

Scene 1

It's the first day back for teachers at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School. There is a light snack buffet around which are gathered five teachers: JERRY FELDMAN, CHRIS SIMMONS, SELINA WELSH, and two additional women. CHRIS and SELINA chat while drinking coffee while JERRY stands alone holding a small plate with a glazed chocolate donut. School principal BENSON and regional superintendent KATHERINE EVANS stand together and talk. Chairs divide BENSON and EVANS from the teachers. MICHAEL enters.

JERRY

Mike, over here.

MICHAEL approaches JERRY.

How you doin'? Good summer?

MICHAEL

Not bad. Yours?

JERRY

Glad to be back. I was getting bored.

MICHAEL glances at SELINA and CHRIS.

MICHAEL

New teachers?

JERRY

Yeah. Man, she is hot.

MICHAEL

Calm down.

JERRY

Let's say hello.

MICHAEL and JERRY approach CHRIS and SELINA.

Welcome to Wilson. I'm Jerry Feldman, the building rep, and this is Mike Finberg.

SELINA

What's a building rep?

JERRY

I represent the teachers' union in the school. If you have any problems with the administration, you come to me, and we try to resolve it.

SELINA

I see. *(to MICHAEL)* And you are?

MICHAEL

Mike Finberg. And you?

SELINA

Selina Welsh.

MICHAEL

Nice to meet you.

SELINA

Me too.

JERRY

(to CHRIS) And you are?

CHRIS

Chris Simmons.

MICHAEL

What do you teach?

CHRIS

Phys Ed.

MICHAEL

(to JERRY) That's right—Hank retired.

JERRY

Yeah, I forgot. *(to SELINA)* What do you teach?

SELINA

Second grade.

MICHAEL

I'm first grade.

SELINA

Really? You look a little old to be in first grade.

Mild laughter.

MICHAEL

That's funny.

BENSON

Can I have everyone's attention? Would everyone please take a seat? I'd like to get started. I promise you'll have time to get your rooms ready once we finish.

Teachers sit randomly. EVANS stands near BENSON.

First, welcome back. Hope everyone had a relaxing summer. And I'm sure you're all happy to be back.

Teachers grumble or laugh. Some sarcastically mutter, "Oh, yeah."

Before I begin, why don't we have our new teachers please stand and introduce themselves. Mr. Simmons?

Chris stands.

CHRIS

Hello, everyone. I'm Chris Simmons. I'm the new gym teacher—pleasure to meet you.

He sits.

BENSON

Ms. Welsh?

Selina stands.

SELINA

Hi, everyone. I'm Selina Welsh. I'm a newbie! Yeah, fresh out of college. I just want to say it's great to be here, and I look forward to working with all of you.

Selina sits.

BENSON

Well, if you remember, I said to expect some changes this school year. I think some of you already know, but I brought a guest to explain things in greater detail. So let me introduce our regional superintendent, Ms. Katherine Evans.

BENSON sits. EVANS remains standing.

EVANS

Good morning, everyone.

ALL

Good morning.

EVANS

Now you can do better than that. *(loud)* Good morning!

ALL

(grudgingly louder) Good morning!

EVANS

That's better. Oh, one thing before I begin. Who ate the chocolate glazed donut?

JERRY raises his hand.

Mr. Benson, write that teacher up. That's my favorite donut.

Everyone laughs.

BENSON

I'll get right on it.

Everyone laughs.

EVANS

As your principal said, I'm from the Office of Curriculum and Development, and this year we are launching an exciting new program. It's called "Achieve"—a program that marks a historic break from how we've been teaching in the past. Let me explain how Achieve works. I'm sorry—what's your name?

JERRY

Jerry Feldman.

EVANS

Mr. Feldman, could you hand out these papers?

JERRY distributes papers to each teacher.

Thank you. Now, if everyone would please turn to the top of page 2.

Everyone turns to the second page.

