

Reminders

A play by Tom Moran

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## Remainders

### Setting

The time: Saturday morning

The place: a public library

### Characters

SWEET VALLEY HIGH VOL. 3 ("SWEET"), female, late teens. A wholesome Californian circa the early 1990'S.

AMERICA'S MAYOR ("MAYOR"), male, 50's. Rudy Giuliani circa 2002.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE ("PRIDE"), female, 20's. A socialite from Regency England, wearing a torn and weathered dress.

HOW TO WIN AT VIDEO GAMES ("VIDEO"), male, teens. A nerd from the early 1980's.

(NOISE of a bustling crowd. LIGHTS UP on SWEET, MAYOR and PRIDE, who stand center of a bare stage. Everyone looks around. [Actors are free to roam the stage.] )

SWEET

Where are we? What kind of house is this?

MAYOR

I'm not sure this is a house.

PRIDE

Oh, dear. I'm afraid I know what this is.

SWEET

What? (Covers ears.) It's so loud and busy. All these people!

PRIDE

We're in one of the library conference rooms, I think. We're... for sale.

SWEET

For sale? What do you mean, for sale?

MAYOR

Yeah. People have been reading us books for free our whole lives. And now they have to pay?

PRIDE

It is a trifle backwards, yes. But the library simply doesn't desire our company anymore.

SWEET

What? Why not? Is there something wrong with me?

PRIDE

I'm sorry, what's your name, dear?

SWEET

I'm Sweet Valley High. Volume Three, A Night to Remember. (Pause.) You know, the one where Jessica and Elizabeth both want to be prom queen and Elizabeth is gonna win and Jessica is soooo jealous and so she spikes Elizabeth's punch with Everclear, right? And Elizabeth is all wasted

and she drives off with Sam. (Pause.) Sam. *Jessica's boyfriend*. Then they run over a guy in Sam's BMW.

MAYOR

What happens then?

SWEET

I don't know, that's in volume four. And she never wants to talk. So probably something really sad.

MAYOR

If I may ask. What year were you published?

SWEET

1993.

MAYOR

Oh. You're older than you look.

SWEET

Hey! Speak for yourself.

MAYOR

You've got nine years on me, honey.

SWEET

What's going on? Why are we here? Who are you?

MAYOR

I'm "America's Mayor: The Rise of Rudy Giuliani."

PRIDE

Oh my.

SWEET

I'm afraid I've never heard of Mister Giuliani.

MAYOR

Really? He was Time's Man of the Year. He beat out Osama Bin Laden.

SWEET

Oh. Is that good?

MAYOR

I would say that's some pretty tough competition.

SWEET

I'm sorry, I don't know who these people are. I don't get out much.

PRIDE

When was the last time anyone checked you out? I mean, from the library?

SWEET

2011.

MAYOR

Ouch.

SWEET

I suppose you've done better?

MAYOR

No comment. (To PRIDE.) But you. You knew who I was.

PRIDE

I tend to get borrowed rather often, so I can keep abreast of the ways of the world. (Displays her ragged garb.) The downside is that I've grown much the worse for wear.

MAYOR

And what makes you Miss Popular?

PRIDE

I fear I haven't introduced myself. The name is Prejudice. Pride and Prejudice.

MAYOR

Oooh. (Gestures to SWEET.) And I thought she was old!

PRIDE

I'll have you know I am a 2008 edition.

SWEET

(to PRIDE)

Oh wow! Jessica and Elizabeth had to read you in tenth grade! Elizabeth loved you but Jessica sweet-talked a freshman into ghosting her book report. And that got her boyfriend at the time, Josh, like really angry, so he broke up with her and started dating that slut Ashley Duncan, until she broke into his locker and-

MAYOR

Yes. Of course. So. We're for sale now?

PRIDE

I'm afraid so. They do this each year.

SWEET

But why? What did we do wrong?

PRIDE

They only have so much space on the shelves. They need to make room for the next generation.

MAYOR

So they're asking cover price, right? (He looks at his backside.) Looks like I go for \$24.99. What a bargain!

PRIDE

The price is a dollar each. Tomorrow it's a dollar a bag.

MAYOR

What? A buck! I'll be out of here in ten minutes. Nobody's forgotten about Rudy Giuliani, I'll tell you that.

PRIDE

That is an accurate statement, yes.

SWEET

But what if no one buys us?

PRIDE

Oh, er, well. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

MAYOR

Pulp mill to shredder.

SWEET

What?!

PRIDE

Ahem! Wasn't Mr. Giuliani known as a *calming* voice?

SWEET

(panicking)

The shredder? Oh my god! I'm too young for the shredder! Please. Help me! (Yelling.) I don't belong here! How do we get out of here?!

PRIDE

Take a deep breath! Breathe! You need to be strong!

SWEET

I'm not strong! I miss the library! I want to go back! It was so quiet and peaceful there. We had our own Sweet Valley shelf. Everyone there looked and acted just like me and nothing had any consequences. (Beat.) It was kind of like in the books, actually.

MAYOR

You speak for yourself, I was stuck in the New York Biographies section. I got *The Art of the Deal* yammering in my ear all day long. Christ, that book never shuts up.

PRIDE

Yes, well.

(SWEET rubs her arms and blows into her hands.)

PRIDE(cont.)

Are you all right, dear?

SWEET

It's so cold in here! I'm not dressed for this, I'm a paperback! (Looks up. A spotlight shines on her) Hey, those people are looking at us. (Starts waving.) Hello! Pick me! I'm full of adolescent intrigue! One night changed Sweet Valley forever, don't you want to know what happened? (Spotlight fades.) No. No one's ever going to buy me, are they?

