assigning Faculty Advisers
to the school clubs. Help raise
awareness on campus. Den mothers
really. Make sure no one OD's on
the bus.

ON AUDREY - She scoops up an armful of manila envelopes.

AUDREY

Before we move on, Vice Principal
Wolgemoth has a sad announcement.

VICE PRINCIPAL EUGENE WOLGEMOTH, stands. The new breed of
public education bureaucrat: Early thirties. Hopelessly
P.C., super-sensitized, a perfectly put together metrosexual.
And thoroughly threatened by Hackett.

EUGENE

Thank you, Audrey. This morning I
received an urgent E-mail.
Roosevelt senior Vince Zarkovitch
has been diagnosed with kidney
disease and won't be returning to
school this year.

There's general reactions of shock and sadness. "What a
shame." "So young." "He looked fine Friday." During this,
Hackett racks his addled brain.

HACKETT

(searching)
Zarkovitch. Zarkovitch...

EUGENE

I know this may be hard for some of
you to process emotionally, but his
family has requested all
communication be made through me
and that you keep Vince in your
thoughts and prayers.

Into this collective grief:

HACKETT

Zarkovitch...
(comes the dawn, loudly)
That A-hole?!

There's uncomfortable silence.

HACKETT

Zarkovitch, right? The jerk who
flips the yarmulke off the Hasidic
kid. The putz responsible for at
least two of the little bastards at
the Student Day Care center?

There's more SHOCKED REACTION to Hackett.

EUGENE

Mr. Hackett, maybe back in the elitist halls of Yale where you used to teach you could be so cold. But here we strive to create a warm, inclusive, non-judgemental environment where no one individual is better than any other.

Hackett just stares at Eugene's face.

HACKETT

Your eyebrows are so perfectly symmetrical. How do you do that?

SFX: Class Bell Rings.

AUDREY

Thanks everyone. Pick up an envelope on your way out.

Hackett picks up a packet and heads for the door. A pinched, uptight Asian man, DR. NOGUCHI, (who will be later dubbed DR. NO by Hackett) buttonholes him.

DR. NO

Mr. Hackett, Dr. Noguchi...I hope you don't mind a professional observation. I sense you're dealing with a lot of unresolved issues. I want you to know I'm more than just a school psychiatrist. So if you ever need a safe place to open up...

Hackett sighs in feigned relief.

HACKETT

Really? Great. Because lately all these strange feelings about my mother have been coming up.

Noguchi nods, smugly.

HACKETT

She never minded me wearing her cocktail dresses before, but now she seems to be getting annoyed. Maybe I'm projecting. Talk later?

Hackett moves past a speechless Dr. No, chortling to himself.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Hackett's still smiling until he opens his manila envelope.

HACKETT
(incredulous)
Girls' basketball!?

Audrey swings in. They keep walking.

AUDREY
Varsity. It was my idea. Think of
it as a sensitivity exercise.

HACKETT
Like convicted killers raising
little puppies?

A sexy PTA MOM passes - expensive implants, latest purse. She smiles and gives Hackett the once over. She wants it. Yikes. Hackett escapes into the...

INT. MAILROOM - CONTINUOUS

Audrey follows him. The place bustles with teachers picking up supplies, making copies...

AUDREY
You can't argue you've had some
issues relating to women.

HACKETT
I assume you're referring to that
pesky little sexual harassment
suit.

Hackett jostles with other TEACHERS to get to his mail.

AUDREY
That would be one.

HACKETT
That was a consensual relationship
with a twenty-six-year-old grad
student who, when I wouldn't leave
my wife for her limited, but
enjoyable charms, decided to
torpedo my life.

AUDREY

Another might be locking your wife
in a Skinner Box in the Sociology
Department of Yale.

HACKETT

She was leaving me. Besides, she
pecked out the right color sequence
and got out faster than Koko the
Gorilla. Couldn't I advise the gun
club?

AUDREY

(aghast)

We don't have a gun club.

Hackett moves out passing a bespectacled MATH TEACHER whose
tie is caught in the LAMINATING MACHINE.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Audrey follows Hackett out into the hall.

AUDREY

Tom, I know you consider yourself
the last great defender of the Y
chromosome, but this could be good
for you. I know you like sports...

HACKETT

I like shooting things. Used to
shoot grouse with Sam Shepard.
Actually shot Sam Shepard. You
want to see the ricochet?

He starts to pull down the front of his trousers.

