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*Dramatic Publishing*

# Love is a Hot Fudge Sundae

A One-Act Play for  
Five Men and Six Women  
by STEPHEN HOTCHNER



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(LOVE IS A HOT FUDGE SUNDAE)

ISBN 0-87129-413-3

LOVE IS  
A HOT FUDGE SUNDAE

*Premiered at the YOUTH DRAMA CAMP  
Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities  
August 7, 1986.*

# LOVE IS A HOT FUDGE SUNDAE

A One-Act Play  
For Five Men and Six Women

## CHARACTERS

MATTHEW GILL	.....high school teacher
NICKY	..... student
DANA	..... student
SUZY	..... student
KATIE	..... student
STACY	..... student
DOUG	..... student
BILL	..... student
SETH	..... student
BOB	..... student
ROSY	..... student

TIME: The Present  
PLACE: School\*

\*See Production Notes

## LOVE IS A HOT FUDGE SUNDAE

SCENE: *A classroom. Chatter. MATTHEW GILL enters. He sits down at the front of the desk and stares for several seconds at each of the students. NICKY and DANA, two girls in the back, look at each other. They write and pass notes to each other under the desk as GILL talks.*

GILL. You can stay in the seats you choose for now. A few weeks from now, when I know you better, I'll assign you places to sit. (*Stares at DOUG MILLER and BILL whispering to each other, their whispering stops. STACY grabs note from NICKY, passes note to KATIE. GILL says to NICKY.*) The notes please. (*DANA grabs note back from KATIE, hands note to NICKY. NICKY rises, walks to GILL, hands him note with head down. DANA walks jauntily up to GILL, slaps her note in his palm and grins at him.*) Is something funny, Miss...

DANA. Daniels. You can call me Dana.

GILL. I don't use first names in the beginning of my classes, Miss Daniels. A student has to earn the right to my friendship. (*DANA stands there a moment as GILL reads the notes, then walks back to her seat.*) He scares me. (*Folds note, puts down on desk, picks up second note, opens it slowly, reads.*) "Heard about Gill the Dragon from a friend. He's a (*Beat.*) pain in the..." (*Laughter. GILL lets laughter continue, then:*) Which sentence is better English? (*Silence, then more giggles.*)

DOUG. You're kidding.

GILL. Your name, sir?

DOUG. Doug Miller.

GILL. Why, Mr. Miller, do you assume I am pulling your leg?

DOUG. 'Cause everybody knows you can't use curse words. Especially for English teachers.

GILL. I see. You're absolutely certain all English teachers are alike. (*DOUG shrugs shoulders, looks around to friends for support.*) You can curse in your papers, Mr. Miller. All I care about are simple direct sentences that communicate their messages. And these sentences communicate their messages, don't you all agree? (*Chorus of nods.*) I am a terror, Miss Daniels, only to quiescent minds.

SETH (*raises hand*). W-what does *quiescent* mean, sir?

GILL. Your name?

SETH. S-Seth Peterson.

GILL. Excessively quiet. Passive. You don't have to call me "sir," Mr. Peterson. From now on, with your permission, I'll call you Seth. Is that all right? (*SETH nods, then tries to slump down into desk, which is impossible.*) Seth has earned my respect. He had the courage and honesty to ask what a word meant. Not a bad way to learn the language. (*SETH grins, glances over to NICKY who smiles back, shyly. SUZY CRANSTON, surrounded by KATIE and STACY, catches the look between the two of them, smiles.*) You're all supposed to have read this poem by Robert Frost before I got here today. Which is, of course, what you were doing while I was being, deliberately, ten minutes late. I'll read the last lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

What does it mean? (*Silence.*) Miss Daniels was partially correct. It is my policy to create an atmosphere of retribution and terror when my questions are met by dumb silence. (*Takes out thick red pencil.*) I will begin to go down the class list and place an ugly red welt next to your names until someone responds. Five of these and you flunk. (*GILL raises pencil slowly.*)

DOUG. The poem's about taking a walk in the woods and how much fun it is.

GILL. Fun?

SUZY. And the sense of adventure you get, the thrill of taking a path nobody else has.

GILL. A little better. Yes?

NICKY. I want to be a writer. I hear stories in my head all the time. But I never write the stories I want to write. That's the road not taken. And I'm scared to take it.

STACY (to KATIE). She thinks she's so smart.

GILL (stares at NICKY). Your name, please?

NICKY. Nicole. Nicole Andrews.

GILL. May I call you Nicky? (NICKY nods. Bell rings. Class empties out except for SETH and DANA. SUZY and her bunch stand at door whispering through following conversations. SETH comes over to NICKY, tries to say something, then just stares at her.)

NICKY. Please don't stare at me.

SETH. I'm not. (Giggles from SUZY's group.) Honest. I like what you said about the poem, that's all. (Rushes out through door.)