Let me read. "Achieve is a literacy program designed to meet the academic and linguistic needs of each student. Teachers are provided with day-to-day, pedagogically sound procedures in the delivery of specific content." *(looks up)* What this means, to put it into my own words, is that Achieve! takes the guesswork out of teaching. It tells you exactly what to teach when to teach, and how to teach.

MICHAEL raises his hand.

Yes?

MICHAEL

You're talking about scripted lessons?

EVANS

Exactly. And what's wrong with that? For one thing, your lesson plans are done. Let me tell you—before I took this position, I was a grade teacher, and every Sunday night I couldn't go out. Why? Because I had to write lesson plans for the following week. But with Achieve, since the lesson plan is already done, you can go out for that Sunday-night dinner.

MICHAEL raises his hand again.

Yes?

MICHAEL

I have a question. If we are following a script, where do we, as teachers, come in?

EVANS

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

I mean, when do we have a chance to display our talents as educators?

EVANS

I'm sorry—display your *what*?

MICHAEL

Talents.

EVANS

May I ask you a question?

MICHAEL

Sure.

EVANS

Would you consider yourself a funny teacher? Someone who likes to do funny things? Make students laugh?

MICHAEL

Sometimes.

EVANS

Let me give you some advice. There are a number of comedy clubs in this city. I've been to a few, and I notice some even have an open mic. That's when anyone can get up and tell jokes. So I suggest if you want to be funny, go to a comedy club. Understand what I'm saying?

MICHAEL

Yes.

EVANS

Let me explain something to you and to everyone here. Wilson is one of the worst-performing schools in the city. Only 25 percent of your students are reading at grade level, so I think it's fair to say that a teacher-designed curriculum has not done this school much good. And let me clue you into something. Downtown is looking to turn Wilson into a charter school. I think you know what that means. Most of you would be gone, and that includes you, too, Mr. Benson.

BENSON

I know.

EVANS

And who's your union representative?

JERRY raises his hand.

Oh, the donut thief. You, sir, would no longer have that position. There are no unions in charter schools. You live at the whim of an administrator. Is that what you want? No protection, no representation?

ALL

No.

EVANS

Excuse me?

ALL

(loud) No!

EVANS

Good. So no more talk about your own individual talents. There's only one thing for you to do—follow the Achieve! program and I promise your test scores will show dramatic improvement.

EVANS checks her watch.

Well, I have to get to another school, so let me end by saying I wish everyone a wonderful and productive year. And don't forget, the key to success is through, everybody?

EVANS raises a fist.

ALL

(loud; some raising a fist) Achieve!

BENSON

Thank you, Ms. Evans. *(to everyone)* Let's meet here at two o'clock. You're free to go.

Scene 2

MICHAEL and SELINA are decorating bulletin boards outside their respective classrooms. MICHAEL'S reads WE BEELONG IN 1ST GRADE! and has cut-out pictures of bees surrounding the lettering. He is stapling the bees onto the board. SELINA'S board reads, WELC ME BACK! She looks in a bag for a letter O to complete the word "WELCOME." She approaches MICHAEL.

SELINA

Oh, that's so cute! "WE BEELONG IN 1ST GRADE!"

MICHAEL

I use it every year.

SELINA

I like it. I didn't know what to put up, so I'm just doing a boring "WELCOME BACK!"

MICHAEL

Nothing wrong with that.

SELINA

Except there's a problem. I'm missing an *O* for the word "WELCOME." I was wondering if you might have an *O*.

MICHAEL

Let me see.

He looks through a stack of letters.

Oh, here's one.

He hands the letter to her.

SELINA

Thanks. Well, don't let me bother you.

MICHAEL

That's all right. First-year, huh? How do you feel?

SELINA

I'm so nervous I can hardly sleep.

MICHAEL

I'm not going to lie—it's not an easy building. Our students don't get a lot of support at home, so they tend to act out. But the staff is great, and if you have any problem just call and I'll come right over.

SELINA

Thank you. I appreciate that. Well, let me get back to work—and thanks for the *O*.

