

HIGHER EDUCATION

Act I, Scene 1: September

CHORUS

September, September!
Month of golden sunny days.
Fall is almost here, but summer somehow stays.

September, September!
Nights are turning cool,
And students and teachers are returning to school.
September! September!

Fall Semester now begins!

The Seaver home, Saturday afternoon

JUDY

Professor Seaver, I'm Judy Belleview.
I'm enrolled in your course on the Middle Ages.

PAUL

Hello, Miss Belleview. It's nice to meet you.

ELLEN

I'm Ellen Seaver. Welcome to our home.

JUDY

And this is my fiancé, Kyle Wozniak.

KYLE

Professor Seaver, Missus Seaver, happy to meet you.

ELLEN

Kyle Wozniak needs no introduction!
The pitching ace of our baseball team!

JUDY

How nice of you to host this party for your students.

PAUL

I like to start the Fall Semester with a bang!

Each in turn expresses private thoughts while the others chat in the background.

JUDY

I hope this Fall Semester will bring me new horizons.
I do love Kyle, but I can't live on baseball.
I need intellectual stimulation.

KYLE

I hope this Fall Semester I'll fine-tune my fast ball.
I need it to be sharp when the Spring season starts.
The Big League scouts will see what I've got!

PAUL

I hope this Fall Semester I'll get tenure.
I've dotted all the i's and I've crossed all the t's.
But I have an enemy on the committee

ELLEN

I hope this Fall Semester Paul will get tenure.
He wants it so much, and he's worked so hard.
Maybe then he'll have some time for me.

The Seaver home, later that evening

ELLEN

What did you think of Kyle Wozniak?
He seems like a pleasant young man.

PAUL

Just a typical jock.
I can't imagine what that remarkable young woman sees in him.

ELLEN

Well, they say he's likely to sign a major league contract for millions of dollars.
Maybe that explains what she sees in him.
I'm going to bed. Would you like to join me?

PAUL

I need to work on a syllabus.
Good night.

Judy and Kyle's apartment, later that evening

JUDY

What did you think of Professor Seaver?
He's quite impressive for such a young man.

KYLE

I had the feeling that he was looking down his nose at me.
His wife is nice, though.

JUDY

Last year he was named Professor of the Year.
I'm looking forward to his course.

KYLE

It seems he's not a fan of mine.
Maybe he doesn't like baseball.

JUDY

Speaking of baseball...

Would you like to join me in the bullpen?

KYLE

We can't play baseball in the bullpen!

JUDY

But there are other ways to score!

Paul's office, the following Monday

PAUL

Tell, me, Ms. Belleview...

Why are you taking my course on life in the Middle Ages?

I'm happy to have you.

But this course is designed for History majors,
and I see that your major is Creative Writing.

JUDY

There's a connection.

I want to write historical novels.

PAUL

I see. A worthy ambition.

Please... tell me more.

JUDY

When I was growing up, there was a painting on the wall.

A portrait of a young woman, a peasant girl.

She looked no older than sixteen.

And I think she was working in the fields.

There was a basket of some kind of leaves at her feet.

She was dressed in medieval clothes:

A long brown skirt, gathered at the waist,

and a plain white blouse with puffy sleeves.

And her hair was covered with a bright red kerchief,

except for one sweet curl that peeked out.

Her lovely rosy lips were softly smiling,
and her eyes had a dreamy look,
as though she was remembering a kiss.

I don't know who she was, or when or where she lived.
My mother thought she was a peasant girl
who lived in Europe in the Middle Ages.

When I was six years old, I named her "Anne Marie."
And she was my secret friend while I grew up.

And now, I...

I want to bring her to life!

I want her to live in my novels!

I want to give her a voice, a song, a dream, and a lover!

And I want her to know the joys of the world:

The sweet morning fragrance of apple blossoms in spring.

The warm, dark secrets of sultry summer nights.

The trees that blaze with color on autumn afternoons.

The icy sparkling brilliance of winter dawns.

