

Terms of Endearment

Side 1: FLAP and EMMA

(He crosses to the refrigerator, takes out a beer, and flops down on the mattress that is still laid out on the floor. He picks up a copy of Wordsworth, and begins reading. EMMA just looks at him as he vanishes from the conversation.)

EMMA

What do I have to do to get you to stop reading and talk to me?

FLAP

I'm just reading Wordsworth. I hate Wordsworth. Truth is, almost anything will get me to stop reading him. The smell of cooking would probably do it.

EMMA

You're a difficult man, Flap.

FLAP

No, just selfish. Did you tell her you're pregnant?

EMMA

I did. She was just here. You just missed her.

FLAP

Thank you, Jesus! What did she say?

EMMA

She had a fit.

FLAP

She is a piece of work. Hey, come here.

(He reaches up and takes her hand and pulls her down onto the mattress with him. He is immediately unbuttoning her.)

EMMA

All right, all right. What is it with you? You never even give me time to think about it. Flap, I wouldn't have married you if I wasn't willing to think about it. What's the rush all the time?

FLAP

One of us might lose interest.

EMMA

(Mumbling) And why is it you only remember to take off your shoes after we make love?

FLAP

Just naturally passionate, I guess. *(EMMA pulls away from him slightly.)* What?

EMMA

I swear, Flap, getting laid by you is like getting sideswiped.

FLAP

Now! You see? I've lost interest.

(FLAP picks up his book, again. EMMA sighs and crosses back to the laundry.)

EMMA

I wish your attention span was longer. Why are you reading Wordsworth if you don't like him?

FLAP

What else is there to do? Why was your mother here, anyway?

EMMA

That's an odd question. I'm her daughter.

FLAP

What an absurd woman.

EMMA

Mama isn't really absurd.

FLAP

I'd like to know what she is, then.

EMMA

She's just absolutely selfish. She's a great deal more selfish than you are, and you're no slouch. She may even be more selfish than Patsy.

FLAP

No one's more selfish than Patsy.

EMMA

I wonder what would have happened if the two of you had gotten married.

FLAP

Me and Patsy?

EMMA

No, you and Mama. (*FLAP says nothing. He is once again only engrossed in his book.*)
Is sex the only thing that's keeping us together?

FLAP

Emma, we didn't just have sex. I wanted to. But we didn't. And we're still together. So stop pretending you're neglected. You're not neglected and you couldn't look bitter if you tried.

EMMA

I don't know. I might learn.

FLAP

You're always saying "I don't know."

EMMA

Well I *don't* know. I don't think I ever will. I bet that's what I'll do when I'm old. I'll sit in in a chair somewhere saying "I don't know, I don't know." Only then, I'll probably drool when I say it.

(*Blackout*)

Side 2: GARRETT and AURORA

GARRETT

Hey ... uhh ... Come here.

AURORA

Hey, come here?!

GARRETT

Yeah, what's your name? Aurora?

AURORA

Greenway.

GARRETT

Yeah. You want a shock?

AURORA

Not particularly.

(GARRETT breezes past that.)

GARRETT

They were gonna have this NASA dinner at the White House? Some cosmonauts and all of us, and I didn't know who I could take. Bemuse everybody I flew with, their wives would have given me bitch bites up and down my ass if I showed up with one of my regular girls. And I didn't know anybody old enough, so I thought what the hell, I'll ask my next door neighbor. *(AURORA looks at him in astonishment.)* Yeah anyway, they canceled the dinner. But I was really thinking about asking you out. Isn't that a shocker?

AURORA

Yes. Imagine you having a date with someone where it wasn't necessarily a felony.

GARRETT

Yeah, what would you have said if I had asked you? Seriously.

(AURORA is a bit nunerved, thinks for a beat, and then:)

AURORA

I would have said I'd like to see the While House.

GARRETT

So you would have come. Well, whill the hell. You wanna have dinner out, sometime?

AURORA

(Almost automatically) No, no thank you.

GARRETT

What about lunch? You ladies ... you like to have lunch alot, don't you?

AURORA

You know, your manner.. . it's like you ... you're trying to toy with me.

GARRETT

That's right Aurora. I'm playing with you. You want to play, Aurora? You wanna go to lunch?

AURORA

Now, this is just the element I mean. This is exactly... *(AURORA stops, takes a deep breath, then continues.)* If you want lo have lunch at some pleasant restaurant, in order to improve the atmosphere in the neighborhood, I suppose I wouldn't exactly say no.

(GARRETT motions for her to come closer.)

GARRETT

Come here, we're too far apart. *(She moves closer to GARRETT. GARRETT now is at his smarmiest and most on-the-make self.)* Now Aurora, since you've agreed, why don't we just skip the rest of it?

AURORA

I beg your pardon.

GARRETT

I know how you feel. There were countdowns when I had my doubts, but then I just said to myself, look, you agreed to do it, you're strapped in and you're in the hands of something bigger and more powerful than yourself, so why not just lay back and enjoy the ride?

(AURORA is horrified to the point of speechlessness.)

AURORA

I'm not going. There's something ... very wrong with you.

