

GOOD MORNING TEACHER

By

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CHARACTERS

MR. BROWN – A veteran English teacher

His former students in their 30s.

FRED – a bit bookish

JUDY - a little frumpy with glasses.

LAURA – beautiful, but aging

SCOTT— athletic type

SYNOPSIS

Former students reminisce about their school days and their favorite teacher who has passed away.

SETTING

The teacher's lounge.

(A school bell rings. We hear the sound of children in the hallways. FRED, JUDY, SCOTT and LAURA enter the teacher's lounge and busy themselves, marking papers, making coffee, etc. They are a bit glum.)

ALL

Good morning, teacher!

FRED

That's how we started every class.

JUDY

We all remember him...

SCOTT

And with good reason.

LAURA

He was our favorite.

SCOTT

Mr. Brown

FRED

A quiet,

JUDY

Unassuming man

LAURA

With short, dark, cropped hair

FRED

And a moustache.

SCOTT

He always wore

LAURA

A navy blue sweatshirt

JUDY

With a hood.

LAURA

He didn't care much about fashion

FRED

Definitely a function over form type of guy.

SCOTT

He kind of reminded me of Charles Bronson. *(beat)*

FRED

I don't think he had a lot of money.

JUDY

Of course he didn't!

LAURA

Duh! He was a teacher. We all know how underpaid they are.

ALL

(Moans of agreement.)

FRED

He was *our* teacher.

SCOTT

He had a nickname for everyone in class.

FRED

He called me the man of the 80s—'cause I was into computers.

JUDY

He called me Maya—like Maya Angelou. "Does my sexiness upset you? Does it come as a surprise that I dance like I have diamonds at the meeting of my thighs?" *(She giggles as the men raise eyebrows. LAURA turns in contempt.)*

LAURA

He used to call me Blue Roses—like from Glass Menagerie.

SCOTT

Great Scott!

LAURA

What?

SCOTT

No, that's what he used to call me.

LAURA

Oh.

SCOTT

He introduced me to *The Great Gatsby*.

JUDY

He said I'd be a great musician someday.

FRED

Philosopher.

SCOTT

Athlete.

LAURA

Doctor... (*beat—they all realize that they are none of these things*). Well, I guess he didn't have the gift of prophecy.

FRED

I guess he just had high hopes for us all.

LAURA

Having high hopes is a prerequisite, I think.

SCOTT

Have to be an optimist.

JUDY

It wasn't until I met him that I started thinking of my teachers as real people.

SCOTT

That makes sense...you were always the self-absorbed, hot girl in class.

FRED

You thought she was the hot one?

SCOTT

Yeah! Hello? She's still hot!

JUDY

Thanks! (*winks at SCOTT, coquettish*)

SCOTT

You're welcome. *(she winks back)*

LAURA

Pfft. Whatever.

FRED

What do you mean, Jude?

JUDY

Oh, I mean I used to wonder if he had a family—a wife, children.

SCOTT

Maybe she was hot for teacher!

JUDY

Shut up!

LAURA

I never noticed a wedding band.

FRED

I think maybe he thought of us as

LAURA

His children.

SCOTT

I liked when he would read the classics to us.

JUDY

Like a parent

LAURA

Reading a bedtime story

FRED

My favorite was *The Odyssey*. *(Lights fade as a spot comes up on a silhouetted Mr. Brown seated on a stool with a book in hand.)*

MR. BROWN

And Odysseus revealed his plan, "I shall introduce myself to the Cyclops and tell him that my name is "NO MAN". Then I shall take this spear and thrust it into the Cyclops's eye." "But will not the Cyclops then call out for aid from his friends?" asked one of his crewmen. "Indeed," replied

Odysseus, "and they shall ask who it is that assails him. The Cyclops will exclaim, "NO MAN is torturing me! NO MAN has thrust a spear into my eye! NO MAN has blinded me!" and then we shall escape." (*Spotlight fades on MR BROWN and returns as before.*)

FRED

He made me want to read.

SCOTT

He made me think about things

JUDY

In a way I'd never

LAURA

thought of them before?

SCOTT

He made me want to come to school.

JUDY

I miss him now.

ALL

We all do.

FRED

He had such high hopes for us all.

SCOTT

Even if we didn't have them for ourselves.

FRED

I hope we aren't a disappointment.

JUDY

Did you ever wonder?

LAURA

What?

JUDY

What his hopes were?

FRED

I heard a rumor that Mr. Brown wanted to be a novelist.

LAURA

"The mass of men lead lives of quite desperation."

ALL

Henry David Thoreau.

SCOTT

Makes you wonder though...

JUDY

Why he started teaching?

LAURA

He was a born teacher.

FRED

I don't think so.

SCOTT

I think good teachers are the products of having good teachers.

LAURA

Pity the pay is such shit!

JUDY

He probably considered himself a failure.

SCOTT

Those who can do,

FRED

Those who can't, teach.

