

The Romantic Movement

(EXCERPT)

by
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CHARACTERS

Bill "Coach" Brennan: 26, male, any race, Director of Resident Life and junior high band director

Linda Bonteller: 22, female, any race, oboist recently graduated from the University of Michigan

Jordan Katz: 23, male, any race, Jewish, French horn player recently graduated from Eastman

Shirley Taft: 20, female, any race, clarinet major at the University of Florida

Danny Bauer: 20, male, any race, piano major at the University of Florida

Rosemary Torelli: 16, female, any race, high school flutist

Troy Monroe: 17, male, any race, high school trumpet and football player

Dorie Conway: 17, female, African-American, high school violinist

Mitchell Black: 17, male, any race, high school bassist

The play takes place in four spaces:

Front of the Desk - the seating area of a college dorm lobby with a reception desk in the background. We can see RAs sitting behind the desk, but the desk should be high enough that we aren't distracted by them.

Behind the Desk - the back of the reception desk where the RAs are on duty

Dining Hall - a neutral area where two people stand holding cafeteria trays

The Bushes Outside - This is exactly what it sounds like.

Concerning my second symphony, as the subtitle implies, it represents for me a definite and acknowledged embracing of the romantic phase. I recognize, of course, that romanticism is, at the present time, the poor stepchild, without the social standing of her elder sister, neoclassicism. Nevertheless, I embrace her all the more fervently, believing, as I do, that romanticism will find in this country rich soil for a new, young, and vigorous growth. My aim in this symphony has been to create a work young in spirit, romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression.

-Howard Hanson on his Symphony No. 2 ("Romantic")

Trumpets and violins I can hear in the distance.
I think they're calling our names.
Maybe now you can't hear them, but you will
if you just take hold of my hand.

Oh, but are you experienced?
Have you ever been experienced?
Not necessarily stoned, but...beautiful.

-Jimi Hendrix

PROLOGUE

June 4th, 1967. The lobby of a dorm at a rural Florida college. A room people pass through, but never stay for long.

In front of a reception desk sit a couch and some chairs, mid-century institutional style. A phone is attached to the wall.

A sign on the desk says "Welcome Resident Assistants of '67!"

LINDA, JORDAN, SHIRLEY, and DANNY sit on the floor with their backs to the audience.

COACH delivers the following:

COACH

So here are the Rules. Except we don't use the word "rules" here. When a student hears "rules," he's mentally breaking them before he knows what they are. So here, we call them "expectations." A rule will be broken, but an expectation will be met. A student will rise to meet it, and that's what we will all do. Rise. (beat) At seven a.m.

DANNY

Seven!?

COACH

Every morning for the next five weeks, the students should be off your hall by 7:30 a.m. Someone has to check every room to make sure that they are. That someone is you.

Without looking at them--

COACH (CONT'D)

You can stop giving me that look, and do not ask if I am joking. A trombonist. Never jokes. (beat) The kids are in rehearsal every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is when you are Off Duty. If you need to leave campus - who has a car?

Shirley raises her hand.

COACH (CONT'D)

What kind?

SHIRLEY

A Beetle?

COACH

Well, everyone be nice to Shirley then. From 8 to 4, you can leave campus, swim, rehearse - but not in the dorms. If the kids can't rehearse in their rooms, neither can we.

JORDAN

Where do we rehearse then?

COACH

The School of Music. Yes, the students will hear you. Yes, they will be intimidated. Enjoy. Use your Off Duty time wisely, because every day from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., you are On Duty. On Duty means one of 3 things: Seminars, Desk Duty, or Bush Patrol.

LINDA

Bush Patrol?

COACH

I'll get to that in a minute. Seminars: you must prepare 3 seminars a week. Hula-hooping. Parcheesi. Friday Night Lanyards. Anything that will keep them out of trouble and out of each other. Six hours of unstructured time for a teenager is a problem. Let's give them that structure.

Jordan raises his hand.

COACH (CONT'D)

Before you ask, seminars CANNOT be music-related.

Jordan lowers his hand.

COACH (CONT'D)

For the next five weeks, these kids are spending seven hours a day in a band room. They are even more socially awkward than you, and most of them are away from home for the first time. So let's help them make friends and broaden their horizons. Through Parcheesi. Which brings me to Desk Duty. This desk will have coverage at ALL TIMES. Your assignments are posted on The Grid. Check The Grid. Live and die by The Grid. There will always be one boy and one girl on duty to cover...gender issues. Which brings me to number three - Bush Patrol. This is exactly what it sounds like. The campus is full of trees and bushes. Teenagers will make bad decisions in those bushes, and it's your job to stop them.

He takes a flashlight from the desk.