(Blackout)

Side 3: EMMA and AURORA

(Then we hear EMMA's phone ringing as lights come up on AURORA's bedroom. She is dialing her phone. We hear it ring. Lights come up on EMMA's playing area. She stands at the kitchen counter, making sandwiches.)

EMMA

Hi, Mom.

AURORA

How did you know it was me?

EMMA

Please. I've been married for five years and there hasn't been a morning when it wasn't you. *(EMMA puts the phone between cheek and shoulder as she tries to multitask.)* Could we talk later? I've gotta get Tommy ready for school and I have to take Melanie to the pediatrician. It's not a good time for me to be on the phone.

AURORA

Don't be so inconsiderate. *(Just then, we hear the splash of GARRETT in the pool, next door.) (To herself.)* For a degenerate, he's an awfully early riser. Now then, I've gotten myself all set for a nice talk with you. You have almost an hour to get the boys off. What's wrong?

EMMA

Nothing.

AURORA

Nonsense. What's wrong?

EMMA

Okay, Mother. I'd like you to loan me some money. I really and truly need it. Will you? *(AURORA says nothing.)* Don't be quiet. You know how hard it was for me to ask. Say no if you want to. Just don't be quiet.

AURORA

I'm sorry, sweetheart. I was just thinking.

EMMA

Thinking what?

AURORA

How much I hate to part with money.

EMMA

Mama, I wouldn't ask, except ... well, don't yell, but I think I might be pregnant, again.

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AURORA

Oh, no! Oh, no! Are you sure?

EMMA

I haven't been to the doctor yet but I feel like something's going on down there.

AURORA

And if you are pregnant ... I suppose you're going to go ahead and have it?

EMMA

Yes, of course. What's happening to you, anyway?

AURORA

Don't act like it's so terrible. I keep hearing about bright young women who are having simple abortions. You can go right there in Iowa, and get one.

EMMA

I don't know why I tell you anything. I seem to like you less and less.

AURORA

That's because I'm the only one who tells you the truth. Emma, how is your life going to get any better if you keep having children with that man? How?! What miracle is going to take place and rescue you?

EMMA

Leave me alone. I need the money. Why not just give me my painting to sell? You always promised me the Klee.

AURORA

No! That's your security! I'm not going to let you use it for rent.

EMMA

Mom, let's not do this. I'll speak to you later.

AURORA

If the money is really that ...

EMMA

No, don't give me the money. It would make you crazy.

AURORA

(Realistically:) Yes, it would.

EMMA

Call me tonight if you want to. We really got to get going. I've gotta pick Patsy up at the airport. She's coming for a visit.

AURORA

Patsy would have an abortion.

EMMA

Goodbye, Mama.

(She hangs up. The lights go down on AURORA's living room.)

Side 3: GARRETT and DORIS

GARRETT

Whoa!!!

(We hear a car door open and GARRETT staggers towards his front door. GARRETT is a delightful rogue, whose beer belly spills out over the cummerbund of his tuxedo. His tie is askew, and his white dinner jacket is stained. He is accompanied by a twentyyear-old girl named DORIS.)

DORIS

Do you need some help?

GARRETT

I'll be fine.

DORIS

Omigod, Mr. Breedlove, you're bleeding.

GARRETT

Yeah ... that's okay. *(He thinks about it a beat.)* Actually, I might not be okay. I might need a little help. Maybe you ought to come in.

DORIS

Mr. Breedlove, I only brought you here because you were too drunk to drive your own car.

GARRETT

Yes, I was. And now, I'm too drunk to go up to my own bedroom. How about a hand?

DORIS

No thank you.

(GARRETT leans in toward her, drunkenly, barely able to stand.)

GARRETT

(Suggestively:) What are you afraid of, Doris?

DORIS

I'm not afraid.

GARRETT

Well then why not come on in?

DORIS

I'm embarrassed.

GARRETT

Why? Did you do something unseemly?

DORIS

I'm embarrassed for you.

GARRETT

(Slurring:) For me? I'm at the top of my form.

DORIS

Because you're drunk. Because when I went there tonight, it was to see a United States astronaut give a lecture. I didn't expect him to prowl after me all night long. I didn't expect some silly flirt, who's more than twice my age, who has to keep his jacket open because his belly's too big. I expected a hero. I'm sorry, Mr. Breedlove, but you're a disgrace. You better tend to that cut.

(She exits and we hear the sound of her car, screeching off. GARRETT stumbles offstage after DORIS. We hear the sound of him tripping over his own garbage can full of beer and liquor bottles, followed by GARRETT stumbling back onto stage.)

GARRETT

Well, okay, Doris. Don't come in. I don't want you in my house.

(GARRETT falls through his own front door. Lights go down in Garrett's playing area.)

Side 4: OTHER CHARACTERS

A: What are you doing

B: Can't you tell

A: Well, I think so but

B: It should be obvious

A: You shouldn't

B: I know

A: I mean, I really wish you wouldn't

B: You should have thought of that

A: Is this because of what I did

B: Partly yes, mostly no

A: Can I make it up to you somehow

B: I very much doubt it

A: Stop doing that and really listen to me

B: You don't recognize "No" do you

A: I just asked you to listen

B: I said "No" that's it