SUGAR DADDIES

A Play by R.S. Bennett © 2017

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SUGAR DADDIES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Brenda/ Becky  University Student, early 20’s troubled by student loans – takes job as a dancer

Tiffany  University Student – room-mate of Brenda, Tara

Tara/ Theresa  Grad Student - takes job as dancer following death of her father

Sketch  An artist who sometimes doubles as a waiter

Toni  The female owner of the club where Tara & Brenda dance

Daniel  A commodity broker who is well connected politically and secret partner of the club, in his 40’s

Harold  A well connected banker who is allied with Daniel

Senator  A U.S. Senator

Waiter  A waiter
SUGAR DADDIES

ACT I
SCENE I

SETTING: A college dorm

AT RISE: Three female students talking

BRENDA: I can’t believe how much I owe on my student loans. I’m just starting my junior year, and already I owe more than twenty four thousand dollars. By the time I finish grad school, I’ll owe a hundred and fifty thousand, or more.

TIFFANY: Good luck finding a job where you’ll earn enough to make payments. How are we supposed to meet our challenges if going to college just puts us in so much debt we can never pay it off?

TARA: What problems do you think will affect us the most?

BRENDA: The growing number of Neo-fascists and white supremacists.

TIFFANY: The cities under water due to sea levels rising. More refugees fleeing disasters as well as the resulting increases in death and diseases.

TARA: Not to mention the farm land which will also be flooded and saturated with salts making it unsuitable for farming, which will add to the number of famines and refugees.

BRENDA: The garbage spiral in the Pacific killing sea life, as is the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Plastic garbage, the pesticide and fertilizer run off choking the planet, not to mention the growing acid levels in the oceans.

TIFFANY: The rise in religious fundamentalism and racism, those who believe they have the right to force their beliefs on others – and are willing to kill or victimize those believe differently.

TARA: All the people we have in jails and prisons. We have more people in prison than any other nation. We have more prisoners than we have college students. The lack of good jobs, high housing costs, drug addiction, and of course, all the homeless mentally ill.

TIFFANY: Of course the biggest problem we may be facing is that most guys are jerks.
BRENDA: Ain’t that the truth? Spoiled little boys who believe everyone exists to serve them.

TIFFANY: The likelihood of nuclear weapons dropping on us is greater than it has been in years. Too many people are under too much pressure, desperate and taking risks which hurt themselves and others.

TARA: What about the 1% who essentially own the politicians and get laws passed which benefit them and them alone?

BRENDA: So what can be done, are we just supposed to drop out of college and have babies, hoping they will be able to fix all the screw ups?

TARA: Well, that’s the plan of the Re-pug-nites. God so favors the rich that he’ll wave his magic wand and make all their problems go away. It may drive everyone else into poverty, but no matter. All the rich need to do is focus on making more money.

TIFFANY: The only problem they see is that they pay too much in taxes. They believe the poor receive too much, like access to food and shelter. I guess they figure as long as they can blame homosexuals and the poor as being the cause of all problems in America, they don’t have to look any deeper.

TARA: Of course, the Demo-rats are really no better; they want everyone to answer to bureaucrats who believe they are helping, while what they’re actually doing the bidding of corporate masters who control Congress.

BRENDA: What choices do we really have?

TARA: Well, we can continue as we have been and hope that things will turn out for the best. Or, stop going to school full time, get a job and continue part time. Of course that means six to eight years to get a degree, more for a masters or Ph.D. Or, find a part time job which pay enough to make college expenses.

TIFFANY: Not many of those jobs exist.

TARA: True, but I got one a few weeks ago. Sorry I haven’t told any of you about it, but I wanted to wait a while to see how it turned out.

TIFFANY: I thought you were grieving the death of your father, and just didn’t want to talk to anybody.

TARA: That’s also true.

BRENDA: What type of job?
TARA: It’s not the type of job everyone would like. It has dangers and temptations. (pause) I dance at a club. It’s not a job I particularly wanted, but after my Dad died, I didn’t see I had much choice. I dance two to three four hour shifts a week, generally making two to three hundred dollars each shift.

BRENDA: Stripping?

TARA: Yes.

END SCENE
SCENE II

SETTING: Dorm room, several weeks later

AT RISE: Brenda and Tara talking as they get into some very tight shorts and sheer blouses

TARA: Excited about the party tonight?

BRENDA: Excited and nervous, it’s only two weeks since I started dancing at the club, and I’m nervous every time I get up on that little stage. What do you think the party will be like?

TARA: I’m not sure; I haven’t been to a party at the owners place before. I got invited to one when I first started, but I needed to study, had an early morning talk to give. But there are supposed to be a lot of interesting people there.

BRENDA: It’s up in the hills, isn’t it?

TARA: Yes, they have a pool, Jacuzzi and tennis court. Liquor will be flowing, and I expect cocaine and other drugs as well. Quite frankly, we’ll be there as eye candy and possibly party favors for some of the guests, so be aware of that. Despite that, it should be interesting.

END SCENE
SCENE III

SETTING: Later that evening. A party at an upscale residence

AT RISE: Tara and Brenda arriving at party where people are milling about a pool, drinking and making small talk as nearly naked young women mingle with the other guests. One man is making a sketch.

BRENDA / BECKY: Hi Sketch, they ask you to make some drawings of the party?

SKETCH: Yes, Becky, like in the club, no photography, but the management and owners allow, and even encourage, artists to draw the dancers.