COACH (CONT'D)

This is a flashlight. It will be your faithful steed in the fight against necking. You'll patrol in pairs of one boy and one girl - again, for gender issues. Do NOT limit your patrols to the bushes. Empty practice rooms, classrooms, rooftops, stairwells. Consider the library our very own red light district.

I caught a couple necking on the couch by the main entrance one day, so don't rule out those who will hide in plain sight. There's a joke that the Gordon College Musical Honors Program stands for Go Home Pregnant. Let's make sure that doesn't happen this summer. But romance won't just blossom on the other side of the desk. While the age gap between high school and college may seem like the journey of a million miles, for some, the first step on that journey will be taken. A crush is not your fault, but it IS your responsibility. (beat) I'll say that again. A Crush Is Not Your Fault, But It IS Your Responsibility. Let them down gently but firmly. Remind them that any kind of relationship between RAs and students is *strictly prohibited*. Expectations. We will all rise to meet them. Together. Now, if you'll follow me, we'll tour the rest of campus.

Coach strides off, and the others scramble up and follow him.

We see a projection: **WEEK ONE**

Behind the Desk: Linda and Jordan are on desk duty.

LINDA

So. I think last summer might have been the last good summer of my life.

JORDAN

Yeah?

LINDA

It was the last time I'll have a summer defined by school. And what is summer if not the absence of school?

JORDAN

Uh huh.

LINDA

So now without school to be absent from, summer has become this crisis. I mean, last summer wasn't great. It wasn't the summers of my childhood, but it was still a viable summer.

JORDAN

Viable?

LINDA

A summer that seemed like a relief from something, a respite, a reprieve, a re... What's summer now other than a sweaty comma in the unending sentence of life?

JORDAN

What do you play again?

Oboe.

LINDA

That makes sense.

JORDAN

What's wrong with the oboe?

LINDA

Nothing.

JORDAN

Grace Slick plays the oboe.

LINDA

I know.

JORDAN

So what does "that makes sense" mean?

LINDA

Precision. I'll bet you make your own reeds.

JORDAN

All good oboists make their own reeds. If you don't, you're relying on someone else for what you need, and Gloria Steinham says--

LINDA

Okay.

JORDAN

Gloria Steinham says, "If the shoe doesn't fit, must we change the foot?"

LINDA

All right.

JORDAN

If you played a reed instrument--

LINDA

I don't.

JORDAN

I know. French horn. I *remembered* your instrument. You probably don't remember my name either.

LINDA

It's on the grid.

JORDAN

He points to the grid.

LINDA

Right.

JORDAN

But even if it wasn't. Even if it wasn't on the grid, *Linda*, I remembered. Also, it's on your nametag.

He covers his nametag up with one hand and the grid with his other.

LINDA

Okay, JjjjjjjjjjIMMY? I got the J right.

JORDAN

There's a war there right now?

LINDA

I don't know Vietnamese.

JORDAN

Not that war.

LINDA

Oh, uhhh...Jordan! Your name is Jordan!

JORDAN

Where'd you go to school?

LINDA

University of Michigan. You?

JORDAN

Eastman.

LINDA

Oh. That's...crap.

JORDAN

It's actually the opposite of crap.

LINDA

I meant, you must be really good.

JORDAN

It got me out of Florida.

LINDA

Then how come you're back?

JORDAN

I'm not *back*. My parents still live here, and summers in New York are oppressive.

LINDA

Aren't summers in Florida way worse?

JORDAN

Not worse. Different. I decided to choose my tyrant. Isn't that what we do in America? Choose our tyrants?

LINDA

Not tyrants.

JORDAN

A leader who sends men to die in a war they don't support isn't a tyrant?

LINDA

Tyrant implies that we don't get to vote.

JORDAN

I didn't vote for this.

LINDA

But you got to vote, making the word tyrant inaccurate.

JORDAN

Easy for you to say when you'll never have to go.

LINDA

Were you drafted?

JORDAN

No. But guys I know. Friends.

Coach walks up.

COACH

How's it going?

LINDA

Fine.

JORDAN

Good.

COACH

Great! If you get bored, you can play a game of I Spy.

LINDA

I Spy?

COACH

As in, I spy that everyone's wearing their nametag.

JORDAN

Riveting.

COACH

Is that a remark?

JORDAN
 No, sir.

COACH
 Drop the sir. I'm not that much older than you, French.

LINDA
 French?

COACH
 You play French horn, right?

JORDAN
 Yeah, but don't call me French.

COACH
 Okay, French.

Coach exits.

JORDAN
 Band directors.

LINDA
 Oh! That makes sense now.

JORDAN
 What?

LINDA
 The whole...militant aspect?

JORDAN
 I heard they won't give him the high school in his county, so he runs the junior high band like Parris Island. Push-ups if they're late. Chromatic scales if they talk in class.