MICHAEL

Hey, anytime you need an *O*, I'm right here.

SELINA

(smiles) I'll remember that.

Scene 3

MICHAEL stands in front of his first-grade class. The students must be imagined by the audience. Behind MICHAEL is a blackboard, and in front are rows of desks and chairs.

MICHAEL

Okay, class, settle down. Yesterday we learned how to make something more than one.

BENSON enters.

Children, we have a special guest today. Everybody say, "Good morning, Mr. Benson." *(pause)*

BENSON

Good morning, children! Please continue, Mr. Finberg.

BENSON sits in back and writes on a yellow legal pad as MICHAEL continues teaching.

MICHAEL

Yesterday, if you remember, we learned how to make something more than one. Can anyone tell me how we make things more than one? *(pause)* Mariana? *(pause)* That's right. We add an s to the end of the word. Good. Now can someone give me an example? First, say the word as one thing, then say the same word with the s at the end. *(pause)* Carlos? *(pause)* Very good. Did everyone hear? He said, "I have one pencil, and now I have two pencils." Now here's what we're going to do. I'm going to give each of you a blank piece of paper. First, we're going to fold the paper in half like this.

MICHAEL folds a white sheet of paper in half.

Then we draw a line down the middle. Let me show you.

MICHAEL draws a line down the middle of the paper.

Now on the left side at the top, we will write the word "One," and on the right side, we will write the word "Two."

MICHAEL writes the words "One" and "Two" on the paper and displays it to the class.

See? So on the left side, I'd like you to draw a picture of one thing. It could be anything: one horse, one dog, one elephant. Then on the other side, you will draw two of the same thing. Let me show you. So I will draw one cat.

MICHAEL draws one cat and displays the picture.

And now I will draw two cats.

MICHAEL draws two cats and displays the picture.

Understand? *(pause)* Good. Hector, could you hand out the paper? And Ariana, could you please give everyone some crayons? Thanks.

BENSON stands up.

BENSON

Mr. Finberg, could I see you in my office at the end of the day?

MICHAEL

Certainly.

BENSON

Thank you.

BENSON leaves the room.

Scene 4

*BENSON sits in his office behind a desk. He is perusing the Achieve teacher's manual.
MICHAEL enters.*

MICHAEL

You wish to see me, Mr. Benson?

BENSON

Sit down.

MICHAEL sits across from BENSON.

Mr. Finberg, do you know what day this is?

MICHAEL

Wednesday.

BENSON

I mean in terms of your teaching. Do you know where you should be according to the Achieve manual?

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. No.

BENSON

You don't look at your manual? Your lesson plans come directly from it.

MICHAEL

I know.

BENSON

Then you should know what you're expected to teach today. Today is Unit 1, Week 3, Lesson 3. Here's what it says: "Students will form the past tense of a regular verb by adding e-d. For example, walked, cooked, played." Nowhere does it say students will form the plural of a noun by adding an s. In fact, I have to go back (*turns pages*) to Week 2, Lesson 1, to see that instruction. So could you please explain to me why you were on Week 2, Lesson 1 when you should have been on Week 3, Lesson 3?

MICHAEL

With all respect, I have students whose first language is not English, and others are still struggling with letter/sound relationships. Some don't even know the alphabet. So they're not ready for verb tenses. But they're smart. We'll catch up.

BENSON

But not fast enough. (*pause*) Mr. Finberg, do I have to remind you that things are different this year? Whether you like it or not, we are married to the Achieve program.

MICHAEL

I know.

BENSON

And there are no exceptions. We march in lockstep—all of us—you, me, the entire school.

BENSON holds up the manual.

This is your bible. This tells you exactly what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach. The next time I walk into your room, I expect you to be exactly where the book tells you to be. Do you understand?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BENSON

And what were you doing with crayons? If I'm not mistaken, you're teaching first grade, not art. We already have an art teacher.

MICHAEL

I was trying to match my lesson to students' learning styles. Drawing helps students who are more visual or tactile. You even encouraged that last year.