BRENDA / BECKY: I put the one you gave me up in my room. I’ve received several compliments about it.

SKETCH: Perhaps some time, I could get you to come down to my little studio and model for me as I do a painting of you.

BRENDA / BECKY: Perhaps, I’ll have to think about it. (pause) Give me the address of your studio. (SKETCH hands BRENDA/BECKY his card and she puts it in her back pocket after looking at it.)

TARA: Hi Toni, nice of you to throw this party.

TONI: The least I can do for my girls. You know, Theresa, that anytime you, or any of the girls want to come up here to swim, play tennis or just get away for a while, you are welcome.

TARA/ THERESA: Thank you, I expect I’ll take you up on that.

TONI: Theresa, this is Daniel. He’s a broker who wants to meet you.

TARA/ THERESA: Oh, what sort of broker are you, real estate?

DANIEL: No, commodities.

TARA/ THERESA: Crops, currencies and cattle?

(Toni mingles with the other guests)

DANIEL: That’s most of it. What does a dancer like you know of commodities?

TARA/ THERESA: I consider myself a small business woman. Dancing is what I currently do to support myself and my studies. But I do know that commodity trading is about the best legal way to make a lot of money.
DANIEL: Or, lose your shirt.

TARA/ THERESA: (unbuttoning her blouse) Most men don’t seem to mind when I lose my shirt. (The blouse falls onto the lounge chair next to her) But, with proper stop loss orders and awareness of the technical aspects of trading, losses can be minimized. Of course, keeping an eye on the fundamentals is also important.

DANIEL: You’re right, of course. Not many women know much about the commodity market.

TARA/ THERESA: Well, I grew up on a small farm, a ranch actually. We country girls aren’t as stupid as the media portrays us.

DANIEL: Obviously. What are you studying?

TARA/ THERESA: I’m working on my master’s in Economic Geography.

DANIEL: That’s not a topic many pursue.

TARA/ THERESA: True, but everything is dependent on economics, geography and politics, and I want to be able to make a difference.

DANIEL: Tomorrow evening, I’ll be taking part in a conference that will last three days. There will be a few Senators and Congressmen there, as well as some other influential people. I’d like it if you would be my date for the conference. You won’t be allowed in the actual meetings, which are usually outdoors, by the way, but you’d be welcomed at the informal gatherings in the lodge.

(SILENCE FOR THREE SECONDS)

DANIEL: I’ll open a trading account in your name, with five thousand dollars in it.

TARA/ THERESA: Where is it being held?

DANIEL: In California. Perhaps you’ve heard of it, Bohemian Meadows.

TARA/ THERESA: Yes, give me the details and I’ll plan on meeting you there.

DANIEL: Good, I look forward to seeing more of you.

END SCENE
SCENE IV

SETTING: Later that evening, Dorm room

AT RISE: Brenda and Tara are just stepping into the dorm room when both their cell phones buzz: a text message has been received.

TARA: (Both Tara and Brenda take out their cell phones) Something must be up. Tiffany is back in the hospital.

BRENDA: She go off her meds again?

TARA: (Reading text message) Came back from a date, singing about how rotten everyone is.

BRENDA: Must have been a bad date.

TARA: Well, at least the house manager let us know. What’s the MOST team?

BRENDA: Cops and social workers trained in ways to calm people who are having some sort of psychological distress. Well, she won’t be back for at least 72 hours. That’s how long they’ll keep her before deciding if she should be kept longer. We need to make some decisions. Most of the time, she is fine, a pleasure to be around, but every once in a while… (shakes head)

TARA: I’ve got to start packing. I need to leave by noon tomorrow, two PM latest, in order to get to the conference at a reasonable time. I need to go shopping for a few things as well.

BRENDA: It was a good party. Only one guy was a total jerk, and he got tossed rather quickly. I’m not sure how many hands I felt on my ass, but I guess that’s just an occupational hazard. A couple of the hands owners I flirted with, but most I just ignored. (pause) Tiffany is in the hospital and Tara’s got a sugar daddy. Never a dull moment around here.

TARA: Well, at least he’s not all that bad looking, he’s rich and he already put five grand into the account he opened for me, just to be his date, and I’ll get to meet a Senator or two as well as some other big wigs. And, Brenda, thanks for taking my shift.

END SCENE
SCENE V  

SETTING: Two days later. A small open air bar in the large garden of an exclusive lodge in the lush countryside of Northern California.  

AT RISE: Daniel is talking to two men. Sketch, dressed as a waiter, is behind the bar.  

HAROLD: People don’t trust us, and some are threatening to take their savings out of our banks and put them into credit unions, under the mattress, or even, god forbid in small regional banks. What can we do?  

DANIEL: (Sipping at his drink) We can eliminate currency altogether. Require people to use credit and debit cards for everything. Give big enough campaign contributions to our allies in Congress (nods to Senator next to him) and it could become law in what, three or four years?  

HAROLD: Get our marketing people on it, right away. Two to four percent of every transaction coming right to us, and our costs are nothing but a nano-second of computer time. That’s billions of dollars every month.  

SENIOR: It will take at least seven or eight years. A lot of people want the convenience of cash and a growing number are opposing everything we tell them they want.  

DANIEL: It may take longer than we’d like, but a marketing campaign combined with the news media touting the safety of a cashless society, we’ll get it done.  

HAROLD: Remind the people that bankers are needed and we are good shepherds of their money. We lend money so dreams can come true. Money sets you free.  

