

5.

Sir Arthur  
Frank, Cuddy

(*Sir Arthur's banquet hall, in the aftermath of a great banquet. A portrait of his dead wife hangs above the proceedings.*)

(*SIR ARTHUR is in his great banquet chair, holding court. CUDDY and FRANK are to his sides. There's huge tension in the air. Each one is on the edge, waiting for the moment in which his world will change.*)

(*WINNIFRED cleans up the banquet. She walks past them, weighed down with heavy dishes – sumptuous, obscene platters, tureens, etc. WINNIFRED walks all the way from one side of the stage to the other. Then a long pause while she off-loads dishes and gets more. Then she walks past us again.*)

(*Every so often, SIR ARTHUR will call to WINNIFRED, and then she will break her pattern and hurry over with the thing he requests. Then back to her pattern.*)

SIR ARTHUR. And the thing is: the free market.  
You know?

FRANK. (Certainly, certainly.)

SIR ARTHUR. And one wants to *celebrate* the free market, one wants to *embrace* the possibility of a world in which anyone, any man,  
(no matter his background)  
can *succeed*.

FRANK. (Absolutely.)

SIR ARTHUR. So that's just, that's just one way of –  
But then there's the issue of *legacy*. / You know?

FRANK. Yes, legacy is crucial –

SIR ARTHUR. Then there's the issue of – what you hand down.

What you are directly responsible for.

(Winnifred!)

(Winnifred, hand-wipes!)

(*Back to the BOYS.*)

For example, if you raise your children right, they have a sense of

I don't know, *responsibility* toward the world.

You have *handed down* your sense of –

(Thank you, Winnifred.)

(*WINNIFRED has brought hand-wipes. She stands by patiently while the MEN take turns using them. She's mostly ignored.*)

FRANK. Absolutely sir, I think it's all about values.

SIR ARTHUR. Values, yes, values.

FRANK. And inheritance confirms values. You know?  
Who you leave it all to is about what you *value*.

CUDDY. (Ohhhkay...)

FRANK. For example, a person who works hard, who gets ahead,  
that's a person who you could sort of trust, trust with a legacy,  
because *his* values and *your* values –

SIR ARTHUR. Everybody thinks it's about class, but it's about *values*.

FRANK. I couldn't agree more, sir, truly.

SIR ARTHUR. Your father raised *you* with the right values  
and you weren't [rich]  
ya know, you didn't have [things easy]

but look at you!  
 You're a bright young man, you're moving in the  
 right [direction]  
 not *victimized* by your previous hardships  
 and maybe those hardships *are* a legacy -

*(Now we're getting somewhere! And they're  
 riffing together.)*

FRANK. - Of experience, of authentic experience -

SIR ARTHUR. - The means by which one gains a sense of  
*self* -

FRANK. - Hardship as a valued teacher, really -

SIR ARTHUR. *(Likes this a lot.)* - Hardship *equals* value -

FRANK. - Value *equals* legacy, *equals* inheritance -

*(FRANK pops a grape in his mouth...and  
 chokes on it. CUDDY sits up expectantly,  
 waiting for FRANK to keel over. FRANK coughs  
 mightily...but does not.)*

CUDDY. *(Here we go!)* He's choking!

SIR ARTHUR. He's fine.

FRANK. I'm fine.

CUDDY. *(Subsides, disappointed.)* Oh.

FRANK. Just got a little over-excited.

SIR ARTHUR. Very exciting stuff, values, legacy, very exciting.

*(Well, if FRANK isn't currently dying, and  
 we are still all having this conversation...  
 CUDDY feels the need to assert himself.)*

CUDDY. OK, I just,  
 I *also* wouldn't say that someone who lives in a castle  
 doesn't have hardship.

SIR ARTHUR. Oh?

FRANK. *Oh-kay.*

CUDDY. What.

FRANK. I mean  
 the "poor little rich kid" argument  
 we've all... [heard that before]

CUDDY. "Poor little" -? What's that *even* -

FRANK. The whole thing about emotional hollowness,  
 emotional lack  
 but I mean, once you put that up against *actual* lack -  
 Lack of resources, lack of food, lack of shelter -  
 Emotional lack seems...well, lacking.

*(SIR ARTHUR breaks in, as things are getting  
 savage.)*

SIR ARTHUR. Love a lively conversation! Gets the digestion  
 going!

CUDDY. Well Frank.

It's interesting to *me* that you seem to have such a  
 connection to the idea of *actual* lack  
 when you've spent the past five years living here at the  
 castle  
 and wearing my dad's clothes and eating my dad's food  
 and  
 you know, riding a horse my dad *gave* you and like  
 I guess I just don't see what you're lacking...*physically*.

FRANK. Excuse me?

SIR ARTHUR. We've been fortunate, have a good kid - good  
 man - around -

CUDDY. Sure, I mean sure, but I'm just interested in  
 Frank's opinions on hardship  
 because I understand that his background was perhaps,  
 ah, underprivileged  
 but he has certainly been blessed with *access*. hasn't he

FRANK. (*Tight and a little raw.*) Well, Cuddy  
I would never fail to acknowledge that your dad  
changed my life -

SIR ARTHUR. (*Modest, a little embarrassed, but pleased.*)  
(Oh now...)

FRANK. (*This comes from a place of truth.*) - But I  
think maybe *your* privilege makes it hard for you to  
understand that five years of this doesn't quite override  
twenty years of having nothing. *You* might forget to eat  
lunch, say you're at Morris-dancing practice and you  
forget lunch, and then you come into the kitchen, you  
say, "I'm starving!" - you have no idea what starving is  
like. You have no idea. If you did, you wouldn't think  
that twenty years of starvation could be forgotten after  
one big meal.

(SIR ARTHUR *is moved and surprised. He*  
*interjects:*)

SIR ARTHUR. Well-spoken, Frank.

(*Afterthought.*) - And Cuddy! and Cuddy -

(*Smoothing it all over.*) Think it's good for men to  
practice the art of dissent.

FRANK. Thank you.

CUDDY. Thanks.

SIR ARTHUR. Argument used to be an art you know  
Ancient Greeks and  
Syrians? probably the Syrians?  
Mesopotamia!  
(where's Mesopotamia?)  
Here, have a date  
have a fresh date  
Winnifred!

(WINNIFRED *comes running.*)

A date!

*end*

(WINNIFRED *holds out a bowl of dates.*  
*Dismissing her.*)

(thank you Winnifred)  
anyway

advanced civilizations train their young men to argue  
to think like lawyers, but with *heart*  
lawyer-poets  
think we miss that, nowadays  
violence and  
think we miss that.

(*With increasing nostalgia that kind of takes*  
*him over.*)

Cuddy's mom was a real...  
she could argue like a man  
she could look you straight in the eyes and just  
decimate your argument  
just tear you apart in a thousand ways and -

(*This has gone to an unexpectedly lonely*  
*place.*)

I loved being decimated by her.

(*And then SIR ARTHUR rallies. Back to normal!*  
*Addressing FRANK.*)

I don't say this lightly, young man, but  
I have some friends whose daughters  
are a little higher in station than you might normally -  
but I think with my strong advocacy, you might be able  
to -  
you know, just sort of, get some irons in the fire.

(WINNIFRED *is shooting FRANK glares over*  
*the dishes.*)

FRANK. (*This is a Yes.*) I couldn't possibly impose on you, sir.