BENSON

I remember. We spent entire days on learning styles. And where did that get us? Did you see last year's test results?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BENSON

Horrible. So no more talk about learning styles. From now on, you stand, you teach, they learn. That's it. You heard Ms. Evans. If we don't get our scores up, heads will roll—and hell if I'm going to lose my job because some teacher is concerned about learning styles. Do you understand, Mr. Finberg?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BENSON

Good. See you tomorrow.

MICHAEL exits. BENSON continues reading the manual.

Scene 5

MICHAEL sits at his desk correcting papers. The classroom phone rings. He gets up and answers.

SELINA

Mr. Finberg, could you come here if you have a moment.

MICHAEL

I'll be right there.

MICHAEL walks to SELINA'S classroom. She is waiting for him at her door.

MICHAEL

What's the problem?

SELINA

(points) Him. He's been out of his seat all day. He won't do his work. He's bothering other students. I've called his home twice, but there's no answer. Do you know him?

MICHAEL

Sure. That's Oscar. Everybody knows Oscar. *(beckons)* Oscar, come here. *(to SELINA)* I had him last year. *(to OSCAR)* What's the problem? Why can't you stay in your seat? You're making Ms. Welsh very unhappy today. *(pause)* I understand. We can deal with that later, but now you need to take your seat and do your work. I tell you what. I'll come in later. If Ms. Welsh gives me a good report, I'll have a little treat for you, okay? *(pause)* We have a deal? *(pause)* Good. Now, where's your seat? *(pause)*. Oh, you're so lucky! You get to sit upfront. Now let's see you go to your seat and sit down. Can you do that? *(pause)* And do your work? *(pause)* Good. One more thing. Do you have anything to say to Ms. Welsh? *(pause)* Thank you, Oscar. Now let's have a good day.

SELINA

(to MICHAEL) Thank you.

MICHAEL

Anytime.

Scene 6

SELINA enters MICHAEL'S classroom as he sits marking papers.

SELINA

Can I come in?

MICHAEL

Sure.

SELINA

I just want to say thanks for all your help today. Oscar was much better after you talked to him.

MICHAEL

Glad to hear it. He can be tough.

SELINA

I'm finding that out.

MICHAEL

Listen, may I make a suggestion? I don't want to sound like a know-it-all.

SELINA

No, please tell me.

MICHAEL

The important thing is to build a relationship. Yelling is not gonna work. He gets enough of that at home. See, it's a kind of trick. They can't see their future, and they're not gonna work for something they can't see. But if you gain their trust, they'll work for *you*, understand? Otherwise, you'll just wear yourself out.

SELINA

I already am. Well, let me go—and thanks again.

SELINA starts to leave. MICHAEL stands.

MICHAEL

Selina?

SELINA

(turns) Yes?

MICHAEL

I was wondering . . . would you like to meet for a drink? If you have time, that is.

SELINA

You mean like a date?

MICHAEL

Well, yes.

SELINA

I'd love to. Got some paper?

MICHAEL grabs a slip of paper from his desk and hands it to her.

MICHAEL

Here.

SELINA writes her phone number and hands the slip to MICHAEL.

SELINA

Here's my number. Call me.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

SELINA

I'll be waiting. Bye.

MICHAEL

Bye.

SELINA leaves. MICHAEL is ecstatically happy.

Scene 7

MICHAEL'S apartment. It is divided between the kitchen and the living room. JENNY is in the kitchen area, cutting carrots on a counter near the sink. The living room contains a sofa, some chairs, and a coffee table. On the coffee table is a picture of JENNY. A front door leads into the living room area. JENNY'S coat is on a hook near the front door. MICHAEL enters, carrying a book bag over his shoulder. He places the book bag on the floor and sees JENNY.

MICHAEL

When'd you get in?

JENNY

Ten minute. I want to make pho', take one hour.