NICKY (to DANA). Sorry I got you in trouble.

DANA. I got you in trouble, sport. That was pretty smart, what you said.

NICKY. Now everybody thinks I'm showing off. Even you. Nicky the owl. She thinks she's so-o smart.

DANA. Hey, sport, that was a pretty good imitation of those snobs.

NICKY. You don't like poetry, do you Dana?

DANA. Do you like sports? (NICKY shakes her head.)

NICKY. Guess we don't have much in common.

DANA (stands). Want to watch me try out for the track team?

NICKY. But I just told you I don't like sports.

DANA (walks around her chair). I don't care. Want to come, anyway? I need a fan.

NICKY. I'd love to watch you run.

DANA. Meet you at the track in fifteen minutes. Watch this. (Dashes through SUZY CRANSTON and squad. Knocks down books.) I hate cheerleaders.



SUZY (*chases after DANA*). I'm going to get you for this, Dana Daniels.

GILL (*as NICKY quietly gathers things*). Yes. I want to read your stories.

NICKY. What?

GILL. I said I want to read the stories you said you can't write. As soon as possible.

NICKY. Do you read minds?

GILL. Can you foretell the future? Bring me the stories tomorrow.

NICKY. They're just about ordinary people.

GILL. Tomorrow.

NICKY. But you won't share them with the class. Because if you did, Mr. Gill, I'd just die.

GILL. Have a good day, Nicky. (*NICKY exits.*)

## SCENE TWO

SCENE: *Classroom.*

GILL. "And so Rosy, alias Rosalind, went on a diet, dyed her hair blonde, bought twenty-four rubber bracelets from a name store, lost thirty pounds and became part of the most popular clique in the school, The Bay City cheerleaders. Then one day, just when everything was going well, Rosy climbed to the school roof and killed herself." (*Some giggling, mostly from STACY and KATIE in the front. GILL glares at them.*)

KATIE. So-rry.

SETH. Uh, Mr. Gill, would you repeat the first couple of sentences of Nicky's story. (*NICKY's head is down on the desk and she is trying to disappear by covering her face with her coat.*)

GILL. I didn't say this was Nicky's story.

DOUG. Who else would write such a crazy dumb story?

GILL. Did you say something intelligent, Mr. Miller?

DOUG. No...I. Uh, sorry, Mr. Gill.

GILL (*reads*). "We are cruel to fat people and crazy about thin people with flat chests and no hips." (*Some*

*giggling, this time from the "jock" clique in the back of the room. DOUG MILLER and BILL immediately stifle themselves as GILL says:)* Mr. Miller, do you have a comment to make on the story?

DOUG. No...uh...sorry, Mr. Gill. Forget it!

GILL. Is that what you wanted to hear, Seth? (*SETH nods, MATTHEW GILL waits, goes back to his desk, pulls out a grade book and begins marking red attitude checks next to each person's name in the class.*) I will keep making these ugly red marks next to your name until somebody talks to Nicky about her story, instead of giggling behind her back. You all remember that five of these ugly red welts and you flunk. Attitude is half of your grade. Remember our definition? An intellectual attitude is the ability to remain open and curious about the world around you. And that includes some of your more gifted classmates.

NICKY (*mumbling through her coat, now completely over her head*). Please don't.

GILL. I can't hear you.

NICKY. Please don't talk about my story. It's just a crazy dumb story. (*To DOUG.*) You're right. Can I please have permission to leave, Mr. Gill?

GILL. You can call me Matthew. You know our system here. We call each other by our first names if we have earned each other's respect.

NICKY. Please Mr. Gill. I don't want to be here right now.

GILL. Don't you want to hear what people have to say about your story?

NICKY. I told you these stories are for you. For you. Not anyone else.

SUZY (*raises her hand - GILL acknowledges her with a glance*). I want to apologize for Doug. Your story is not crazy or dumb. It's just that your story's not true. (*NICKY nods frantically.*)

GILL. Be specific.

SUZY. Nobody would be that cruel to someone just because they're fat. Besides, what's wrong with being thin?

BOB. I agree.

GILL. Mr. Ruckerford? Please elaborate.

BOB. We live in a more enlightened age than this,  
uh... story... uh...

GILL. Mr. Ruckerford?

BOB. Yes, sir?

GILL. You have been trying to impress me with your vocabulary since we began this class. Do you understand a single word you're using? (*Class howls. One look from GILL and there is silence.*) Does anybody get the point of this story?

SETH. People should have left Rosy alone.

DOUG. She wasn't happy being left out by the other kids.

SETH. I d-don't mean that.

GILL. Be specific.

SETH. She was fat, but...but...

GILL. Yes?

SETH (*beat, during which he tries to find words*). I can't.

DANA. Oh, sh...!

GILL. Did you say something, Ms. Daniels?

DANA. You know what Seth means, Mr. Gill.