DANIEL: Money is all that matters. I pity the poor clowns who believe life is more than money. Money and power are all that matters.  

HAROLD: Food is another problem.  

DANIEL: (Putting down empty glass) The food is good. You have a problem with food? Waiter, come here.  

HAROLD: We have large positions in all the big supermarkets. More people are beginning to grow their own food. If they eat the food they grow, they will spend less at the supermarkets. That means less revenue for the supermarkets and fewer profits for us.  

SKETCH: Yes sir, what do you need?  

DANIEL: Another scotch – just bring the bottle.
SKETCH: The Aultmore or the Glengoyne?

DANIEL: (to Sketch) The Glengoyne. (Sketch goes to the bar)

In the big cities, few people have the land to grow their own food, but rooftop gardens are starting to become popular. In smaller cities and towns many people have yards where they are able to grow food. We need zoning laws to prevent people from growing food. Restrictions put into homeowners associations, as well as have city councils demand people have lawns, possibly encourage flower gardens, but not gardens for food. Complain that they are eye sores, and impose fines for those who grow their own food, or raise chickens or ducks.

SKETCH: (Sketch pours some Scotch for Daniel, and places the bottle down) Here’s your Scotch, sir. (To the other two men) Is there anything I can get for either of you gentlemen?

SENATOR: Not right now.

HAROLD: (To Sketch) No, no thank you. (Sketch returns to bar)

(To Daniel) Good idea. Good marketing campaigns are the key to gaining greater control over people's money, and when you control money, you control the people.

SENATOR: Many communities will put up a lot of resistance to that. Young people want greater control over their lives, and some older people can’t pay the prices supermarkets charge. Food gardens are a source of pride and independence to many. This is not an issue I can support you on. It would be political suicide for me. (Walks to Sketch) I’ll have that drink now.

HAROLD: Well, we can’t get his support on everything, but we may be able to have him come around. Meanwhile we’ll continue to proceed.

DANIEL: Of course. Withholding funds from his re-election campaign should be enough to do the trick. If not, we fund someone who will.

HAROLD: What are your thoughts on the various wars and potential wars we may be involved in?

DANIEL: War time is the easiest time to make a lot of money. Governments and others will pay top dollar for second rate products, and substantial premiums for quality. But we can’t be seen as supporting war, unless we can demonstrate substantial provocation.

HAROLD: North Korea, Russia and Iran are all adversaries we may potentially have to go to war with, not to mention Venezuela, although that would (Continues next page)
HAROLD: (Continued) be a mistake to my way of thinking. Much better to just help speed their collapse. We already have wars in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and we’re in Yemen, and Niger, although few people know about it. There is also the potential of war between China and India, as well as between Pakistan and India. We need to have our think tanks study each of these to determine where the greatest potential for profit exists in each of these wars.

DANIEL: I agree; we need to monitor each conflict the best we can.

HAROLD: We need to do it quietly, of course. Should the press find out about it, there could be hell to pay. They’ll simply claim we’re war profiteers, not good businessmen looking to maximize opportunity.

DANIEL: (Sipping his scotch) We’ll certainly catch some flack if it leaks to the press, but like everything else, the government will come down hardest on small time operators, and leave us alone. We just have to keep them in debt to us. Then they won’t touch us.

HAROLD: (Nodding) Another area of concern is the former mental patients who claim they have recovered and no longer need drugs. They even have some psychiatrists supporting them. In fact they claim that many of the drugs are making them ill, and cause violent behavior. This could hurt us if large numbers of people stop taking drugs.

DANIEL: Profits from drug companies make up a significant portion of our portfolios. Congress clamped down hard last year and made it easier to force drugs on people. The public needs to be protected from the lunatics. Once you go crazy, you may go crazy at any time.

HAROLD: But they have proof; studies have shown that some drugs do cause violence, while others show that trauma is a major source of mental illness, and it can be treated successfully without drugs. Finland has made astounding progress in non-drug therapies.

DANIEL: I don’t care. We are heavily invested in drug companies. Profits are all that matter. Another public relation campaign to remind people of how frightened they need to be of everyone who has been given a mental health diagnosis.

HAROLD: That’s enough for now, I could use a walk.

(Lights dim and then brighten to show passage of time)

SKETCH: (Finding Daniel slumped over a picnic table next to nearly empty bottle of Scotch.) Looks like he passed out. (Continues next page)
SKETCH:  (Continued) (Checking pulse) Breathing and pulse are good.  
(Sketch gets a wheelchair and manages to get Daniel, and his nearly empty bottle, into it and wheels him back toward the lodge.)

END SCENE
SCENE VI

SETTING: A Few minutes later. Ext. Int. of room at lodge

AT RISE: Sketch rolling wheelchair with Daniel in it to room as Tara (Dressed provocatively) opens the door

TARA: They called and let me know you were on your way up. Sketch, is that you?

SKETCH: Theresa?

TARA: Theresa is just at the club, here and everywhere else, I’m Tara. Is he drunk? Help me get him to bed. (Sketch wheels Daniel into the bedroom where Tara and Sketch move Daniel from the wheelchair to the bed.) Help me get his clothes off. (They undress Daniel, and Tara pulls the covers over him, strokes his face and kisses him on the forehead. Sketch then wheels the wheelchair into the outer room, Tara follows.) Care for a drink?