MICHAEL takes off his jacket, hangs it on a hook near the front door, and sits down on the sofa while JENNY cuts vegetables. He looks at her.

MICHAEL

Jenny, come here. I want to talk about something.

JENNY

I busy. I make pho'. Many things to do.

MICHAEL

It can wait. Sit down.

JENNY

What you want?

MICHAEL

Come here. I need to tell you something.

JENNY

I know. You busy this weekend. No problem. I can work.

MICHAEL

No, not that. It's something else.

JENNY

Wait.

JENNY stops cutting and moves to the living room.

What?

MICHAEL

Sit down.

JENNY sits on the sofa.

I need to tell you something.

JENNY

I know. What?

MICHAEL

(pause) I met someone.

JENNY

Good.

JENNY stands and returns to the kitchen.

MICHAEL

What are you doing?

JENNY

Making dinner.

MICHAEL

I need to tell you something.

JENNY

You told me. You met someone.

JENNY continues cutting vegetables.

Who is he?

MICHAEL

It's not a he. It's a she.

JENNY

Good.

MICHAEL

I like her.

JENNY

I happy. Everybody should like everybody.

MICHAEL

I don't mean it like that.

JENNY begins to understand. She stops cutting and returns to living room area. She remains standing.

JENNY

What you mean?

MICHAEL

You know, romantic.

JENNY

A girlfriend?

MICHAEL

Yes.

JENNY

Who is she?

MICHAEL

A teacher.

JENNY

Your school?

MICHAEL

Yes.

JENNY

She Vietnam?

MICHAEL

No, she's American.

JENNY

I'm American.

MICHAEL

I mean, she was born here.

JENNY

She speak good English.

MICHAEL

Yes, it's her language.

JENNY

You like her. She speak good English.

MICHAEL

It's not that. We communicate.

JENNY

What mean?

MICHAEL

We like the same things; you know, like politics.

JENNY

What politic?

MICHAEL

Like the president.

JENNY

You sek?

JENNY makes a fist indicating sex.

MICHAEL

Please, don't ask that.

JENNY

You sek?

JENNY gestures again.

Tell me.

MICHAEL

(pause) Yes.

JENNY

Where?

MICHAEL

Sometimes here, sometimes her place.

JENNY

Here? My picture here.

JENNY takes picture from coffee table.

She see my picture.

MICHAEL

I put it away.

JENNY

Where?

MICHAEL

In the closet.

JENNY

You crazy.

MICHAEL

You're right.

JENNY continues holding the picture throughout the rest of the scene.

JENNY

So what you say? You want end?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

JENNY

No "I don't know." You want end? Yes or no?

MICHAEL

I don't know! It's not easy. We've been together many years.

JENNY

But you not happy.

MICHAEL

I *am* happy. I just feel we need a change.

JENNY

Okay, you can change.

MICHAEL

Please, don't be angry.

JENNY

I not angry. You want end, we end. No problem. You know my life. After war, my family lose anything. My father rich man in Saigon, but North come and take anything. So why I say no problem. I can do. But I tell you, you not find lady like me. You go Asia every summer. My friend say I crazy. But I love you, so I say nothing.

MICHAEL

I go to relax. Look at the temples.

JENNY

I no stupid! I know what you do!

MICHAEL

You're wrong.

JENNY

I no wrong. American man think Asia girl easy. She no easy. She need money, so she do.

MICHAEL

You're wrong.

JENNY

I no wrong! I little girl, but I see anything. My sister go with American man. My father not happy, but we poor, so she do.

MICHAEL stands, tries to hug her.

MICHAEL

Jenny.

JENNY pushes him away.

JENNY

No, we over. I give you anything but you not happy.

JENNY takes a key from her pocket and hands it to him.

Here's your key.

MICHAEL reluctantly takes the key.

I never see you again. You call I no answer.

JENNY takes her coat from the hook and exits, still holding the photograph, as MICHAEL remains standing.

Scene 8

SELINA stands at the door to MICHAEL'S classroom. MICHAEL is sitting at his desk marking papers. SELINA wears a skirt and a button-down blouse.