COACH (O.S.)
 Tighten up, officers!

Shirley and Danny run past and exit.

LINDA
 Hey, what's her story?

JORDAN
 Who, Shirley?

LINDA
 She's always with that guy.

JORDAN
 Danny?

LINDA

They're in cahoots.

DANNY

What is this? Perry Mason?

LINDA

Cahoots is the word. They look up to something. Especially him.

JORDAN

Well, you'll find out for yourself. You're on desk duty with him next week.

LINDA

Yeah, how come we're stuck with the same person all week?

JORDAN

Sick of me already?

LINDA

No. But what if I get stuck with someone I don't like?

JORDAN

Then you'll have a bad week.

LINDA

How much longer is our shift?

JORDAN

Two more hours.

LINDA

We could play a game.

JORDAN

Like what?

LINDA

We've got...Twister. That's obviously out. Parcheesi, checkers, Operation.

JORDAN

Let's play Operation.

LINDA

Okay.

ROSEMARY appears on the other side of the desk.

ROSEMARY

Hey! You have games, right?

LINDA

Yeah. We've got Twister, Parcheesi--

ROSEMARY

I'll take Operation!

LINDA

Sure.

ROSEMARY

Thanks!

She takes the game, and bounds back over to the table.

LINDA

So this is our summer. Five weeks behind a desk, babysitting teenagers.

JORDAN

You know what seminars you're gonna do?

LINDA

No. I just spent 4 years majoring in the one thing I'm not allowed to teach. You?

JORDAN

I'm thinking...bubbles.

LINDA

Bubbles?

JORDAN

Yeah. Just get a bunch of bubble wands and...blow.

LINDA

I could do a seminar on questionable men and how to avoid them. Or psychosis and how to spot it in the average man. I'm an expert in that. Well, finding psychotic men, not spotting them. Teach what you want to learn, right?

JORDAN

What about psychotic women?

LINDA

I have no idea how to spot them.

JORDAN

I'm starting to get an idea.

LINDA

I'm not crazy.

He looks at her.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I'm not! I'm just...wildly unlucky it seems.

JORDAN

What's his name?

LINDA

Stanley.

JORDAN

Stan or Stanley?

LINDA

Stanley. Never Stan. My high school sweetheart, who's been waiting 4 years for me to get over "this band thing."

JORDAN

This band thing?

LINDA

His words. Before I left for U of M, he said, "So when's this band thing gonna be over?"

JORDAN

No.

LINDA

Last week, my mother said, "Well, you had your fun in college, but it's time to start your real life with Stanley."

JORDAN

Is it?

LINDA

Maybe. I've got the next 5 weeks to decide. It's either move back home with my parents or marry Stanley. I asked my beau at school if he'd propose. He just stared at me, then looked back at his music.

JORDAN

What instrument?

LINDA

Percussion.

JORDAN

Well, that was never gonna work out. They're hopeless.

LINDA

What about French horns?

JORDAN

Oh, we're perfect. It's the superior instrument.

LINDA

Nope. There has to be something wrong with you.

JORDAN

I dunno. (beat) We're hidden.

LINDA

Hidden?

JORDAN

People forget we're there, because we blend in so well.

LINDA

Unless you're out of tune. And it's harder to stay in tune on a French horn than anything.

JORDAN

Exactly. So the better you are, the more people forget you're there. What about oboes?

LINDA

You already said. Precision.

JORDAN

Am I right?

LINDA

No. I'd say purity.

JORDAN

You mean perfectionism.

LINDA

No! Purity. Because at our best, the sound is a clean, straight, undisturbed line moving into something like... eternity. Except eventually, you know, we're human and we have to breathe. You can't play into eternity because your body won't let you. Your lungs won't let you. You're human and you have to breathe and the sound ends. It just...ends.

JORDAN

(beat) Are you breathing now?

LINDA

No.

JORDAN

Take a breath.

She does.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Take another breath.

She does.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Now go on.

In Front of the Desk: Rosemary, TROY, DORIE, and MITCH stare off into space. Mitch reads a book, ignoring the others.

ROSEMARY

This is the longest I've ever been away from home. (beat)
What about you?

No answer.

ROSEMARY (CONT'D)

The longest I've been away from home is a week. Every summer, I spend a week with my grandparents, so that's the longest I've been away at one time. I guess if you add all the weeks together, it's a lot. (beat) 16. Although I don't think I went when I was a baby. I don't think Mama would've sent me away for a week when I was a baby. The first time I remember going was when I was 7. So that's...9 weeks I've spent away from home total. Which is longer than the 5 weeks I'll spend here, so I guess technically, this is my longest *consecutive* stay from home, but not the longest overall. (beat) My grandma said she'll send cookies.

DORIE

What kind?