SKETCH: Might as well have some of this. Six hundred dollars a bottle, it would be a shame to let it go to waste. (Empties the bottle pouring a small amount into glasses for both himself and Tara)

TARA: (taking a glass) It was nice of you to bring him here. (Tara sits on a couch and motions for Sketch to also sit, which he does.)

SKETCH: It was the decent thing to do, even though he seems to be evil incarnate.

TARA: What do you mean? He was quite nice with me last night.

SKETCH: After listening to him this afternoon, I can understand why people think Communism is a good thing. (Emptying his glass in one sip) This is good scotch.

TARA: I still don’t understand.

SKETCH: Well, he wants to do away with cash because banks receive a portion of every financial transaction made with debit or credit cards. He wants to prevent people from growing food as that could harm the profits of banks and supermarkets. Sees war as an opportunity to increase prices, and believes people should be prevented from recovering from mental illness.

TARA: That’s horrible, but people can’t recover from mental illness, can they?

SKETCH: Sure they can, as long as they don’t expect to get well just by taking drugs.

TARA: Oh?
SKETCH: Drugs help many people, but the drugs don’t cure anything. For a few people, just taking magnesium will help them more than any drug. The body needs magnesium to produce serotonin, the feel good chemical. Food in America, due to all the chemical fertilizers and pesticides used here, is deficient in magnesium. But, for most people it is more complicated.

TARA: Is trauma a cause of mental illness? One of my room-mates was just hospitalized again for exhibiting mental problems. She blames it on all the traumas she’s endured, and doesn’t like taking the meds.

SKETCH: Yes, psychological trauma can cause almost all the symptoms listed in the psychiatrists’ bible, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Several non-drug treatments are available and being used quite successfully by more than a few people.

TARA: (finishing her scotch with a single sip) So magnesium and trauma treatments will cure mental illness?

SKETCH: For some, perhaps. It would be a good start, but it is more complicated than that. Various illnesses can cause psych problems, or make them worse. Brain injuries can contribute to the problems individuals’ experience, as well as those who develop poor responses to stress. Some claim that the stresses involved in modern society are the reason so many have psychological problems.

TARA: I never heard of that before.

SKETCH: Standard medicine just involves bio-chemistry: cells, tissues and organs. Eastern medicine deals with subtle energies, how they aid healing and add vibrancy to life. How one deals dealing with stress is also an important factor. Tremendous advances have been made by combination of methods. Perhaps the most important thing for recovery is examining one’s life, not to beat your-self up, but rather to understand why various choices were made. Including those things which you may have felt, at the time, no other choice was available.

TARA: Why does an artist know so much about mental illness?

SKETCH: I’ve been homeless, a patient in various mental hospitals, and was repeatedly arrested and jailed. My life experiences forced me to address the issues I faced. While I experienced a lot of injustices, I sought understanding, not revenge. My painting and drawing work to keep me in a calm frame of mind, plus bring in a small income. Not enough to live on though, that’s why I need to take jobs like this.
TARA: That’s fascinating. Do you think you could come over and talk to my roommates? We need to know what can be done. Tiffany’s a good person, but every now and then she is just too much to handle. Your insights may help us make the best choices.

SKETCH: I’m willing, but first it’s important to have Tiffany agree. She needs to be the one setting the direction. From my experience, it’s only from those she trusts that she may be willing to accept help. The assistance needs to be in harmony with her values. I don’t have answers that everyone agrees with, nor do I offer any guarantees. And, setbacks are norm. But I’m willing to try to help her.

TARA: Thank you. Why don’t we have room service bring us something to eat? I expected Daniel to be back hours ago. While I was looking forward to having Bouillabaisse at the chic little restaurant here, why don’t we have some pizza and chicken sent up? That way Daniel will also be able to eat something when he eventually wakes up.

SKETCH: Sounds good to me.

TARA: (picking up the house phone and pushing a few buttons) Room service? Would you please send up a pizza and some chicken – enough for three or four. Oh yes, also a bottle of Pinot Grigio, a pitcher of ice tea, and a pot of coffee. Thank you. (To Sketch) What sort of injustices?

SKETCH: Aside from having to make the choice of dying in jail or pleading no contest to charges I didn’t believe myself to be guilty of, I encountered attorneys who were quite open about covering up the mistakes and abuses of the police. The treatment in the jail and in the court, at least in Los Angeles, where all this happened to me, typically ranged between callous and depraved indifference. I hope they have changed for the better, but I doubt if they have. Our plea bargain system encourages crime, and has created a system of injustice, not justice.

TARA: Did you file any complaints about this?

SKETCH: Several, but each time they couldn’t see any problems with how I was treated, or they rejected the complaint outright. Politicians told me those sort of things just don’t happen. Attorneys told me it happens all the time, but there was nothing I could do about it, while the media told me I was lying.

TARA: So, there is nothing that can be done?

SKETCH: I believe it was Justice Stephen Breyer who said the Supreme Court doesn’t tell people what to do, but rather it sets boundaries. In my opinion, they have set some pretty pathetic boundaries.
TARA: What does the Supreme Court have to do with it?

SKETCH: Just as Supreme Court decisions made the civil war almost inevitable, a number of Supreme Court decisions have, in my opinion, work to diminish any trust people once had in the government. Neither political party works to benefit any but the super wealthy. Frazier v. Cupp has permitted police to lie to the public since 1969. Why and how often they lie solely depends on the integrity of the local police. To avoid the expenses Miranda v. Arizona imposed on communities, many prosecutors turned to threats and intimidations to prevent defendants from having their say in courts. And, the court ruled these were permissible as well.