SELINA

Mr. Finberg, may I come in?

MICHAEL

Sure, Ms. Welsh. Could you close the door, please? It's hard to concentrate with all the noise in the hall.

SELINA closes the door. MICHAEL stands and moves to the front of the desk.

SELINA

You're right, Mr. Finberg.

She touches his crotch area.

It is *hard* to concentrate. Remember you'd give me an *O* if I ever needed it?

MICHAEL

Yeah?

SELINA brushes past MICHAEL and sits on the desk.

SELINA

Well, I need it. Fuck me.

SELINA begins to unbutton her blouse.

MICHAEL

Here? We'll get fired.

SELINA

So? We'll raise sheep in Nepal.

She continues to unbutton her blouse.

MICHAEL

We'll wrinkle my students' work. How can I explain how the papers got so sticky? I mean, talk about show and tell.

SELINA

Yeah, guess you're right.

SELINA buttons her blouse and adjusts her skirt.

Tonight, eight o'clock. Bring some Merlot.

SELINA opens the door. Suddenly formal.

Thank you, Mr. Finberg.

MICHAEL

Anytime, Ms. Welsh. Always happy to help.

Scene 9

MICHAEL sits across from BENSON in BENSON'S office. BENSON has the Achieve! teacher's manual on his desk in front of him.

BENSON

As you know, I'm required to conduct at least two formal observations a year, and your time has come up. Looking at my schedule, I'd like to come in Thursday morning.

MICHAEL

That's fine.

BENSON

Let's see what it says in the manual.

BENSON opens teacher's manual.

That would be Unit 3 (*turns pages*), Week 3, Lesson 2. Here it is. (*reads*) "Students will form the present continuous tense by adding i-n-g at the end of a verb. For example, walk/walking, talk/talking, go/going." The lesson provides a handout for students to add i-n-g. In fact, looking at the handout, none of the verbs end in e or require doubling the consonant. So, explain the form, give one or two examples, then have students complete the handout. See you on Thursday.

Scene 10

MICHAEL stands in front of his class as described in Scene 3. BENSON sits on a chair at the back of the room with a yellow legal pad and pen, ready to take notes. On MICHAEL'S desk are the handouts for the lesson as well as a stack of 3x5 cards. There is a board behind MICHAEL on which the following is written:

i-n-g

Jack is _____ the ball. (throw)

Mary is _____ to school. (walk)

MICHAEL

Who remembers what a verb is? (*pause*) Carlos? (*pause*) That's right. A verb is an action word. Now, who remembers what happens to a verb when we add e-d? (*pause*) Phan? (*pause*) Good. It places the action in the past. Now today, we're going to learn a new verb ending. Today we are going to add, everyone look at the board, i-n-g. It's pronounced "ing" like in ring or sing. Can anybody guess when we put i-n-g at the end of a verb? (*pause*) Ahmed? (*pause*) Very good! We use i-n-g to describe something we are doing now. For example, who can do number 1? It reads, "Jack is blank the ball." And then we see the word "throw." Ronald? (*pause*) Good—throw-ing!

MICHAEL writes throwing in the blank space.

Let's try number 2. "Mary is blank to school." Kim? (*pause*) Good—walk-ing!

MICHAEL writes walking in the blank space.

So, I have a handout, and it's exactly like we just did. Add i-n-g to the verb you see after the period. Any questions? Good.

MICHAEL takes the handout from his desk.

Here's the handout. Make sure you put your name at the top.

MICHAEL is about to distribute the handout but stops.

You know, I have a better idea.

MICHAEL puts the handout back on his desk and picks up the 3x5 cards.

How many of you would like to be an actor or an actress? You know, like in the movies or on TV. *(pause)* Good. Well, today we're going to do a little acting. Let me show you. *(mimes throwing a ball)* What am I doing? *(pause)* Kenny? *(pause)* Yes, I am throw-*ing* a ball. Now I'm going to give each of you a card with an i-n-g word on the back. Don't show it to anyone. When you're ready, you're going to come up and act out your word, and we'll try to guess it. Understand?