ROSEMARY

Snickerdoodles. What kind of cookies does your grandma make?

DORIE

I don't have a grandma.

ROSEMARY

Oh. (beat) Are you nervous about being away from home?

DORIE

No.

ROSEMARY

What's the longest you've ever been away from--

TROY

This is so boring!

DORIE

If you're already bored, it's gonna be a long five weeks.

TROY

I'm BORED!

DORIE

Why did you come then?

TROY

My mom made me. All this noise about you're only young once and being well-rounded. I'm gonna get a football scholarship anyway, so this dumb crap doesn't matter.

DORIE

I've never met a football player who plays trumpet.

TROY

I've never met a black girl who plays violin.

DORIE

Well, now you have.

TROY

What did you audition with?

DORIE

Bach. You?

TROY

Bach.

ROSEMARY

Hey, can you lend me two Bachs?

They stare at her.

ROSEMARY (CONT'D)

They're gonna post the seminars list later on.

TROY

Great. More dumb crap.

ROSEMARY

People who use the word "dumb" a lot usually are.

TROY

I get straight A's, so BAM!

DORIE

Me, too.

ROSEMARY

Me, too.

TROY

Big surprise there.

ROSEMARY

I only do it, because when I get all A's, I get a treat.

DORIE
What? Snickerdoodles?

ROSEMARY
No. Acid. (beat) Just kidding. It is snickerdoodles.

TROY
Well, look at that.

DORIE
Goody Two Shoes has a sense of humor.

ROSEMARY
I'm not a Goody Two Shoes.

TROY
Are you secretary or treasurer on student council?

ROSEMARY
(beat) Secretary.

DORIE
Good one.

Rosemary turns to Mitch.

ROSEMARY
What are you reading?

Mitch closes his book and leaves.

TROY
I'll bet he's reading something banned.

DORIE
Like "In Cold Blood." They banned that at my school, but I read it anyway, and it's soooo scary.

ROSEMARY
I'm not allowed.

TROY
Oh, man. Your parents are even more of a drag than mine.

DORIE
Do you have a record player?

TROY
Yeah?

DORIE
In your room?

TROY
Yeah.

DORIE
Then your parents aren't a drag.

TROY
I brought it with me.

DORIE
What?! Go get it!

TROY
All my stuff's still in boxes.

ROSEMARY
You haven't unpacked yet? That's the first thing I did.

TROY
Course it was.

ROSEMARY
We could play a game! They've got games at the desk!

DORIE
Oh, God. We've only been here 4 hours and we're already resorting to games?

ROSEMARY
I'll see what they've got.

She hops up and goes to the desk.

DORIE
What records did you bring?

TROY
The Who, The Stones, The Doors, The Velvet Underground,
Cream, Jefferson Airplane.

DORIE
Your parents must be rich.

TROY
That's what everyone says. What about yours?

DORIE
It's just my mom, so...

Rosemary comes back with the game.

ROSEMARY
They've got Operation!

TROY
Oh, brother.

ROSEMARY

Have you played it yet? My best friend, Marjorie, got it last year when it first came out, and it's so fun.

TROY

Go Marjorie.

ROSEMARY

Well, what do you suggest?

TROY

(beat) Fine. We'll play the dumb game.

ROSEMARY

Yay! So. Here's everyone's Specialist card.

DORIE

How're we gonna do this with just three of us?

TROY

We could ask that guy to play.

DORIE

Lenny? No way.

TROY

Why not?

DORIE

He wears red suspenders and smells like cabbage.

ROSEMARY

Is he from your school?

DORIE

I met him at auditions.

TROY

What chair is he?

DORIE

Second.

ROSEMARY

What chair are you?

DORIE

First. You?

ROSEMARY

Seventh.

They look at Troy.

TROY
 What do you think?

ROSEMARY
 (beat) I'll just split all the Specialist cards between us.

DORIE
 Who goes first?

TROY
 The person with the shortest hair. Ha!

He takes a Doctor's card.

TROY (CONT'D)
 Spare Ribs.

ROSEMARY
 Ohhh... that's the hardest one.

TROY
 Think I can't do it?

ROSEMARY
 It's hard is all I'm saying.

TROY
 Maybe for some people.

He pulls it out. No buzz.

TROY (CONT'D)
 See? You do it. Since you're so experienced.

ROSEMARY
 You can't put pieces back. Those aren't the rules.

TROY
 So? What good are rules if you don't break them?

Rosemary tries. The board buzzes, and she shouts. Dorie and Troy laugh their asses off, and Rosemary runs out.

DORIE
 You're awful.

TROY
 Yeah. (beat) You still wanna play?

DORIE
 Yeah, okay.

She takes a Doctor's card.

Heart Burn.

DORIE (CONT'D)

END OF EXCERPT