TARA: That’s a bit hard to believe. What you’ve been saying seems contrary to almost everything I’ve been taught.

SKETCH: Things I once believed to be true, I found out simply weren’t. While I knew the system wasn’t perfect, I was dismayed at how pathetic it really was – or is. As I see it, these decisions have been a major factor in the rise of gangs in the major cities, as well as part of reason for the rise in white supremacists and Neo-Nazi groups.

(Loud knocking on the door)

TARA: That must be room service (Walks to door and opens it) Yes, thank you. (Wheels in cart with food, wine, coffee and ice tea)

SKETCH: ( Gets up, wheels cart closer to couch, pours himself some ice tea and takes a piece of chicken) I’m not interested in upsetting you. I know almost no one believes me, but these are the conclusions I’ve arrived at due to my experiences.

DANIEL: (Walking out of bedroom in his shorts) What is he doing here?

TARA: You need to thank him. He brought you back here after you got drunk, and passed out.

SKETCH: I better get going. (Walks to wheelchair and pushes it to the door and opens it.)

DANIEL: (Looks first at Tara who is staring at him, then picks up bottle of wine, and then turns towards Sketch) Thank you. (Sketch exits with wheelchair)

TARA: Don’t you think coffee would be a better choice? Take a shower, it will help wake you up, and give me a chance to get into a better mood.
DANIEL: Not a bad idea. (Pours some coffee, and walks into the bedroom. Tara pours herself a glass of wine.)

END SCENE
SCENE VII

SETTING: The suite at the lodge, some minutes later

AT RISE: Tara is sitting on a cushion on the floor in full lotus position with a half glass of wine in front of her. (After a brief pause, Daniel enters the room wearing only a towel. He pauses for a second, looking at Tara, then proceeds to the cart and picks up the bottle of wine.)

TARA: Coffee, remember? (DANIEL puts down bottle and pours himself a cup of coffee) I have nothing against having a drink or two. (Picking up her wine glass and then standing) But, I was really disappointed that you decided to get drunk instead of being with me.

DANIEL: I’m sorry. I don’t know what got into me.

TARA: My father was a drinker. I loved him, he was a good man; and God knows he had reason to drink. He would work all day on the ranch and never take a drink until seven o’clock at night. At precisely seven he would get up from his chair, get down his bottle of bourbon and pour himself a drink, then another. I’m leery of drunks and you’re a drunk.

DANIEL: I said I was sorry.


DANIEL: What do you mean?

TARA: Like I said, I loved my Dad, and he was a good man. But the burden he carried was too much for him. I understand how life can present situations which are just a little more difficult than you think you can handle.

DANIEL: I tend to handle things well. I don’t always get what I want right away, but mostly I do get what I want. Life has treated me well.

TARA: On the positive side, being drunk, you also brought back memories of my mother. She disappeared when I was twelve. She went to visit her sister. Flew into Boise, rented a car and was never seen again. They found her rent-a-car eight months later, abandoned on an old logging road. We never knew what happened to her. No body was ever found; her credit card was never used again. She just disappeared. It was just too much … (Tara starts to cry. Daniel goes to Tara, hugs her and the then leads her to the bedroom)

END SCENE
ACT II

SCENE I

SETTING: The next morning. A restaurant at the lodge

AT RISE: The Senator is sitting at a table with a cup of coffee. Daniel and Tara approach.

DANIEL: Good morning, Senator. I’d like you to meet Tara. Not only is she beautiful, she is also a strong determined small business woman; while also working on her master’s in Economic Geography.

SENATOR: (Motioning for them to sit) Would you care to join me for breakfast?

TARA: (Taking a seat next to the senator) Thank you, sir. (Daniel also takes a seat.)

SENATOR: What makes you interested in, what was it, Economic Geography?

TARA: Yes, Economics and Geography have been around as long as humans have walked the planet. While one, economics, is a human invention, it is dependent on both politics and geography, which humans have but meager control over. Whether a government is organized around capitalistic, communist, socialist, or any other philosophy which ever existed or will exist, economics and geography will be central to the welfare of every nation and its people. Sir, I really don’t understand why more people aren’t interested in the subject.

SENATOR: So you’re flexible about the type of government you want to live under?

TARA: A growing number of students are coming out in favor of both communism and socialism. Of course, there is a growing Neo-Nazi movement as well. Each see the country moving in the wrong direction, the poor and middle being squeezed while the wealthiest take increasingly larger portions for themselves. In Economic Geography we look at systems, Federal, State and local, be they corporate, capitalistic, socialist, or communist. Our current system distorts several key indicators. If these are not adequately addressed, violence, a neo-feudal state, or some other sort of totalitarian or dystopian state could easily result. I’m interested in living in a more harmonious nation and world. Having a government which is flexible is better than one which is rigid and in decay.

SENATOR: Which key indicators are being distorted? (A waiter approaches with a coffee pot.)

WAITER: Would you like some coffee while you decide what you would like?