AUDREY

(smiling)

I already saw it in Vanity Fair.

Something vaguely sexual passes between them. Hackett puts a
quick stop to that. Handing her back the packet...

HACKETT

Look, if the gig doesn't pay
fifteen grand in back child support
then I'm not interested.

AUDREY

Tom. It's not voluntary.

He takes it as the threat intended. She hands him back the packet and moves off. Hackett takes a quick turn into the...

INT. BOYS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Three BOYS are smoking pot. They ditch it and run. Hackett picks up the joint, taking it into a stall. He sits down and takes a nice big drag. It's already been one of those days.

HACKETT (V.O.)
...Toni Morrison. Crap. Sylvia
Plath. Crap...

CUT TO:

INT. HACKETT'S CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hackett is at his desk tossing aside books contemptuously.

HACKETT
...Jonathan Franzen. Cheated me
out of the National Book Award.
Crap.

Students dodge the flying paperback.

HACKETT
Anything with Oprah on the cover:
Crap.

Hackett finds a book he likes. Something comes alive in him.

HACKETT
Ah. "The Sun Also Rises."
Hemingway's first novel.

He starts handing books back.

HACKETT
A lost generation devoid of purpose
seeks solace in meaningless hook
ups and binge drinking. Take away
the bullfights and it sounds like
you guys.

More of the kids laugh. A PAKISTANI KID scribbles lots of notes.

HACKETT

But remember, Hemingway points us toward optimism in the simple acceptance of what we cannot change. Later on he shoots himself.

A few more laughs. He's generated a lot of interest as they open the books. The cooler, smarter kids are actually digging this new teacher. Hackett turns to go back to his desk seeing...

HAMILTON - A weasly kid thumb-typing into a Blackberry. Hackett takes it and reads.

HACKETT

Cavaliers by five? Gambling on campus, Mr. Hamilton?

HAMILTON

Gambling's for losers. I'm a bookie.

HACKETT

(peering down at him)
Really?
(then)
I'll take the Knicks by eight.
(nudging another kid)
Give Hamilton a ten-spot. I'm good for it.

The POOR SLOB does as he's told.

EXT. SCHOOL/LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

Hackett's crossing. The sole on his once expensive loafer has come loose, flopping. He stops. ANAND, the Pakistani kid we saw in class lopes up after him, winded.

ANAND

Mr. Hackett... Here.

He hands back his copy of "The Sun Also Rises."

ANAND

I read it three years ago. You're right. It's brilliant. Of course so are you. "Wild Song" was virtually transcendent. Too bad about the movie. So is there something I can get a jump on?

(MORE)

ANAND (cont'd)
But don't say Dostoyevsky. I've
just finished all of Dostoyevsky.

Hackett exhales. He's seen kids like this before: A little
too awed. Way too overeager to impress.

HACKETT
Let me guess. First generation
American. Parents worked their
asses off so you wouldn't end up
pulling eighteen hour shifts in
Bangladore taking tech calls from
American idiots unable to download
the latest donkey porn from Mexico.
Freaky smart in math and science.
And your parents would kill you if
you brought home anything less than
an A.

ANAND
(thrilled to be noticed)
Yes.

HACKETT
Good. I have a VCR that needs
fixing. I'll get you my address.

He walks away, shoe flapping, leaving the hapless youth
stunned.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - EARLY(NEXT) MORNING

Hackett is sitting on the hood of his car sipping convenience
store coffee, watching something with great intent. We SWING
around to see it's ...

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACROSS THE STREET

FATHERS happily dropping off their CHILDREN. Hand holding.
The lunch pail hand-offs. The kisses good-bye.

ON HACKETT - A pained smile. Is this pleasure or penance? A
CAR DOOR SLAMMING makes him turn.

DR. NO - is locking his car, eyeing him.

HACKETT
I was admiring that mother's
outfit. You think I have the figure
for midriff tops?

Dr. No scurries away, muttering.

DR. NO
Pervert.

Hackett turns back to elementary school, relieved not to be caught in an emotional moment.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/OUTSIDE MAILROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Hackett comes out with an arm load of official looking school pro forma and immediately dumps it in the TRASH.

TAM - falls in with him.

TAM
I hate women.

HACKETT
I wish I did.

Hackett notices her solemn mood.

HACKETT
Barb move out?

She nods glumly.