And I want my readers to hear the music of her voice,

and see the stars in her eyes,

and feel the heat of her youthful sensuality!

I want Anne Marie to step down from that painting

and live through me!

PAUL

If you write like you talk, you'll sell millions of books!

JUDY

Sorry, I got carried away!

PAUL

Don't be sorry!

It must be wonderful to have a dream that's within your grasp.
I envy you.

JUDY

But surely you have a dream job!
Professor of History!

PAUL

I love my job.

But I dreamed of another kind of future when I was young.

JUDY

Please... tell me more.

PAUL

When I was a boy, my father often took me sailing, out on the sea.
My family was rich, filthy rich.
We owned a magnificent sixty-foot sailing yacht.
Her name was *Albatross*.

As a boy, I fell in love with the sea.
The wind, the waves, the cries of the gulls.
The heel of the boat when her sails fill with wind.
The glow of the far horizon, out on the open sea!

When I was a high school senior,
I went to my father and said:
"When I graduate from high school,
could you buy a sailboat for me?
I'd like to go into business,
as a sailing company,
taking tourists out to the islands,
taking fishermen out to sea."

My father put his hands on my shoulders,
and he looked me in the eyes.

“Paul,” he said,
“You could work in the family firm,
with your older brother and me.
But if not, then go to college, and earn a degree.
And then, I’ll give you the *Albatross*,
and you can live your dream,
taking tourists out to the islands,
taking fishermen out to sea!”

So I went to college, as my father wished.
I majored in History.
I studied hard, and I got good grades.
I wanted my father to be proud of me.

And then, out of nowhere...

I had just returned to school
to begin my senior year.
The telephone rang, and I was told
that the FBI had raided the family firm
and taken my father and brother away.
They both pled guilty to charges of
tax fraud, bank fraud, consumer fraud.

My brother went to prison.
My father...killed himself.
The family fortune vanished,
and I was left with nothing.
I guess you could say I missed the boat!
I went on to graduate school
with a teaching assistantship.
And I earned my PhD.
I guess you could say the rest is history!

JUDY

Do you still go sailing?

PAUL

Only in my nightmares.

JUDY

Nightmares?

PAUL

It's a recurring dream, always the same.

I dream I'm on the deck of our family sailboat, the *Albatross*.

I'm all alone. No passengers, no crew.

I'm sailing over the open sea, no sign of land.

It's perfect sailing weather.

I'm standing at the wheel,

sailing close to the wind on the starboard tack.

I gaze at the empty horizon..

I'm searching for something,

or searching for someone.

Then the wind dies, the waves die.

The surface of the sea

is like a sheet of glass.

The *Albatross* sits dead in the water.

The scorching sun burns down,

Time seems to stop.

Then, out of nowhere, the sky turns black.

A mighty wind seizes the *Albatross*

and sends her racing over the stormy sea!

A massive jagged rock looms dead ahead!

I grip the wheel and turn downwind,

to pass the rock on the leeward side.

But someone comes up behind me

and pushes me away from the wheel!

I turn around.

It's my father! My dead father!

His eye sockets are empty.

The flesh is peeling from his face.

He clutches the wheel with fingers of bone,

and aims the *Albatross* straight at the rock,
howling, raving like a madman!

That's when I wake up screaming.

JUDY

How horrible!

PAUL

Thank you for dropping by, Ms. Belleview.
I'll see you in class tomorrow.

JUDY

Thank you, Professor Seaver.

Judy leaves the office, walking slowly away.

PAUL

What a fascinating young woman.

JUDY

What an amazing man.

PAUL

So full of ideas, energy, dreams.

JUDY

So full of grief. His life is like a tragic novel.

PAUL

How she glows! Glows with passion.

JUDY

How he aches! Aches with sorrow.

PAUL

My heart is moved, astonishingly moved.

JUDY

My heart is moved, astonishingly moved.

PAUL

There is a light in her...

JUDY

There is a darkness in him, a darkness that calls to me.

PAUL

...a light that calls to me.

END OF ACT I, SCENE 1