

# **REMAINDERED**

**A Ten Minute Play**

By  
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*(a MAN is browsing a long table of remaindered books outside a bookstore. He already has one book in his hand as he peruses. He looks down and see another book anxiously)*

MAN

Oh oh oh!

*(he reaches down hungrily picks up a book, shifting the other already in his hand to underneath his arm)*

MAN

Yes. Yes. *Yes!*

*(he stares down at the book happily)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

I can't believe it. Hee hee! *Finally*, it's here. I knew they'd get around to it. It's about time!

*(After a long moment, he pulls out the other book from under his shoulder and stares at both. He then reaches to get his wallet from out of his jeans back pocket, fumbling with both books as he does.)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

C'mon now. Don't, don't....

*(he opens the wallet and pulls out one ten dollar bill)*

Fuck.....Fuck!

*(despondently he sighs then looks around inquiringly, hoping to see someone he knows)*

MAN

Fuck. God....

*(he heaves a heavy sigh and thinks painfully)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Ech, fuck. Eat or read, eat or read.

*(he shakes his head remorseful, stares back at both books)*

Which, what, why....I don't know.

*(to an unseen attendant)*

Is there a bulk discount?

*(he listens, then embarrassed)*

Just these two books....What? No?—Where you going? Where....ech.

*(disappointed, he looks down at the books again. After a hard deliberation, he places the last book back on the table again and begins drifting down the table desultorily. He stops looks back at the book a longing moment)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

No fair. No fucking fair.

*(a young, very attractive WOMAN drifts slowly to the farthest end of the table. He notices her though his disappointment)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Cute. Very cute.

*(she peruses the table, picking up a book)*

And a reader!

*(she places down the book)*

MAN

Okay, she's not a reader. Just browsing, huh? Yeah. Makes you seem intelligent, doesn't huh? Yeah I bet. What a shame. But cute. Very very cute.

*(she notices him watching her and she smiles. He smiles guiltily and turns away)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Hello. Nice smile. Nice—nice smile.

*(she picks up another book)*

Look at that, Anne Rice. Go ahead sweetheart. Yes, you pick that up and read it. That's your style, dreck like that. Enjoy.

*(she puts that book down)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

No? No taker. Okay.

*(she moves leisurely down the table towards him)*

That's right. Come to daddy. I'll teach what to read. Uh oh, watch that Grisham there. The *latest* in a line of legal thrillers. *Ooooooh*, exciting. Go ahead, you know you want to.

*(she moves past the book and edges closer to him. He pretends to look at another book)*

MAN

*(she continues moving towards)*

No sale there either. Go figure. Oh well, better luck next time. *Humboldt's Gift*. They'll be no purchase with the Bellow darling. Sorry, ol' girl, that's beyond you. No plot, too much anthroposophistry. No murder or lewd sex. Maybe the Roth is more to her liking.

*(she keeps moving towards him)*

Come on. Come on down next to me. We'll talk books. I'll teach you literature. Real literature, true and authentic. What to read, how to read it. I'll open doors, new arenas of thought.

*(she moves inches closer)*

Yes, that's it. Modes and modalities, cathexes, vision liberated from sightlessness. Step into the light. We'll have sex all day like banshees on the tundra, read and talk all—

WOMAN

Oh!

*(she picks up the book that he put down earlier, regrettably)*

MAN

What, what....

WOMAN

Ooooh.

MAN

*(voice-over)*

What're you doing? What're you—put that, put that down. Put that down!

*(she turns to see him looking at her aghast and she smiles at him winningly, almost flirtatiously. He cracks something not quite a smile back)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Don't you smile at me? Don't you fucking—put that back. Put it down! You're not, you can't possibly....

*(she opens to the inside cover and reads the title pages)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Close that. Close, close that!

*(he moves to the other side of her and picks a random book to hide his anger at her)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

What do you think you're doing? You are not going to read that. You not going to understand it. You are not—put that down!

*(she flips through the pages to the middle stops somewhere and begins to read)*

MAN

No! No! That's not, that's....You have blonde hair! You picked up the Anne Rice. And the Stephen King! You're wearing fur!

WOMAN

*(to the unseen attendant)*

Do you have this in paperback?

MAN

*(out of his mouth, before he can stop it)*

It doesn't!—It uh, it—come in an uh....

WOMAN

*(turning back to the unseen attendant)*

No?—Oh. I prefer paperbacks.

MAN

*(aloud)*

Mmffff!

*(she turns to him abruptly and he breaks into a fake cough to hide his scoff)*

Dust. El Niño, I think.

WOMAN

*(to the unseen attendant)*

Will it come out in paperback any time soon?

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Books like that don't come on paperback! Nobody reads them! No sane person reads book like that! Not even the author's mother!

*(she goes back to reading the book, turning to further back in the book)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

El Niño, that was stupid. That was an idiotic thing to say. How could a weather anomaly—oh never mind. What difference does it make? Now she'll buy the book for sure. Just to torture me. Just to keep me from something I need, something I've got to have.

WOMAN

*(to the unseen attendant, indicating the book)*

Is it any good, really?

MAN

Oh god!

*(she turns to him abruptly and animatedly he lifts a book)*

Johnson. Paul—I'm a big—Pauly, he's uh—he's really—mm hm.

*(she turns back to her book after an annoyed look his way and he shuffles down to the end of the table keeping an eye on her)*

MAN

*(voice-over)*

Bitch!....Who the fuck do you think you're dealing with here?! Huh? Huh?! I've read Celine! I've, I've read Proust, "A La Recherche du Temps Perdu." All seven. In French!

*(he throws down onto the table he picked up earlier)*

I've read the Churchill autobiographies and Nixon's series and Foote's Civil War. I've read the Gibbon unabridged!

*(she looks away from the book, thinking momentarily)*

I've read Thucydides! I read Ulysses three times!

*(she closes the book with a snap and a flourish, apparently deciding to take it)*

I've read the explicatory book twice! I learned Latin and Gaelic for it! I traveled to Dublin to rove through St. Stephen's Green, to amble the boulevards of Bloom and Dedaelus, to experience the winds and sense the bouquet and see the dawn as it rose glistening and brusque above the cold coal—

*(she just barely begins to move on with the book)*

PUT IT DOWN! PUT IT DOWN! PUT! IT! DOOOOOOOOOOWN!

*(a long pause as she considers whether he means her)*

MAN

Yes! Yes!

*(warily, she lowers the book onto the table)*

MAN

Good. Fine. Yes!

*(a long pause as the book has been placed and both are unsure of the next move)*

MAN

Listen, I'm uh—

*(she moves off from the table and away)*

MAN



I'm sorry. I'm, I am. I am sorry.

*(she is gone, he stands alone, dispirited, gazing down at the book)*

MAN

*(to her vanished direction)*

Okay fine, I'm not sorry. I'm not. You shouldn't be holding a book like that anyway. It's above you. It's above your reading level! It's above your comprehension!

*(he picks up the book from off the table. He smiling down at it happily. He caresses it slowly)*

MAN

There are real readers here. Real people who know and care.

*(he reaches eagerly for his wallet, pulls out the same five dollar bill as before and stares at it incredulously for a long moment)*

MAN

Fuck.

*(eventually, he turns away pained. Sadly he puts down his book, with an humiliated shake of the head and shamefaced moves off in the opposite direction from the woman)*

**Fade to Black**