DANIEL: Yes, please. (turning up both his and Tara’s cup)
TARA: (Scanning menu) One example is our recent hurricanes. All that destruction, from the winds, the flooding that resulted, the number of people made homeless, etcetera, simply results in an increase in Gross National Product. The pain and misery endured is simply not factored in. That distorts the picture of the actual economy. Money which flows into the affected areas, be it grants from FEMA, borrowing to rebuild, or money from insurance companies is counted, but the losses are just ignored. A great many people are worse off. Homes damaged or destroyed, losses of businesses and personal vehicles, not to mention all the injuries and deaths involved, or the significant number of homeowners who don’t have adequate coverage to rebuild is just ignored. Our accounting system counts catastrophes as a positive, while the negatives are just ignored.

SENATOR: But, we need to project a positive view of the future.

TARA: We need to be realistic about the suffering being endured. Not marginalizing any portion of society. We need compassion, not a con job. Our current system apparently considers global warming, sea level rise, floods, tornados, earthquakes, wars and other forms of suffering as good things as they attract money. Whether the incoming money is from those working to rebuild or from those looking to profit from the misery of others, it is counted as a positive, This is not the message we should be sending to the rest of the world, or our own people.

WAITER: Are you ready to order?

TARA: I’ll have the Avocado omelet, with mushrooms, Swiss cheese and grits.

SENATOR: Bring me the cinnamon apple oatmeal, and some more coffee and water.

DANIEL: Steak, medium rare, scrambled eggs and home fried potatoes. (Waiter exits)

TARA: Many economists decry the methodology being used in Western capitalism. Quite a few argue for a return to capitalist fundamentals, where the true cost of products and services are factored in, including environmental costs.

DANIEL: Wouldn’t that decrease incentives for innovation?

TARA: Mainly, it would work to implement innovations and policies which will enhance life, liberty and happiness for a great many. That is the purpose of government, at least according to the Declaration of Independencen. (Showing Daniel a big smile) Not making the greedy few richer and more powerful.

DANIEL: (to the Senator ) I told you she was a strong determined young woman.

SENATOR: I see.
**TARA:** The challenge we face as a nation is how to transit to a future where all people can live in dignity in a sustainable world which respects human rights. Other nations, such as China, are promoting their views, and a growing number of nations are listening. Our own people, not to mention other nations are questioning the direction this nation has been headed.

**SENATOR:** It’s refreshing to hear young people presenting solutions which aren’t the canned talking points of one party or another. What are you views on some of the hot button topics of the day; Immigration, for instance?

**TARA:** Thank you, senator. Compassion needs to be part of every policy we have, but not idiot compassion. We have over one million people immigrating here every year. This doesn’t include those who slip in without proper paperwork. People are looking for a better life, and I don’t blame them. But immigration, especially in large numbers, impacts the lives of many. Rents increase as competition for low cost housing increases. Many people leave cities looking for tax relief and more affordable housing, land prices go up in both rural and less urban areas. While this can benefit those who own land and rental housing, renters and first time home buyers are squeezed, often forcing them to cut back on food, medicines and leisure time activities. More people results in more competition for jobs, especially low wage jobs. This keeps wages low. This may help to keeps some prices down, but also marginalizes a great number of people, especially the less educated, pushing many onto debt or homelessness. My friends and I know people with good degrees who are forced to accept jobs which pay little more than minimum wage.

**DANIEL:** They must not be very confident in themselves.

**TARA:** Some were spoiled, and expect everything to be handed to them just for showing up. Some are strongly averse to risk, some experience discrimination due to disability or skin color. Others just find no demand for what they view as important, and feel compelled to take low wage jobs just to survive. No one answer fits everyone.

**SENATOR:** So, what position do you take on immigration?

**TARA:** I honestly don’t know. World population is about seven and a half billion people, and is expected to rise to between nine and twelve billion. All aspects of immigration need to be discussed, in the open, to arrive at a sensible policy. People want to escape the life threatening conditions they face. Many countries are densely populated and cannot grow enough food to support their populations. Some don’t have an adequate water supply, or face severe famine and flooding. This adds to the problems and conflicts (Continues on next page)
TARA:  (Continued) in belief systems which emphasize different strategies for living. Educating women has had the greatest success in reducing birth rates and population pressures. This is true in Mexico and other places as well. Immigration probably needs to be reduced, but I don’t know by how much as the problems remain, including how the strength of urban Democrats, who represent those who can’t vote, increases with every new immigrant.

SENATOR:  Thank you, you’ve given me some things to think on. (Waiter approaches carrying a tray)

END SCENE
ACT II

SCENE II

SETTING: That afternoon at the lodge. An umbrella covered table with chairs by a pool

AT RISE: Tara and Daniel, both in bathing suits, are sitting under the umbrella having drinks

DANIEL: I’m curious about your politics. Are you associated with any political party?

TARA: I registered as a Green. Privately, I sometimes refer to the two main parties as Re-pug-nites and Demo-rats.

DANIEL: (laughs) You realize of course, that I’m a Republican.

TARA: I figured as much. Many Republicans seem to come off as Neanderthals on social and environmental issues. I really don’t know your position on these topics, so I’ll let you speak about them. But, a great many people, especially of my age, oppose everything Republicans or Re-pug-nites are in favor of, even those rare times when economic sense is being made. But mostly, it seems as if your party’s main purpose is to make it easier for the rich to crap on everyone else.

DANIEL: (chuckles a little) And, the Demo-rats?

TARA: On many social issues, women issues, Demo-rats have positions similar to mine. While they’re quick to spout off about how they help the poor and are in favor of taxing the rich, protecting the wealthy from the negative consequences of their actions seems to be their major concern. The solutions they advance frequently seem to simply take from the middle, give to the rich, and while claiming to help the poor. They prefer corporations over small businesses, seem to be hostile to working people, and have a strong urban bias. Of course, we have a millionaire Congress, both left and right, concerned first and foremost with keeping millionaires happy.