TAM
And took off with four hundred and fifty dollars of my Clinique products. Last time I get involved with a lipstick lesbian. Next time it's strictly Farmer Joans.

HACKETT
I'd recommend men, but there's not a lot to recommend them.

Tam laughs, feeling better. They pass Eugene escorting a MALE JOCK out of his office. He squeezes his shoulder.

EUGENE
You know it's okay to cry, man. My door is always open.

The STUDENT can't get away fast enough. Eugene spots Hackett.

EUGENE
Tom...

Hackett stops. Tam takes off.

EUGENE

Tom, I'm starting a research fund
for Vince Zarkovitch. I thought
since...you...

Hackett's examining his forehead.

EUGENE

What?

HACKETT

I can't get over your brows.
They're like lovely little bonsai
trees.

EUGENE

I have a very good stylist. Now
about Vince's fund--

Hackett keeps getting closer, backing Eugene in circles.

HACKETT

Dang! I swear those brows are
neater than a porn star's pubic
hair.

EUGENE

Mr. Hackett, that is not
appropriate. And to be honest,
you're making me very
uncomfortable.

Hackett steps back.

HACKETT

The answer is no, Eugene. I'm not
contributing to your fund.
Everyone hated that odious little
punk and I refuse to elevate him to
sainthood just because he got sick.

Suddenly the Petulant Girl from the opening butts in holding
out her pink cell phone, annoyed.

PETULANT GIRL

It's like, for you.

HACKETT

(to Eugene)
Now if you'll excuse me.

Hackett takes the phone and moves off.

HACKETT

Howard? What did she say... What kind of deal? I can't get my hands on that kind of money in two weeks! Don't you know what REAL teachers get paid?! What if I can't. No, I don't find it comforting that Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote his best work in prison.

He slaps the phone closed and hands it back, cowed.

PETULANT GIRL

You know your lawyer sucks.

HACKETT

I know!

INT. GYM - AFTER SCHOOL - PREGAME

The GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM - THE ROCKETEERS - a mixture of large boned WHITE PITUITARY CASES and some mean looking SISTERS - are running drills. They're smooth, good.

HACKETT - sits in the near empty stands, trying to STAPLE the sole back on his shoe. Not a man to be trifled with.

A COACH'S WHISTLE sounds. The PLAYERS trudge over to Hackett, lead by pretty, young COACH JENNY.

COACH JENNY

Mr. Hackett, being a famous writer, the girls were wondering if you'd do the preseason pep talk.

HACKETT

(not looking up)
Go team.

He staples his finger.

HACKETT

(unintelligible expletive)

He sucks on his wounded finger. He looks up to find ten pairs of eyes looking at him, expectantly.

HACKETT

What am I supposed to say here?
That I really care about women's
sports. NO ONE cares about women's
sports. There isn't a women's pro
franchise out there that makes a
dime and if you're not in a game
that features a lot of skin, like
Anna Kournikova, the endorsements
aren't there either. Frankly,
you'd get richer getting knocked up
by a Laker, rather than trying to
be one. But hell, if you love this
game so damn much, who am I to say.
Squander your future.

(suddenly Knute Rockne)

Now go out there and play some
ball.

He goes back to stapling his shoe. The girls look at each other in shock. Coach Jenny ushers them away from Hackett as if he were contagious. Suddenly Hamilton appears next to him.

HAMILTON

Yo, H. Don't know how you did it
but the Knicks beat the spread.

Hamilton peels some twenties off a thick roll of cash and slinks away. Hackett pockets the cash. He looks up to see the girls running drills. Coach Jenny storms back.

HACKETT

(suddenly upbeat)

You know they're not half bad.

COACH JENNY

You sexist freak. Why didn't you
just tell them the only reason they
lose once a month is because
they're all on the rag, huh?!

HACKETT

Do they lose once a month because
they're all on the rag?

COACH JENNY

No. God! What kind of pig are you?

HACKETT

I just heard that when girls spend
a lot of time together their cycles
synchronize. That's not true?

COACH JENNY

Well, yeah, that happens. But that has nothing to do with it!

She slams herself down on the bench, flustered.

HACKETT - leans back, mulling. He looks up to see...

HAMILTON - in the stands, making bets. A thriving business.

ON HACKETT - The rusty wheels are starting to turn.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS

Hackett is soliciting bets from various school cliques:

1) He approaches some HOMIES.

HACKETT

Yo, dawg, got our lady ballers by five. Y'all up for the action?

