

STUDY HALL 1963

A Short Story as a One Act Play

CHARACTERS:

Tommie, Larry Baker, Hart, Becky, Miller: High School Seniors

Miss Peterson: PE Teacher and Study Hall Monitor

Mr. Johnson: High School Principal

Study Hall Student

(Lights Up)

(1963, A large study hall containing sixty student desks in a high school. Students are busy silently studying textbooks, writing papers, or whispering while silently monitoring the movements of the teacher/ study hall monitor who is sitting at a wooden teacher's desk at the front of the room. Tommie, Larry, and Hart are whispering to one another and sneaking shoulder punches at each other. At the front of the room the speaker for the PA system rattles with a semi-coherent announcement.)

Tommie: Shut up, Man. What did he just say?

Larry: I don't know. You can't understand anything on that piece of crap.

Tommie: I thought he just said that Kennedy was dead.

Hart: We couldn't be that lucky. My old man says Kennedy's a communist.

Larry: Yeah, right. You can't be a communist and be president, Moron.

Hart: You should talk to my old man.

Tommie: No, I swear. He said the president was dead.

Larry: Well, if it's true, he probably died from back trouble. He's got a bad back, you know.

Tommie: You're an idiot. You can't die from back trouble.

Larry: Oh, really, Mr. Know It All. I saw it on the CBS News. Walter Cronkite says he even has a special rocking chair that he sits in for it.

Tommie: Shhh, he's saying something else. WHAT THE...! Did he just say someone shot President Kennedy!

Larry: No way, Man. They don't do that stuff anymore.

Tommie: I swear. He just said someone shot the president.

(A student, bent at the waist approaches the boys.)

Student: Hey, you guys, did you hear what he just said? Someone killed Kennedy.

Larry: You better get back to your seat, Numbskull, before Peterson sees you.

Student: She's not looking. She's staring at the PA. Besides she's got a hundred other idiots to worry about anyway. *(Student slinks back to his seat)*

Mary Ann: Would you guys be quiet. I'm trying to study for an algebra test.

Larry: Hey, Mary Ann, weren't you listening? The president's dead.

Mary Ann: Yeah, right. That's not funny, Larry. *(pause)* If I don't pass this test, I'll get a C, and my mother will kill me.

Larry: Well, hey, Mary Ann, if there's anything I can do to help you feel better, all you gotta do is ask, ya know.

Mary Ann: Shut up, you creep! I'm going to tell Becky you said that.

Larry: Aw, come on, Mary Ann, don't do that. I was just kidding around. Don't say anything to Becky, come on.

Hart: Shhh, be quiet you guys. Listen. Dallas? I didn't even know he was in Dallas.

Tommie: That's because you're an idiot. You could be in downtown Dallas, and you'd be too stupid to know where you were.

Hart: Now look. You made Mary Ann cry. You're a real piece of work. You know that, Man.

Larry: Come on, Mary Ann. Everything's gonna be okay. They could be wrong, ya know. He might not really have croaked. They've got about a million guys guarding him, ya know. I read one time...

Mary Ann: If I don't pass this test my mother'll ground me. I won't be able to go to the homecoming dance this year. Nancy and Barb said I have a good chance of being elected Homecoming Queen. *(quietly sobs)*

Student behind Mary Ann: Hey, Mary Ann, back here. *(Mary Ann looks behind her)* Are you going to the dance with anybody? *(Mary Ann sobs into a tissue)*

(Miss Peterson stands up from her desk in the front of the room)

Miss Peterson: Mary Ann, are you okay?

(Mary Ann continues to sob)

Mary Ann: It's not fair, Miss Peterson, it's just not fair.

Miss Peterson: I know, Dear. I know. It's so sad. He was...he was...

Mary Ann *(whispering)*: How would she know. I bet her mother never grounded her. She's probably never had a date, anyway.

Larry: Hey, look at Peterson. Is she crying?

Tommie: Surely you jest. That old bag's too mean to cry about anything. She's gotta be at least 27, 28 years old.

Larry: That's old.

Hart: Older than dirt.