GILL. Do I? Then... (*Looks pointedly at BOB RUCKERFORD.*)...enlighten me.

DANA. Seth is saying, Mr. Gill, that Rosy was okay fat. If she needed those extra thirty pounds to be a good person, who were those broads to ask her to starve her best qualities away.

SUZY (*frantically raising her hand. GILL acknowledges her*). I think...

DANA. You do? That's news.

SUZY. Nicky's story has good qualities. And certainly those of us who take good care of ourselves, persecute overweight people unnecessarily. But suicide, Mr. Gill? On the school roof? I mean, really. Rosy did the right thing to diet. Why would she kill herself when she's finally gotten her act together, as they say in the city?

DANA. Oh, stuff it.

GILL. Excuse me, Ms. Daniels, did you say something?

DANA. Yes.

GILL. Continue, Ms. Daniels.

DANA. Conform, conform, conform. I liked Rosy. The cheerleading squad murdered her. Poor kid.

*(A girl enters, stays at door. Coughs to get everybody's attention.)*

GIRL. Excuse me, are you Matthew Gill?

GILL *(slowly turns toward girl standing at door)*. Yes.

GIRL. And this is room 213?

GILL. It is.

GIRL. Well, then, I'm in the right place. My name is Rosy and I'm glad to be here.

GILL. Your name is Rosy?

ROSY. Rosalind Hynes, sir, reporting for duty. This is my first day at East Ridge High and they told me to come to your class. This is an English class?

GILL. Sometimes. You need a desk, Ms. Hynes.

ROSY. I can wait, sir.

GILL *(distractedly looks at roster)*. Mr. Gill will be fine. Should you prove a thinking member of our species you can call me Matthew.

ROSY *(as GILL pours over roster)*. Guess I'm the new girl in town. Now I know I've got a few extra pounds on me...

STACY. You sure do.

SUZY *(suddenly glares at STACY)*. Quiet!

ROSY. But I promise I'll try and work this roll off this afternoon on the tennis court if somebody will join me.

KATIE. I wonder if she bounces as high as the ball.

SUZY *(fiercely whispering to squad)*. Anybody who teases this girl answers to me. And you can forget about the sophomore cheerleading squad.

KATIE. But, Suzy...

SUZY. No talk about diets. Not a remark. *(Whispers.)* Remember the suicide on the roof.

GILL *(who has been watching this whole exchange)*

- numbly*). Uh... you'll have to forgive everybody, Ms...
- ROSY. Rosalind Hynes. Please call me Rosy. (*Goes to desk.*)
- GILL. Matthew Gill. Didn't I say that before? Doesn't matter. You'll have to excuse everyone, Rosy. They're not usually so rude.
- DOUG. What's wrong with the Dragon Man? Never seen him so gentle.
- SUZY. Because Nicky's story came true, that's why.
- DOUG. Yeah, but...she said...she wouldn't...
- SUZY. Nicky's psychic. Her story came true.
- NICKY (*to herself*). No. No, that's not possible.
- SUZY. Please, Mr. Gill?
- GILL. Yes?
- SUZY. I would be honored, I'd consider it a privilege if you let Rosy sit next to me. (*To STACY.*) You clear out.
- STACY. But, Suzy...
- SUZY. Move! (*STACY hastily empties desk. SUZY waits for GILL to give permission.*)
- GILL. Of course. Of course.
- ROSY. Why are you all looking at me as though you've seen a ghost?
- SUZY. Please. (*Gets up.*) Take the desk next to me.
- ROSY (*looks questioningly back at GILL. He nods.*) Okay.
- SUZY. I'm going to be your official welcoming committee to East Ridge High. You're going to eat lunch with me and my friends. Promise?
- ROSY. I suppose that's all right.
- SUZY (*bell rings. Taking ROSY's arm as she walks her out*). But you can't diet, do you understand? Promise me that. (*DANA goes to door, turns and looks at NICKY.*)
- DANA. Meet you at the slaughter house?
- NICKY. I lost my appetite for lunch.
- DANA. Later, okay?
- NICKY. Okay. (*DANA exits. To GILL.*) I trusted you. I

gave you my stories because you said you wanted to see them. I begged you not to share them with the class.

GILL. They're good stories. You can't keep them to yourself. Not forever.

NICKY. Yes I can. And I will. I had a bad feeling about writing those stories. Sometimes, when I write them, I feel cold.

GILL. Nicky, you're not psychic. This was just a coincidence.

NICKY. I know that. But now rumours will start, Mr. Gill. And people will talk about me. You shouldn't have read my stories without asking me first.

GILL. Nicky, I was just trying to...

NICKY. Give me back my stories, please.

GILL. All right. (*Hands stories to NICKY.*)

NICKY. I'm going to see the principal, Mr. Gill. I'm going to transfer out of your class as soon as I can. (*Exits.*)