PRIDE

Oh, I should think so. You know, Young Adult books have gotten very very popular. Even among old adults. Why, the most popular novels on earth are about a teenage wizard.

SWEET

At Sweet Valley High, Jessica is a wizard at, at cheerleading and backstabbing!

MAYOR

And Rudy's a wizard at cleaning up the streets and being America's shoulder to cry on. Hey, Pride, you said you hear things. What's Rudy up to these days? Is he president yet?

PRIDE

Your guess is somewhat ... wayward. But he is still a very public figure.

MAYOR

Oh yeah? For what?

PRIDE

He is a counsel for the president.

MAYOR

That's it? Just a lawyer?

PRIDE

Yes, but a very important one. He appears on the television and explains away all the things the president does.

MAYOR

You mean explains. Not explains away.

PRIDE

No, you heard me correctly.

MAYOR

And who is this president anyway?

(Spotlight on SWEET.)

SWEET

(Pointing up)

Hey, some more people are looking at us! (Waving, desperate) Hi, guys! Pick me! Please! I'm still in the flower of my youth!

(The spotlight moves to MAYOR.)

PRIDE

(To MAYOR)

Those two gentlemen in the red caps are looking at you rather intently.

MAYOR

Hey, yeah. (Upwards.) How about me! You know who called Rudy America's Mayor? Oprah! And I think that lady knows a thing or two!

PRIDE

I don't expect these are Oprah fans. But nevertheless I believe you have a patron!

MAYOR

Great! But quick, who is the presid-

(MAYOR exits stage left as though pulled by an invisible hand.)

PRIDE

(yelling after him)

You'll find out!

SWEET

Miss Pride? I'm scared.

PRIDE

There's no call to be afraid.

SWEET

That's easy for you to say. You're a timeless work of literature. If people will pay a dollar for that guy, you'll have no problem at all.

PRIDE

Do you know my plot, dear? It's about a young, earnest woman who yearns to fall in love but finds obstacles in her way. Her family, society, her reputation. You know.

SWEET

That sounds a lot like what happens at Sweet Valley High.

PRIDE

Precisely. Remember, the best books never die, they are just recycled. (Pause.) Oh dear. I mean, not literally. But you see, what happens to your Elizabeth isn't all that dissimilar from what happens to mine.

SWEET

Your Elizabeth commits vehicular manslaughter?

PRIDE

Listen: do you recall all the girls who checked you out of the library back when you first arrived?

SWEET

How could I forget? I was the most important thing in the world to them! Until they got to book four, I mean.

PRIDE

Precisely! Girls huddled under their covers, staying up hours past their bedtime for just one more of your chapters. A dollar is a small price to pay for that kind of joy. Especially a dollar a bag.

SWEET

Maybe.

PRIDE

But my readers are completing an assignment. Nothing siphons the joy out of a book more than being required to read it. Isn't it better to be wanted than needed?

SWEET

I bet everyone likes you even if they don't admit it sometimes. *I* like you. You make me feel lucky.

PRIDE

That's very sweet.

SWEET

Sweet is in my name, after all.

PRIDE

Listen, since we have this time together, how about you read to me. From your first chapter?

SWEET

You mean it? (PRIDE nods.) Okay! Chapter one. "Jessica had had enough."

PRIDE

Strong opening.

SWEET

Thanks! "She stared at the poster for Jungle Prom with a fire raging in her-

(Spotlight on PRIDE.)

SWEET(cont.)

Hey, a woman's looking at you! (Upwards.) Hey! Hey! One classy lady deserves another! (To PRIDE.) She's got a sheet of paper.

PRIDE

A-ha. You see? Reading list. Here I go! Godspeed! Remember, you are wanted!

(PRIDE exits stage left via invisible hand. She and SWEET wave goodbye. SWEET looks after her a moment, sad but resolute.)

SWEET

Wanted. I'm wanted.

(Noise offstage. VIDEO loudly enters stage right and halts center stage, as though placed there. He looks dazed and dusts himself off, coughing.)

SWEET

Hello. Are you all right?

VIDEO

Where am I? Who are you?

SWEET

I'm Sweet Valley High Volume Three, A Night to Remember.

VIDEO

Oh my God! You're the night that changed Sweet Valley forever!

SWEET

(bashful)

You're heard of me?

VIDEO

We talked about the Sweet Valley High girls a lot on my shelf. But we never really got to talk to you. I'm "How to Win at Video Games."

SWEET

Oh, how ... nice. What sort of games?

VIDEO

You know, Pac-Man, Space Invaders, Donkey Kong. All the big ones.

SWEET

You sound very, um, useful. Do you get checked out often?

VIDEO

(coughs, dusts himself off some more.)

Sorry, didn't hear you, I have a lot of dust on me. So ... do you know where we are?

SWEET

We're for sale.

VIDEO

For sale? Oh my god, who's going to want to buy us?

SWEET

It's okay. We'll be fine.

VIDEO

Do you think so? Really? I'm worried that I might be a little, you know, dated. (Awkward.) Not that I've dated much, if you know what I mean, ha ha.

SWEET

Don't worry, we have many chapters left to go. In fact, why don't you read me something. Do you have anything about Super Mario Brothers?

VIDEO

There's a SUPER Mario Brothers?

SWEET

Just give me whatever you got.

VIDEO

You really want me to?

(Spotlight on SWEET. She looks up.)

SWEET

(thoughtful)

Yes. I do. I really do.

(Blackout. End of play.)