Tommie: I hope if I live to be that old someone just blows my brains out. All Peterson knows how to do is give ya the stink eye. People that old don't have any feelings. They just know how to ride your butt. Take my word for it.

Hart: She's not as old as my old man. He says Kennedy's a communist.

Larry: Oh, oh, there's Old Man Johnson. What's he want? Probably here to give someone detention. I told you you'd get caught for that stunt in the cafeteria.

(The boys warily watch Miss Peterson and the principal at the front of the room)

Tommie: Shut up, Man. Just act normal.

Hart: That's hard for Baker to do. *(giggling quietly)*

Tommie: Shut up, Hart. If you get us in trouble, I'm gonna kick your butt.

Larry: I swear, Peterson's crying.

Hart: Look at that! Johnson's hugging her!

Larry: I thought he was married.

Tommie: They probably meet up in his office after school.

Mary Ann: What's wrong with you guys! Can't you just shut up.

Larry: Oh, sorry, Mary Ann. Hey, you guys, do you think we'll get out of school early?

Hart: All right! I knew somethin' good would come from this. My old man hates Kennedy anyway. He says Kennedy's a communist.

Tommie: You already told us that, moron. Besides your old man's an idiot, or he'd never have had you.

Hart: Hey, my old man was in the Marines. He was in the war.

Tommie: The only war he was ever in was the war of words talking your mom into getting pregnant for you.

Hart: Hey...

Larry: Are you guys kidding. Mickey Mantle would have to croak before they shut down this dump. *(pause while they all consider this)* Do you really think they meet up in his office?

Tommie: What?

Hart: I think Baker's got the hots for Peterson.

Larry: What? I was just...

Tommie: Yeah, we all know what you were just doing.

Mary Ann: You guys are all sick, and I'll just die if I don't get to go to the dance. My life will be over. Somebody might as well shoot me.

Hart: They'd better not cancel the game Friday night. I've got a date with Karen Van Hook.

Tommie: That's the best you can do, Karen Van Hook?

Hart: She's a nice girl.

Tommie: That's the problem, Hart, she's a nice girl. Besides, Mast took her out, and he said she's nothing special.

Larry: Neither is Mast.

Tommie: Oh yeah, Wise Guy. He took Tammy White to the movies. You ever taken out Tammy White or her sister even?

Hart: I don't want to date the kind of girls you date, Tommie.

Tommie: Don't worry about it, Hart. You can't get the kind of girls I date. You're lucky to get any girl.

Larry: Hart, you've probably never even had a date.

Hart: Shut up, no one's talking to you, Man.

Larry: I'm just saying...

Hart: SHUT UP!

Tommie: Shhh

Larry: We'll just lose again, anyway.

Tommie: You got that right. Those guys couldn't make a basket if they were ten feet tall. I'm not goin' to the game anyway. Gotta get my sleep. I'm goin' huntin' Saturday morning. Shoot a few rabbits. Take 'em home for Mom to fry.”

Larry: You remember that time I shot that rabbit and blew it's head off? Twelve gauge really did a job. Blood all over the ground. Couldn't even find the head, just little pieces.

Tommie: Yeah, and you, Crap for Brains, threw it in the back of Miller's new corvair. Made a mess all over the back seat. Miller had to take it someplace and get it cleaned to get the blood out.

Larry: *(stifling a laugh)* Yeah, I about split a gut over that one.

Hart: Did you guys really do that?

Tommie: I didn't. Your crap for brains buddy here did. He better hope Miller or his dad never finds out who did it. Cost his old man twenty bucks to get it cleaned.

Hart: Look. Where's Peterson going?

Larry: I told you she was crying. Oh, great, now we're stuck with old man Johnson. Maybe she's in trouble, got fired.

Hart: Look, he's hugging her again.

Tommie: Why doesn't Johnson just go back to the office and crawl in his hole.

Larry: And die.

Student two seats back: Hey, Mary Ann, you got a date for the dance?

Mary Ann: Leave me alone. I'm trying to study.

Tommie: Oh crap, here comes Miller. What's that moron want?

Miller: Hey, you guys, did you hear what they said on the PA? Somebody killed Kennedy.

(Lights Fade)