BENSON stands up.

BENSON

Mr. Finberg, this is not what we discussed!

BENSON exits angrily.

Scene 11

It's the end of the school day. MICHAEL is in his classroom putting papers into his book bag. JERRY enters.

JERRY

How'd it go?

MICHAEL

Get ready to represent me.

JERRY

You defied Benson?

MICHAEL

Yes.

JERRY

Why?

MICHAEL

Jerry, I've told you a million times. I hate scripted lessons. I didn't become a teacher to follow a manual. He wants to write me up? Fine. I used to respect him, but now he's just your typical corporate hack. In fact, I'll make a prediction. This year's test scores will be just as bad as last year's. So you know what they'll do? They'll find another program, call it "Success!" or (*raises fist*) "Victory!" and you'll still get the same results. Why? Because children are not one-size-fits-all. And until the system accommodates differences, nothing will change.

As they speak, CHRIS enters SELINA'S classroom. They hold hands, talk, and smile. Her classroom lights are off.

JERRY

Mike, no one likes scripted lessons, but you gotta play the game. Look, we've kissed a lot of ass in this place. Just kiss some more.

MICHAEL

Let me tell you something. I have a niece in a suburban school. They don't have scripted lessons there. Why? Because rich white kids are encouraged to think, express themselves, create. Here the feeling is that if you're poor, black, or brown, you need structure, discipline. I mean, look how much time we spend making students stand in a straight line. In the suburbs, they don't care if the line is straight. "Okay, kids, let's go." That's it, and they go. Then all day, "Be quiet, be quiet." How can you tell a child to be quiet, seven hours a day yet? Children need to talk, but that's too subversive an idea around here. Anyway, gotta go. See you tomorrow.

SELINA and CHRIS kiss.

JERRY

Have a good night.

MICHAEL

You too.

JERRY exits. MICHAEL puts on his jacket, enters SELINA'S classroom, and turns on the lights. He discovers CHRIS and SELINA kissing. Set goes black.

Scene 12

Meeting room. There is a long table. On one side sit EVANS and BENSON. JERRY and MICHAEL stand and speak outside the room before entering.

MICHAEL

I hate this.

JERRY

You have no choice. He gave you a warning, and you disobeyed him. Now you have to do what they tell you, or you could lose your job. You should thank me. They were ready to dock your pay till I talked them out of it. Ready?

MICHAEL

Let's go.

JERRY and MICHAEL enter the room and sit.

JERRY

Good morning.

BENSON

Good morning. Considering the situation, I've asked our regional superintendent, Ms. Evans, to attend.

JERRY

With all respect, this meeting is only about an unsatisfactory observation. I don't see why it requires additional district personnel to attend.

BENSON

We will get to that. Let's deal with the observation first. Now, you have been given ample time to read and discuss my findings. How do you wish to respond?

JERRY

First, as union representative at Wilson, I will speak for Mr. Finberg. Mr. Finberg and I have read and discussed the report. He has agreed to follow the Achieve manual at all times, not deviate from the prescribed script, and deliver content exactly as it's written within the teacher's manual.

BENSON

I am pleased to hear that. Nevertheless, Mr. Finberg shall be placed on probation if and when he returns to teaching. Failure to comply with the Achieve program could result in suspension, loss of pay, and possible termination. Does Mr. Finberg understand?

JERRY looks at MICHAEL. MICHAEL nods understanding.

MICHAEL

(to JERRY) What did he mean by "if and when"?

JERRY

(to BENSON) Yes, he understands—but excuse me. Why did you say "if and when"?

EVANS

I'll take over from here, Mr. Benson, if you don't mind.

BENSON

Go ahead.

EVANS

A few days ago Mr. Benson received a letter from a teacher at your school, a Ms. Selina Welsh. I believe she teaches second grade. Is that correct, Mr. Benson?