DANIEL: Don’t you think environmental issues are over-blown?

TARA: No, of course not. There are about two hundred thousand large commercial electric generating plants around the world, over one billion cars on the road, not to mention all the trains and planes, and the numbers are growing. Each sends heat into the oceans or the atmosphere. The temperatures of the atmosphere and oceans are rising. Sea levels are rising, and it is becoming more acidic. Tundra is melting in artic regions, the intensity of hurricanes is increasing, and numerous species are dying off.
DANIEL: Climate has always changed.

TARA: Weather changes; climate – which is the seasonal variation in weather patterns has remained within a certain range for centuries. While it is true that crocodiles once inhabited what is now the arctic, and glaciers once covered what is now New York City, change occurred over centuries or millennium, not decades. The big change is human activity.

DANIEL: I’m not interested in giving up any of the advantages that technology has provided, and I don’t think you are, either.

TARA: (pause) That’s true, and that’s why it’s important to switch over to solar, thermal, wind power and other renewables. Local, home based power systems should be used whenever possible, rather than transmission lines which lose energy with every mile than travel. These methods won’t generate as much waste, and, in the long run be less expensive for the users.

DANIEL: But that means lower returns for investors; yet if you are able to convince me it is in my best interest, perhaps I could make some minor changes to how I do business. But my methods have been quite profitable.

TARA: There are three philosophical positions which conservatives cling to which I see as major obstacles. The first is a belief in a sort of corporate absolutism. It is quite similar to the religious absolutism of the middle ages. Essentially, no one should stand in the way of those who pursue money especially when shielded from personal liability with a corporate charter.

DANIEL: So, you’re opposed to all corporations?

TARA: I didn’t say that. The second is the belief that property owners will always take good care of their property and pollution simply results from no one owning rivers, oceans, the atmosphere, as well as various tracts of land and therefore no one is taking proper care of it.

DANIEL: Basically true.

TARA: Simply false, merely an excuse for greed and a way to blame others while displaying contempt for the life and welfare of others, including non-humans. The proof can be found everywhere; from slumlords to toxic waste dumps.

DANIEL: Ronald Reagan said Greed is good.

TARA: Your Saint Ronnie is not one of my favorite people. Besides, he said a little greed is good, but greed by definition, knows no limits. (Continues next page)
TARA: (Continued) According to Buddhism, hate, greed and ignorance are the causes of the destruction of both individuals and societies. Most at the top levels seem to be oblivious to the harm their greed is causing.

DANIEL: You said there were three philosophic positions?

TARA: Yes, the third is that the natural world exists solely for squeezing money out of it. I, and many like me, view the entire planet as a living organism which incubates all forms of life. We also view life as more important than the accumulation of money, particularly when it’s done to make it easier to push others around.

DANIEL: Have you made millions from your trading account already?

TARA: (laughs) I haven’t started paper trading yet, let alone any real trades. I expect it will be at least three to four months before I make my first real trade. But, I do want to have at least a quarter million dollars by the time I’m thirty.

DANIEL: That’s reassuring. Without paper trading you’d be throwing your money away. But, generally, government regulations are the only solutions I’ve heard in regards to the problems associated with rising sea levels, etcetera.

TARA: Government regulations have their place, but most regulations have more to do with increasing the power of the bureaucracy, not solving any real problems.

DANIEL: I remember reading someplace that farmers never will do anything that goes against their own self-interest and that causing small farmers to lose their farms – or ranches was one of the reasons increases in GNP was possible.

TARA: Farmers, ranchers, small business owners in general, look out for the welfare of the community and neighbors as well as for themselves. When our neighbors found out my mother had disappeared without a trace, you couldn’t believe the generosity we received. Neighbors helped plow our fields when my Dad felt he had to go to Idaho to look for my mother. One neighbor family came over once a week for about a year and shared the dinner they cooked. More than once my Dad and I had to take some of the food we were given up to Reno and give it to people in the homeless shelter, as we were given more than we could possibly eat. (Staring to cry) So don’t tell me farmers are stingy people solely interested in themselves.

DANIEL: Sorry, I should know that you can’t believe everything you read.

SENATOR: (Walking by in his bathing suit) Don’t be making her cry, Daniel. She’s the best thing that ever happened to you. She may even be able to make you into a human being.
END SCENE
ACT II

SCENE III

SETTING: The Dormitory, a few days later

AT RISE: Tara, Tiffany, Brenda and Sketch are in the room

TARA: Tiffany, this is Sketch, who I told you about. He would like to help you navigate your way through some of the difficulties you’ve faced. I hope you will be willing to talk with him.

TIFFANY: Hello.

TARA: He’s faced some of the same difficulties as you.

TIFFANY: No one knows what I’ve been through.

SKETCH: You’re right. You are the only one on earth who has had your exact experiences.

TIFFANY: Well, at least you’re not telling me you know exactly how I feel.

SKETCH: Not only are your experiences unique, but how you interpret your feelings may be unique as well.

TIFFANY: Are you saying my feelings are wrong?

SKETCH: No, just that many people, especially those who experienced traumas at a young age, like myself, can have feelings which are all jumbled up. It can take a while to sort them out.

TIFFANY: Sometimes I don’t know what I am feeling.