2) To some glazed over STONERS.

HACKETT

...so there's like this girls' basketball game. You know, basket... ball...

3) To the CHRISTIANS in the midst of Bible Study.

HACKETT

(fire and brimstone)
And Matthew said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul."
The line is five. Anybody?

A dozen pairs of hands thrust money at him.

CAMERA GOES OVERHEAD

Encircled by cash, Hackett looks to the sky.

HACKETT

Hallelujah!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HALLWAY - LUNCH TIME - NEXT DAY

The hall is crowded with tables seeking donations for Vince Zarkovitch: One sells BAKED GOODS. Another hocks PLASTIC BRACELETS. Each table features a picture of a very menacing, ugly looking kid.

ON TAM and HACKETT - careering down the hall. Hackett's scribbling in his little notebook.

TAM
(incredulous)
You're gambling on your own team?!

HACKETT
Gambling's for losers. I'm a bookie.

A SKATE BOARDER KID passes, Hackett palms him a twenty.

HACKETT
(jotting it down)
Mitchel. Besides I'm only fulfilling my job requirement as Faculty Advisor. Increasing awareness on campus.

A clean cut JOCK KID palms him another bill, keeps moving.

HACKETT
Oooh a Benjamin.
(jotting)
That one's dealing.

TAM
I don't get it. Is it really worth the risk? It won't make a dent in your child support.

HACKETT
It's a start. Besides I have a plan.

TAM
What plan?

HACKETT
It's a girl thing.

Tam shakes her head.

TAM

Don't tell me. I'd rather not be accessory to a felony.

HACKETT

This is not a felony. Besides, I'd commit far worse just to see my son and daughter again.

Tam stops, brought up short by Hackett's sudden vulnerability. Hackett spots a giant SAMOAN KID.

HACKETT

Hey, Penser. Don't you still owe--

The BIG SAMOAN KID slams him up against a locker, holding Hackett up with his tree trunk forearm.

HACKETT

Hey, it's all good.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM - BASKETBALL SEQUENCE:

1) The Rocketeers are playing the COLUMBUS CADETS and killing in the fourth quarter. Since there's money on the line there's a noticeably bigger turn out.

2) Still more people in the stands as the Rocketeers DESTROY the DAYTON DESTROYERS.

3) The stands are almost full as the Rocketeers take on the SANDUSKY SENTINELS.

ON COURT - The Rocketeers win it with a beautiful Hail Mary. The fans erupt. They're on a winning streak.

ON HACKETT - He jumps to his feet, too. High fiving, bumping bootie with fans on either side.

ON HAMILTON - Standing by the stands, pissed, out of the action. He's eyeing Hackett, putting the pieces together.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NEXT DAY

Hackett's squeezed next to some lockers, making payouts. Half a dozen kids clamor around him in the crowded hallway.

COACH JENNY (O.S.)
Mr. Hackett.

The kids see her striding toward them and scatter. Hackett sticks his hands in his pockets.

COACH JENNY
Mr. Hackett, you can't hide from me. I saw what you did last night at the game.

Hackett freezes. Thinks he's dead.

COACH JENNY
(suddenly smiling)
You were having fun. Weren't you? Admit it!

Hackett smiles. Dodged another one.

HACKETT
(playing coy)
Okay, you caught me. What can I say...I'm a fan.

COACH JENNY
I don't know how you got the word out about our program, but all I can say is...thank you.

Coach Jenny throws her arms around Hackett's neck, emotional. He suddenly feels like a shit for playing her. Then he looks down at her sweet ass. He shrugs. Oh, what the hell. He smiles and pats her back.

CUT TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - LUNCH

Eugene Wolgemoth is holding a COMMITTEE MEETING for Vince Zarkovitch. Half a dozen teachers, BROW-BEATEN LACKIES, sit around a table. Eugene stands next to a wooden FUND RAISING THERMOMETER. The red "mercury" is barely visible.

EUGENE

Anyone can hold a bake sale,
people. What we need is a major
fund raiser.

MALE GYM COACH

How 'bout a golf tourney?

EUGENE

Too elitist.

FEMINIST TEACHER

A car wash could be fun.

EUGENE

Anti-environmental.

ANOTHER TEACHER

A Walk-a-thon?

EUGENE

Hello, not everybody has legs.

HACKETT (V.O.)

I have an idea.

Hackett has come in and is pouring himself coffee.

HACKETT

Why doesn't someone just offer to
donate a kidney?

