

Oleanna by David Mamet

Carol, a college student, comes to her professor John to discuss her grades. Carol is nervous and unsure of herself and John, whilst attempting to listen to her problems, is distracted by his need to meet with his wife to buy a new house. Carol joins a 'group' who empower her with the language of political correctness. She brings a complaint against John to the faculty of the college, resulting in his failure to achieve a tenured post at the college and his suspension. This then means that he loses the house he was hoping to buy. In effect, Carol has ruined John's life both personally and professionally.

At this point in the play John, having lost his job, has invited Carol, reluctantly, to his office to apologise to her. Carol explains to him the feelings of all his female students, as personified in the 'Group'.

Carol For Christ's sake. Who the *hell* do you think that you are? You want a post. You want unlimited power. To do and to say what you want. As it pleases you - Testing, Questioning, Flirting [. . .] Excuse me, one moment, will you?

(She reads from her notes.)

The twelfth: 'Have a good day, dear.'

The fifteenth: 'Now, don't *you* look fetching . . .'

April seventeenth: 'If you girls would come over here . . .' I saw you. I saw you, Professor. For two semesters sit there, stand there and exploit our, as you thought, 'paternal prerogative,' and what is that but rape: I swear to God. You asked me in here to explain something to me, as a child, that I did not understand. But I came to explain something to you. You Are Not God. You ask me why I came? I came here to instruct you.

(She produces his book.)

And your book? You think you're going to show me some 'light'? You '*maverick*.' Outside of tradition. No, no, *(She reads from the book's liner notes.)* 'of that fine tradition of *inquiry*. Of Polite *skepticism*' . . . and you say you believe in free intellectual discourse. YOU BELIEVE IN NOTHING. YOU BELIEVE IN NOTHING AT ALL. [. . .] why do you question, for one moment, the committee's decision refusing your tenure? Why do you question your suspension? You believe in what *you call* freedom of thought. Then, fine. *You* believe in freedom-of-thought *and* a home, and, *and* prerogatives for your kid, *and* tenure. And I'm going to tell you. You believe *not* in 'freedom of thought,' but in an elitist, in, in a protected hierarchy which rewards you. And for whom you are the clown. And you mock and exploit the system which pays your rent. You're wrong. I'm not wrong. You're wrong. You think that I'm full of hatred. I know what you think I am. [. . .] You think I am a frightened, repressed, confused, I don't know, abandoned young thing of some doubtful sexuality, who wants, power and revenge. *(Pause)* Don't you? *(Pause)* [. . .] Isn't that better? And I feel that that is the first moment which you've treated me with respect. For you told me the truth. *(Pause)* I did not come here, as you are assured, to gloat. Why would I want to gloat? I've profited nothing from your, your, as you say, your 'misfortune.' I came here, as you did me the honor to *ask* me here, I came here to *tell* you something.

(Pause) That I think . . . that I think you've been wrong. That I think you've been terribly wrong. Do you hate me now? *(Pause)*