SKETCH: The mental health system simply offers you a few token favors if you keep your worker happy by always taking your drugs and doing what they say. If you don’t, you get scolded, or worse. Keeping people on drugs seems to be the main focus, not helping people lead a happy and meaningful life. You need to act in your enlightened self-interest, and do the work needed to bring greater happiness to your life.

TIFFANY: What does enlightened self-interest mean?

SKETCH: Doing things which give you joy, happiness or contentment; and doing them without harming or pissing off others, particularly those who are in a position to limit your freedom.

TIFFANY: So, watch what I say or do?
SKETCH: That’s part of it, although doing the things which bring you happiness and contentment is more important. The consequences that can result if you annoy someone while you have a mental health diagnosis can be rather severe, so generally it is best to avoid confrontations if you can.

TIFFANY: Sometimes things come out of my mouth without me thinking about it.

SKETCH: Yes, I’ve experienced that myself. But recovery is a game of hop-scotch.

TIFFANY: Hop-scotch? What’s that?

SKETCH: A game which was popular, probably for centuries, prior to TV becoming the main source of entertainment. You jump around on a series of squares, often on one foot, picking up an object tossed to a particular square while reciting certain phrases or poems. If you are good enough, it looks like you are dancing, but in any event it helps with coordination. Variations of it are popular all over the world.

TIFFANY: What’s that got to do mental illness or recovery?

SKETCH: You pick up things along the way, learning things along the way, having fun in the process.

TIFFANY: Nothing is fun about the mental health system.

SKETCH: That’s a big part of the problem. (Tiffany gives a little laugh) You can’t really recover until you learn to love yourself – or at least generally be happy with life, but to do that you also need to understand what is bothering you. So much of our society revolves around chasing money or finding fault – with yourself or others, not finding little things which bring a smile to your face.

TIFFANY: So, it’s not all my fault?

SKETCH: No, but like in hop-scotch you need to recognize it when you accidently step outside the box and no two people will do their jumping in exactly the same manner.

TIFFANY: You make it sound like fun.

SKETCH: It can be, although our current system is primarily about enforcing rules. Very few of which actually help people in need.

TIFFANY: So how do you learn to love yourself?

SKETCH: Aside from taking a little time every day to have some fun, you also can program yourself to love and accept yourself.
TIFFANY: How do you do that?

SKETCH: Start a journal or a diary. Spend fifteen to twenty minutes every day writing in it. Write down your thoughts, your feelings, what or who you are angry about and anything else that comes to mind. Everyday write I love you over and over again. At least three to five lines, so twenty to twenty five times, and on some days more. An entire page or two, just writing I love you.

TIFFANY: It’s that simple?

SKETCH: No, but it is a good start. Likely you’ll find that you will argue with yourself. Things will bubble up, like I hate you, or you’re no good. For everyone it is a little different, but it will be about what is bothering you. You need to let it up and acknowledge the hurt you feel. Allow yourself to write whatever it is, but follow it up with a few lines of I love you.

TIFFANY: Physician, heal thy self?

SKETCH: Exactly, while you need to be willing to accept help from others, you need to be the one in charge. At times you may feel like Humpty Dumpty. All the kings men and all the kings horses can’t put you back together again, but you can put yourself together, even better than you were before, but it involves trying a few things you may never have tried before, and it will likely take more time than you’d like.

TIFFANY: What sort of things do you suggest I try?

SKETCH: My favorite is Cranio-sacral therapy. It’s basically a brain or at least a head massage. It increases the flow of the fluid the brain bathes itself in, and helps to flush out any waste materials which may have accumulated. I feel like a relaxed, happy, contented wet noodle every time I get a brain massage. I have to sit for at least a half hour afterwards, just to enjoy the feeling it leaves me with.

TIFFANY: Sounds interesting.

TARA: What about the trauma treatments you told me about?

SKETCH: There are quite a few things which can gradually be added. The WRAP program, developed by Mary Ann Copeland, helps people untwist the jumble of emotions they may have. There are tension and trauma releasing exercises, basically a way to induce shaking, relieving at least some of the internal tension you may be feeling. There is Somatic Experiencing which can bring awareness of body sensations helping to heal rather than relive or reenact traumas. The Non-Violent Communications course helps guide people to communicate better. Emotional CPR helps people out of emotional crisis (Continues next page)
SKETCH: (Continued) and was developed by a guy who became the medical director of the same hospital where he had been a patient with schizophrenia. There is the NAMI Peer to Peer course, which helps people better understand what is happening. Many were developed by individuals who were labeled mentally ill, and then went on to live meaningful lives, like Daniel Fisher who developed Emotional CPR,

TARA: Why don’t we hear about things like this? The importance of drugs is all that is ever mentioned on TV or the newspapers.

SKETCH: You can thank people like your friend Daniel, who give huge amounts of money to politicians to ignore everyone except those with big money. The money drug companies spend billions on commercials and advertisements, a lazy press which relies on press releases rather than real investigative reporting. There is even an organization, headed by a doctor who made his name in psychiatry by proving that stress is a major factor in the onset and relapse of schizophrenia and this helped to open research in cognitive therapy and its various offshoots, which have helped thousands, including myself, live lives where their mental illness resides solely in the past. Yet, he totally ignores his own research and promotes forced drugging.

TARA: That’s horrible.

SKETCH: There is much that is horrible about the way we do things. We have a congress of millionaires who are simply puppets of their sugar daddies.

END PLAY