The room goes very quiet. Sheepish looks. Then...

EUGENE

How about an auction?

Everyone jumps on it. "Sure." "That's the ticket."

FEMINIST TEACHER

I'd be happy to donate DVDs from my
last performance piece.

MALE GYM COACH

Hey, how about auctioning An
Evening with Thomas Hackett? I bet
you got some stories.

There's more VOCAL SUPPORT.

HACKETT

I could write a book. And while I'd usually love to drain some fine Mid-Westerners of their best scotch, regaling them with my colorful life, I will have to say no. I've pissed away about everything else in my life, I'm not going to piss away what's left of my integrity so Emo-boy here can win some holier-than-thou contest. Now the great game of Women's Basketball awaits.

Hackett exits feeling smug and superior. Eugene Wolgemuth burns.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hackett comes out. A SMILING GIRL in an electric wheel chair approaches, holding up a plastic fundraising bracelet.

SMILING GIRL

"In-VINCE-able" bracelet? It's only two dollars.

HACKETT

No thanks.

She glowers and zips off, but not before ramming into Hackett's shin.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - AFTERNOON

THE STANDS - are packed. Totally into it.

AUDREY sits with Miss Oats and a handful of her Special Ed Kids. Dr. No on the other side, going over a ROSTER with a MATRONLY OFFICE WORKER.

DR. NO

(indicating)

Ritalin. Ritalin. Ritalin.

Prozac. Ritalin.

The Matronly Woman moves away.

MISS OATS

Wow. Look at this turn out. It's about time women's sports got the serious attention it deserves.

Miss Oats once again stops the EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED BOY from playing with himself.

DR. NO

I'd have to admit, Hackett's support of this team marks some real emotional growth for him. Despite his disgusting mother issues.

AUDREY

He does seem to have suddenly turned a corner.

Is there a shadow of doubt in her voice?

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS LOCKER ROOM - SAME TIME

It's empty, save for the SOUND of locker doors being opened and closed. Someone's rooting through them. We COME UPON Hackett, slamming shut one locker and opening another. He rummages through it. He pulls out the usual stuff: deodorant, hair brushes, a lipstick from which a SWITCHBLADE sudden pops up.

HACKETT

(startled sound)

He gingerly puts it back. He opens another locker.

FROM INSIDE THE LOCKER - It opens. On the top shelf is the object of Hackett's quest...a big bottle of MIDOL.

SFX: Angels sing.

Hackett smiles. He's hit the motherload. He closes the locker. BLACKNESS. A second later the locker opens again. Hackett grabs the MIDOL and closes the locker. On that...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HALLWAY - (NEXT) MORNING

Lunch time. Hackett weaves his way through the throng. He's definitely feeling his oats. He notices a line of kids forming. A sign indicates: "Vince Zarkovitch Blood Drive."

PENSER - The huge Samoan kid from earlier comes out, woozy and FAINTS.

Hackett continues, dodging open lockers. TAM falls in.

TAM

Audrey wants you.

HACKETT

Yes, I'm sure she does.

TAM

Gee, you seem...bouncy...this morning.

Hackett grabs a lunch from a locker when the kid isn't looking.

HACKETT

That's because my beloved Rocketeers will be losing today.

TAM

And that's a good thing?

HACKETT

It is when all the squares are betting that they'll win.
(offering from the bag)
Granny Smith?

TAM

No thanks.

Hackett pulls out a sandwich from the bag. Sniffs.

HACKETT

Deviled ham? What kid of nancy lets his mom pack him deviled ham?

He shoves it in a kid's backpack, taking his.

TAM

Hey listen, you want to get together this weekend? We could get some wine. Rent a Pamela Anderson movie. Have a "I hate women pity party?"

Hackett's eyes dart, as if looking for an escape. Even an offer of friendship as innocuous as this is too intimate.

HACKETT

Gee, I'd like to, but I've really got to work on my book.

TAM

(hurt)

Yeah. Sure. Gotcha.

Tam starts away.

HACKETT

(calling after her)

Another time?

Hackett leans against a locker, disgusted with himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDREY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene and Hamilton are there. Eugene has a serious gloat on. Hamilton glowers at Hackett, as Audrey addresses him.

AUDREY

...is this true? You were taking bets on the Girls' Basketball Team.

Beat. Hackett turns on Hamilton.

HACKETT

Snitch!

HAMILTON

Jerk!

