

CAROL 1

JOHN. Now, look: I'm a human being, I ...
CAROL. I did what you told me. I did, I did everything that, I read your *book*, you told me to buy your book and read it. Everything you *say* I ... (*She gestures to her notebook. The phone rings.*) I do.... Ev ...
JOHN. ... look:
CAROL. ... everything I'm told ...
JOHN. Look. Look. I'm not your *father*. (*Pause.*)
CAROL. What?
JOHN. I'm.
CAROL. Did I say you were my father?
JOHN. ... no ...
CAROL. Why did you say that...?
JOHN. I ...
CAROL. ... why...?
JOHN. ... in class I ... (*He picks up the phone. Into phone.*) Hello. I can't talk now. Jerry? Yes? I underst ... I can't talk now. I know ... I know ... Jerry. I can't *talk* now. Yes, I. Call me back in.... Thank you. (*He hangs up. To Carol.*) What do you want me to do? We are two people, all right? Both of whom have subscribed to ...
CAROL. No, no ...
JOHN. ... certain arbitrary ...
CAROL. No. You have to help me.
JOHN. Certain institutional ... you tell me what you want me to do.... You tell me what you want me to ...
CAROL. How can I go back and tell them the *grades* that I ...
JOHN. ... what can I do...?
CAROL. *Teach* me. *Teach* me.
JOHN. ... I'm trying to teach you.
CAROL. I read your book. I read it. I don't under ...
JOHN. ... you don't understand it.
CAROL. No.
JOHN. Well, perhaps it's not well *written* ...
CAROL. (*Simultaneously with "written."*) No. No. No. I want to *understand* it.
JOHN. What don't you understand? (*Pause.*)
CAROL. *Any* of it. What you're trying to say. When you talk about ...
JOHN. ... yes...? (*She consults her notes.*)
CAROL. "Virtual warehousing of the young" ...

Start

JOHN. "Virtual warehousing of the young." If we artificially prolong adolescence ...

CAROL. ... and about "The Curse of Modern Education."

JOHN. ... well ...

CAROL. I don't ...

JOHN. Look. It's just a *course*, it's just a *book*, it's just a ...

CAROL. No. No. There are *people* out there. People who came *here*. To know something they didn't *know*. Who *came* here. To be *helped*. To be *helped*. So someone would *help* them. To *do* something. To *know* something. To get, what do they say? "To get on in the world." How can I do that if I don't, if I fail? But I don't *understand*. I don't *understand*. I don't understand what anything means ... and I walk around. From morning 'til night: with this one thought in my head. I'm *stupid*.

JOHN. No one thinks you're stupid.

CAROL. No? What am I...?

JOHN. I ...

CAROL. ... what am I, then?

JOHN. I think you're angry. Many people are. I have a *telephone* call that I have to make. And an *appointment*, which is rather *pressing*; though I sympathize with your concerns, and though I wish I had the time, this was not a previously scheduled meeting and I ...

CAROL. ...you think I'm nothing ...

JOHN. ... have an appointment with a *realtor*, and with my wife and ...

CAROL. You think that I'm stupid.

JOHN. No. I certainly don't.

CAROL. You said it.

JOHN. No, I did not.

CAROL. You did.

JOHN. When?

CAROL. ... you ...

JOHN. No. I never did, or never would say that to a student, and ...

CAROL. You said, "What can that mean?" (*Pause.*) "What can that mean?" ... (*Pause.*)

JOHN. ... and what did that mean to you...?

CAROL. That meant I'm stupid. And I'll never learn. That's what that meant. And you're right.

JOHN. ... I ...

CAROL. But then. But then, what am I doing here...?
JOHN. ... if you thought that I ...
CAROL. ... when nobody wants me, and ...
JOHN. ... if you interpreted ...
CAROL. Nobody *tells* me anything. And I *sit* there ... in the *corner*. In the *back*. And everybody's talking about "this" all the time. And "concepts," and "precepts" and, and, and, and, and, WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU *TALKING ABOUT*? And I read your book. And they said, "Fine, go in that class." Because you talked about responsibility to the young. I *DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS AND I'M FAILING* ...
JOHN. May ...
CAROL. No, you're right. "Oh, hell." I failed. Flunk me out of it. It's garbage. Everything I do. "The ideas contained in this work express the author's feelings." That's right. That's right. I know I'm stupid. I know what I am. (*Pause.*) I know what I am, Professor. You don't have to tell me. (*Pause.*) It's pathetic. Isn't it?
JOHN. ... Aha ... (*Pause.*) Sit down. Sit down. Please. (*Pause.*) Please sit down.
CAROL. Why?
JOHN. I want to talk to you.
CAROL. Why?
JOHN. Just sit down. (*Pause.*) Please. Sit down. Will you, please...? (*Pause. She does so.*) Thank you.
CAROL. What?
JOHN. I want to tell you something.
CAROL. (*Pause.*) What?
JOHN. Well, I know what you're talking about.
CAROL. No. You don't.
JOHN. I think I do. (*Pause.*)
CAROL. How can you?
JOHN. I'll tell you a story about myself. (*Pause.*) Do you mind? (*Pause.*) I was raised to think myself stupid. That's what I want to tell you. (*Pause.*)
CAROL. What do you mean?
JOHN. Just what I said. I was brought up, and my earliest, and most persistent memories are of being told that I was stupid. "You have such *intelligence*. Why must you behave so *stupidly*?" Or, "Can't you *understand*? Can't you *understand*?" And I could *not* understand. I could *not* understand.

Stop