BENSON

Yes.

EVANS

The letter accuses you, Mr. Finberg, of harassment—sexual harassment, to be more specific. As per the collective bargaining agreement, you have the right to hear the accusation. I made copies, which you may read but need to return.

EVANS hands out copies of the letter to JERRY and MICHAEL.

Please follow along. *(reads)* “Dear Mr. Benson, Let me begin by saying how much I appreciate all you have done to make me feel welcome at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School. However, it has not been an entirely pleasant experience, as I have been constantly harassed by first-grade teacher Michael Finberg. For example, on September 8, the first day back for teachers, I asked Mr. Finberg for the letter *O* so I could complete the word ‘WELCOME’ on my bulletin board. Upon my receiving an *O*, Mr. Finberg said, ‘Anytime you need an *O*, I’m right here,’ which I assumed meant *orgasm*.”

MICHAEL looks up, incredulous.

“Next, on October 4, I entered Mr. Finberg’s classroom for the sole purpose of thanking him for helping with an errant student. As soon as I entered, he grabbed my arm, lifted me onto his desk, pulled up my skirt, and attempted to take off my panties. Fortunately, after a struggle, he gave up. Nevertheless, he made a threat were I to say anything. Of course, I should have reported it then, but I was too afraid, not knowing what Mr. Finberg might do.”

MICHAEL looks up, incredulous.

“Then, on November 15, after students had been dismissed for the day, Mr. Finberg entered my classroom unannounced even though the lights were out. I had turned off the lights, hoping Mr. Finberg would assume I had left for the day. This could be corroborated by Mr. Chris Simmons, who was with me at the time as he has been a rock of support during this very difficult time in my life.”

MICHAEL looks up, incredulous.

“In conclusion, I hope the administration will take appropriate action so that I may continue to teach at Wilson Elementary School without fear. Failure to do so would leave me no choice but to seek employment elsewhere. Thank you, Selina Welsh. Second-grade teacher. Wilson

Elementary School.” Please return the papers.

JERRY and MICHAEL return papers to EVANS.

As you know, the school district takes such accusations seriously, and as regional superintendent, I am required to conduct a detailed investigation. Until my investigation is complete, you Mr. Finberg, are to report every day, starting tomorrow, to the school district administrative building, regular time from 8:20 a.m. to 3:09 p.m. During this time, you are to have no contact with Ms. Welsh. Do you understand?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BENSON

With that, this meeting is adjourned. Mr. Finberg, I will have someone accompany you to your classroom, where you may collect your belongings and escort you out of the building.

Scene 13

MICHAEL and RITA are sitting in RITA’S kitchen.

RITA

Harassment?

MICHAEL

I told you—I didn’t do anything.

RITA

Don’t tell me that. It didn’t come out of thin air. You must’ve done something.

MICHAEL

I did not harass her.

RITA

Doesn’t matter. These days an accusation is enough. I read the news. Now every day you have to sit in a room and do nothing for seven hours?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

RITA

That's it, just sit in a room? What are you gonna do?

MICHAEL

I'll read.

RITA

I can't believe it—my son, a sexual predator.

MICHAEL

I'm not a sexual predator!

RITA

Then what are you?

MICHAEL

A teacher. An elementary school teacher.

RITA

On probation. What does that mean?

MICHAEL

I have to follow the teacher's manual.

RITA

Why didn't you follow it?

MICHAEL

I didn't believe in it.

RITA

Who cares what you believe? They tell you to follow the manual, you do it. That's it. It's a good thing your father's not here. He'd have a stroke. Now I don't even have Jenny. I liked Jenny. I didn't understand a word she said, but I liked her.

MICHAEL

I'll get her back.

RITA

Stop it. A girl like that doesn't give second chances. I don't understand. Everything was so good. Now all this has to happen. How can I speak about it?

MICHAEL

Say nothing.

RITA

Say nothing? I'm a Jewish woman. How can I say nothing?

End of Play