HACKETT

Narc!

HAMILTON

Has-been!

Hackett can't argue with that one. He lunges anyway. Audrey steps in the middle of them.

AUDREY

Gene, please take Hamilton out.

EUGENE

You sure you want to be left alone with this reprobate?

Hackett fakes a move toward Eugene. He FLINCHES.

AUDREY

I think I can handle it.

Eugene leads Hamilton out, closing the door.

AUDREY

Do you have any idea how many laws you've broken? Underage gambling, illegal gaming--

HACKETT

Please. Half the kids out there were already playing off shore poker on their iPhones. I don't think you really want to call attention to that.

Audrey sits, suddenly weary.

AUDREY

This isn't my biggest concern, Tom. Someone saw you going through the girl's lockers during the last game.

Hackett starts to laugh.

HACKETT

You think I was sniffing panties?

AUDREY

What am I supposed to think? You were run out of Yale for sexual harassment.

HACKETT

There were many fine reasons I was run out of Yale. Sexual harassment was just a technicality.

(MORE)

HACKETT (cont'd)
I can't believe you'd think I'd
find those walking Bratz Dolls out
there attractive. My idea of sexy
is sipping scotch across from a
beautifully flawed brunette at the
Four Seasons Grill Room, not
slugging daiquiris from a can
trying to dry hump some hood rat on
a Maxima.

AUDREY
Then what were you doing in the
girls locker room?

HACKETT
(without hesitation)
I was trying to find out if the
basketball team had PMS.

It's taking a moment for Audrey to digest this.

AUDREY
Wait...you were setting the point
spread based on our team's
menstrual cycles?

HACKETT
No.

Audrey looks relieved for a half second.

HACKETT
(proudly)
I was keeping that information to
myself. That's my play.

Audrey rubs her temples.

AUDREY
Great. Here comes a migraine.

Pulling the bottle from his pocket...

HACKETT
Midol?

AUDREY
Stop it! Just stop it!
(gathering herself)
Do you have any idea how barbaric
you sound? Women are not just
prisoners of their own biology.

HACKETT

We're all prisoners of our own biology. For instance, you lean forward on that desk one more inch and I get an erection. You think I want that?

Audrey looks down. There's a flash of unintended flesh. She quickly buttons.

AUDREY

Dammit, Tom. I wanted to give you a chance. I wanted to believe in new beginnings.

HACKETT

Bullshit. You wanted to rescue me. Just like all the other losers you've tried to rescue but who only end up crushing your heart.

He hit bone with that one. She looks up at him.

AUDREY

You know I loved you as a writer. Read "Wild Song" six or seven times in grad school. Now all I wonder is how someone who could illuminate the human condition with such tenderness be such a prick.

HACKETT

Telling the truth makes you a prick.

(beat)

I think Edith Wharton said that.

Audrey picks up the phone.

AUDREY

Melissa, get me the athletic office.

HACKETT

What are you doing?

AUDREY

Calling the game off. The whole program could be compromised.

HACKETT

(panicking)

No.

He takes the receiver from her hand and puts it down.

HACKETT

What if I told you I needed that money so I could see my kids again?

There's honesty in his desperation. But it's too late.

AUDREY

(picking up the phone)
Sorry. And I don't think I need to tell you you're off the team.

The door opens. The MATRONLY LIFER enters, actually excited.

MATRONLY LIFER

Ms. Dover? There's a news crew out here. They want to cover tonight's game.

She leaves. Hackett eyes Audrey.

HACKETT

Oooh, could be kind of embarrassing if you pull the plug now. On the other hand could be some choice publicity for the school. What's it gonna be, your career, or the principle... principal?

Audrey looks at the receiver in her hand. Which way is it gonna go, up or down? Hackett eyes bore into her. She looks at the receiver. Then Hackett. That S.O.B.

SMASH TO:

INT. GYM - THAT NIGHT

It's the hottest high school basketball game this side of Indiana. The Rocketeers lead the FRANKLIN FIRE CRACKERS 36-20 in the SECOND QUARTER.

IN THE STANDS - Hackett is seated between Audrey and Eugene, as if he needs keepers. He couldn't care less. All he wants is the Rocketeers to lose and things are not going his way.

AUDREY

So, Mr. Hackett, I guess women aren't prisoner to their biology are they?

A furry mascot, ROCKET RACCOON, bounces into Hackett's sight line, cheering the crowd. Hackett throws his soda at him.