LAURA

Those who can't teach—

LAURA, FRED & JUDY

Teach P. E.! *(They all laugh and point at SCOTT)*

SCOTT

Very funny. *(beat)* You know, I saw him catch someone cheating once.

FRED

Really?

SCOTT

Why would I lie?

MR BROWN

(Silhouetted as before)

Mr. Smith! Don't look at Susan's paper! Do you know why? You probably think I'm going to say that "You're only cheating yourself." Or "You're depriving yourself of your own knowledge!" Or "Passing someone else's work off as your own is plagiarism!" Wrong! I don't want you to copy her answer because—Susan's answer is wrong!

LAURA

He always had...

JUDY

A good sense of humor.

FRED

I think it's a prerequisite.

SCOTT

If it's not, it should be. After all, I think some people fall back on teaching when they run out of options. I mean why would anyone choose to be a teacher in the first place?

JUDY

Low pay.

LAURA

Long hours

SCOTT

And crappy conditions.

FRED

Well, sometimes. I visited a certain school across town—you know which one I'm talking about—that had a state-of-the-art gym—an Olympic sized swimming pool and both indoor and outdoor tennis and basketball courts.

SCOTT

I went to one on the other side of town. No grass, no gym and a sinkhole where the soccer field used to be.

JUDY

Schools aren't what they used to be.

LAURA

When we were kids, there used to be a road that ran through the middle of campus, remember.

FRED

Yeah. My dad used to pick me up there after school.

SCOTT

The road's still there. Only now it's closed during the day.

LAURA

On account of a few unsavory incidents.

JUDY

Someone was shot.

LAURA

In a drug deal gone bad.

FRED

Shame...

SCOTT

Now the campus is encircled by chain link.

JUDY

Topped with concertina wire.

SCOTT

Looks more like a prison than a school.

FRED

I used to think that was to keep the bad element of society out-

LAURA

Rather than keeping our children in.

JUDY

There used to be a lot of fun things in school though, back then.

LAURA

Such as?

Music class JUDY

Wood shop SCOTT

Electric shop FRED

Auto shop SCOTT

The school play. LAURA

Do you remember family history night? FRED

Who could forget? JUDY

Remember that guy who said he was a descendant of Tom Mix? LAURA

The cowboy? SCOTT

Yeah, I remember. FRED

He had all western memorabilia. LAURA

Oh my god...what a- JUDY

GEEK! ALL

I did my family tree on my apple computer and made drawings with my koala pad then linked them together in a slide show. This was years before power point, mind you. I wrote a little program in BASIC with a subroutine that would show the slides for a number of seconds and then

change to the next one. Then it looped around and started over from the beginning. My dad was so proud. Mr. Brown asked him if he had helped me with it, and he beamingly said that I had done it all myself. He gave me 100 points out of 100. And the next day, he gave me an extra 10 points! Ha! Ha! Those were the good old day...*(he chuckles to himself, lost in his reverie...silence)*

JUDY, LAURA, SCOTT

GEEK!

FRED

That's the kind of thing Mr. Brown would do, though.

JUDY

He appreciated it.

LAURA

When you made the extra effort.

SCOTT

Not many kids do that anymore. I don't think most of them care. Apathy is easier. Makes me wonder what's the use anyway?

FRED

Don't you remember what he said at graduation?

MR BROWN

(as before, perhaps with a mortar board hat)

Every year I meet new people—I call them people, not students—that are just beginning this odyssey we call life. Just discovering who they are. I see them grow. I see them begin to emerge as independent, free thinkers. Individuals. And sometimes they ask me what's the use of it all? As if apathy makes some kind of strange sense in a world that sometimes seems hopeless. I tell them to live well and do something memorable—for we are all food for worms. Love, joy, satisfaction in accomplishment—these are the fruits of life we all must savor. For tomorrow, we will all be gone. Wishing that someone remembered us. I am reminded of the words of old uncle Walt Whitman who said, "O me! O life!...Of the questions of these recurring; of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities filled with the foolish; what good amid these, O me, O life? Answer. That you are here - that life exists, and

identity; that the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse."

SCOTT

And now he's gone...We should do something.

JUDY

Like what?

SCOTT

Build a statue to honor him.

FRED

Statues of him all over the world.

JUDY

At every school

SCOTT

In every town

LAURA

He was everyone's favorite teacher.

FRED

Who lived through his students.

JUDY

He inspired.

SCOTT

He gave hope

FRED

He praised us

LAURA

And lived by example

JUDY

He had no wife

SCOTT

And no children.

FRED

But we were his life.

LAURA

And we were his children.

JUDY

And he is the reason.

ALL

We all became teachers.

MR BROWN

(As before)

Good morning, teacher.

ALL

(They turn to look at him)

Good night, Mr. Brown.

(Lights fade. As the teachers console each other. A school bell rings.)

END OF PLAY.