HACKETT

Someone get that fetid rodent out of my way.

ON MASCOT - as he slinks off, depressed.

ON EUGENE - He leans over to Hackett.

EUGENE

You know Audrey might be willing to let this gambling incident go away, but I'm not. Of course there's always the auction for Vince Zarkovitch.

Hackett just keeps staring at Eugene's face.

EUGENE

I have them waxed, okay?! Now would you just leave it alone!

HACKETT

No, I was wondering about your teeth. How do you get them so white?

Eugene burns. Everyone takes to their feet after another Rocketeer basket. Hackett buries his face in his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM - SOME TIME LATER

It's the THIRD QUARTER. Rocketeers lead 54-48. The crowd is even hotter than before. It's like a prize fight.

ANGLE ON - A couple of TEAMSTERS have gotten in on the action.

ON COURT - TWO OF THE ROCKETEERS actually look FRIGHTENED by the vociferous crowd.

Another Rocketeer basket. Hackett hangs his head as everyone jumps to their feet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM - LATER STILL

FOURTH QUARTER. Less than a minute to go. The score is 92-88, Rocketeers. Hackett is downing the rest of the Midol.

ON COURT - A VERY LARGE Roosevelt girl trips in front of a SMALLER ROOSEVELT GIRL, blocking her shot. One of the opposing girls snags the ball, drives and shoots, 92-90.

ON HACKETT - he clutches his heart in hope.

ON COURT - The TWO ROCKETEERS.

SMALLER GIRL
Gracie, you fat ass!!

The Larger Girl starts to break down in tears.

ON HACKETT - He brightens. Could it be?

ON COURT - The coach is yelling at the crying girl.

COACH JENNY
Gracie! Head in the game!

GRACIE
But she called me fat!

Meanwhile one of the Firecrackers has gotten possession of the ball. She SHOTS. It's clean. 92-92.

ON HACKETT - He sits up hopeful. He looks at the...

SCORE BOARD - :07 left.

ON COURT - The Rocketeers drive toward their basket, the SMALLER GIRL is in possession. In an earnest attempt to get back in the game, Gracie moves in to guard the SMALLER GIRL, but by ACCIDENT shoulder checks her, causing the SMALLER GIRL to stumble and lose possession.

SMALLER GIRL
You did that on purpose.

GRACIE
Did not!

They start shoving each other, irrational. YES, PMSing. In the meantime, a Firecracker snags the ball and drives.

ON STANDS - Everyone's on their feet, except HACKETT, who looks up pensively at the...

SCORE BOARD - :03.

The Firecracker shoots from the three point zone. It flies through the air in SLO-MO.

We CUT between HACKETT and the BALL. HACKETT and the BALL.

SCORE BOARD - :02

ON BALL - It hooks in, swishing around the rim.

ON HACKETT - Hopeful.

AUDREY - Not so.

SCORE BOARD - :01

ON BALL - It swishes out of the basket, dribbling off the rim.

ON STANDS - All the Rocketeer fans erupt.

ON HACKETT - Watching as...

THE BALL - falls away from the basket...right into the hands of a deft Firecracker, who SLAMS and DUNKS.

ON SCOREBOARD - :00 the BUZZER SOUNDS.

ON STANDS - Everyone collapses in disappointment, except...

HACKETT - who leaps up, SCREAMING.

HACKETT

Yes!

It's an ill-timed moved. It ECHOS in the suddenly SILENT GYM. All eyes turn on him.

ANGLE ON - SOME OF THE KIDS we saw placing bets with Hackett earlier, starting to put things together. So are the TEAMSTERS.

ON HACKETT - He looks around. The crowd is turning hostile. He turns toward the court.

HACKETT'S POV - The BIGGEST, MEANEST ROCKETEER is there. She cocks back her arm. WHAP!

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING (NEXT)

Hackett's on the cell phone. His cheek looks like raw meat.

HACKETT (INTO PHONE)
...just tell her I have some of the
money...
(he touches his eye)
It wasn't easy.

He spots TAM coming toward him, avoiding eye contact. Hackett looks around. When a KID bends, leaving his locker open, Hackett snags a package of Twinkees. He offers them to her. She stops, takes them and smiles, knowing exactly where they came from. Hackett smiles and turns back to the phone.

HACKETT
Howard? Yeah, I'm here. So, uh,
what about me seeing the kids...

From the pause we can tell he's being put off.

HACKETT
Yeah, maybe next year.

He flips the phone closed, handing it back to the...

PETULANT GIRL - She shakes her head.

PETULANT GIRL
Keep it. You're so pathetic.

She moves off. Hackett heads toward class, passing sunny Miss Oats and her band of Special Ed Kids. He smiles at her. She just sniffs at him, turning her head, as the kids file past. Suddenly he looks at his shoes.

HACKETT
Did one of your kids just pee on
me? One of your kids just peed on
me!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE on a large gold medallion - The Pen/Faulkner Award framed with a picture of a handsome, young Hackett receiving it. We HEAR the sounds of TYPING.

A BEER is placed on the medallion, as if it's a coaster. WIDEN to reveal the TYPING isn't typing, but Hackett sitting in a gaming chair playing Legend of Zelda. Every inch of the small one-bedroom is crammed with remnants of a previous life: big expensive furniture pieces and stacks of hardbacks.

ANAND (V.O.)

You know this is a dead technology?

We WIDEN... to find ANAND at a nearby table, screwing the aforementioned VCR back together.

HACKETT

All technology is dead, for it has no soul.

(pounding at the controller)

Dammit! How come I can never get through that sixth dungeon!

Hackett chucks the controller. Anand turns the VCR over.

ANAND

Should work now. This was in there.

He hands Hackett a tattered paperback.

HACKETT

"Sophie's Choice." I guess I thought it was the movie.

ANAND

(plugging in VCR)

Man, I would love to write like Styron...but my parents expect me to be an engineer.

Hackett picks up his beer, revealing his Pen/Faulkner Award. He looks at it wistfully.

HACKETT

Expectations kill.

Hackett's talking about himself. He SLUGS back the beer and rises. He crosses to a milk crate, retrieves what appears to be a CHEAP PORNO TAPE, snatches a generic box of TISSUES off a table and crosses back to the VCR. Anand reacts.

ANAND

Oh. Oh. I better go.

Hackett pops the tape into the VCR. Anand opens the door.

Hackett fumfers. Hackett likes this kid, despite himself.

HACKETT

Anand? I you ever want me to read something you wrote...just give me some notice. I'm kinder when I'm drunk.

Anand beams and exits. Hackett sits, putting the tissues on his lap. He hits the remote. The SCREEN comes to life.

ON SCREEN - A younger looking Hackett frolic with a 2-YEAR-OLD GIRL and 4-YEAR-OLD BOY on a Nantucket Beach. His children. He's eerily content in a simple game of chase.

CLOSE ON HACKETT - He can't help but smile. Bitter sweet.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

THROUGH THE SLIDING GLASS OF THE ICU we see Hackett sitting next to VINCE ZARKOVITCH, reading from a copy of "The Sun Also Rises." With all the tubes and monitors, Vince hardly looks like the menacing kid we've heard of. Just a sick one.

HACKETT

"Cheer up," I said. "All countries look just like the moving pictures."

Hackett notices Vince drifting off and gently nudges him.

HACKETT

Hey, I told you last week, no dozing, or I pull a plug.

Vince laughs, appreciating the company. We SLOWLY PULL OUT as Hackett goes back to the book, sipping vendo coffee and waving at a nurse, as if he's been coming here all along.

HACKETT

But I felt sorry for him. He had it badly. "I can't stand it to think my life is going so fast and I'm not really living it." "Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bullfighters."

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Backstage. Hackett is on the cell phone, wearing an outdated dinner jacket and a perturbed look. We can HEAR an AUCTION being conducted on stage.

HACKETT
(into phone)
...well what about supervised
visitation?

Eugene approaches, a big sickly smirk on his face.

EUGENE
You're up, Mr. New York Review of
Books. Right after a year's supply
of Mr. Plunkett's Homemade Beef
Jerky.

Eugene moves off.

HACKETT
(into phone)
Howard? Yeah, hold on for a second.
(he punches a button,
annoyed)
What? Yeah, this is Cindy's cell
phone.
(angrily)
I'm her boyfriend. Who's this?...
(an evil idea is brewing)
Oh, wow, her dad? Gee, sorry. No
Cindy just went in to see the
doctor... At the Women's Health
Center... Oh man, I thought you
knew. She said you were cool with
all this birth control stuff.
Okay, I'll have her call you. Me?
(smiling)
Eugene Wolgemoth. But you can call
me Gene...

On Hackett's wicked grin...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW