

A FIXED STANDARD OF CONDUCT

A full-length play in two acts

by Michael Rychlewski

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THE TIME

The last two weeks of high school, 2003

THE PLACE

A general high school in Chicago and various other locations

THE CHARACTERS

James Shelton: English teacher, African-American, pushing 60

Julie Nakamura: English teacher, Asian-American, mid-30's

Dr. Green: Principal, any race or gender, 40's-50's

Jason Miller: student, black, white or mixed race, 17

Amber Carlson: student, black, white or mixed race, 18

Iris Santiago: student, Latina, 18

Mirko Sobot: student, white, Serbian-American, 19

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 / TUESDAY JUNE 3 / MS. NAKAMURA'S CLASSROOM

SCENE 2 / WEDNESDAY JUNE 4 / MIRKO'S BASEMENT

SCENE 3 / THURSDAY JUNE 5 / MR. SHELTON'S GREAT BOOKS CLASS

SCENE 4 / FRIDAY JUNE 6 / MS. NAKAMURA'S CLASSROOM

SCENE 5 / SATURDAY JUNE 7 / AN ALLEY OUTSIDE A CLUB

SCENE 6 / MONDAY JUNE 9 / MS. NAKAMURA'S FILM STUDIES CLASS

SCENE 7 / MONDAY JUNE 9 / MIRKO'S BASEMENT

ACT TWO

SCENE 8 / WEDNESDAY JUNE 11 / MS. NAKAMURA'S CLASSROOM

SCENE 9 / THURSDAY JUNE 12 / DR. GREEN'S OFFICE

SCENE 10 / THURSDAY JUNE 12 / UNDER A VIADUCT

SCENE 11 / FRIDAY JUNE 13 / DR. GREEN'S OFFICE

SCENE 12 / SATURDAY JUNE 14 / A FUNERAL HOME

SCENE 13 / TUESDAY JUNE 17 / MS. NAKAMURA'S CLASSROOM

SCENE 14: / WEDNESDAY JUNE 18 / MR. SHELTON'S CLASSROOM

SCENE 15 / SUNDAY JUNE 9 / MONTROSE HARBOR

NOTE:

- 1) All the teenagers are seniors in high school.**
- 2) Popular music from 2001, 2002 and 2003 might be heard during and/or between scenes.**

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 / TUESDAY JUNE 3 / MS. NAKAMURA'S CLASSROOM

MS. NAKAMURA stands at her desk holding up a war-medal. She regards it with great tenderness. MIRKO enters without knocking, sees this, stands there. A few seconds pass. She notices him.

NAKAMURA

Mr. Sobot.

MIRKO

Ms. Nakamura. ...Trouble with the computer, huh?

NAKAMURA

Yes. Every time I turn it on it makes three long beeps and shuts off.

MIRKO

I'll take a look

(He trouble-shoots as she puts the medal into a small box.)

NAKAMURA

I appreciate you taking the time, Mirko. I know you're busy preparing for finals and everything.

MIRKO

No sweat.

NAKAMURA

I thought maybe it was detecting a virus and was automatically shutting off.

MIRKO

I doubt it.

NAKAMURA

...I really enjoyed the game Friday.

MIRKO

Yeah. *(shakes his head)* We just didn't bring it.

NAKAMURA

Well, *you* brought it. Two goals, one assist.

MIRKO

I missed that free-kick. *(laughs)* I was trying to channel Rolandino.

NAKAMIURA

The World Cup goal.

MIRKO

Exactly! Greatest free-kick in history!

NAKAMURA

Well, I don't know about that.

MIRKO

It was!

NAKAMURA

(debatable tone) The English goalie was caught off his line.

MIRKO

It wouldn't have mattered. To thread the needle in the upper-left corner from 50 yards!? The power! The precision! And his footwork!? The guy's *insane!* ...*(no argument)* It was magic.

(He takes out a part, blows on it, a little dust flies up.)

NAKAMURA

How's it going on your final research paper for the Film Studies class? You have Robert Altman, right?

MIRKO

Yep.

NAKAMURA

You didn't have any notecards today.

MIRKO

Yeah.

NAKAMURA

The outline is due on Wednesday.

MIRKO

Yeah. I'm a little behind on that. The playoffs and everything. I saw four of his movies!

NAKAMURA

You were supposed to look at six. ...Did you read any critical analysis?

MIRKO

I'm a little behind on that too.

NAKAMURA

I'm a little worried. You're lost five points for not turning in a thesis and five more for not having your notecards. Your "A" has flown out the window.

MIRKO

Well, at least it's free now. ...Right? Maybe it'll fly into someone else's window.

(He sees she is irritated by his flippancy, tries to sooth things.)

I liked *M*A*S*H*. "Everybody-talking-at-the-same-time" thing.. Feels real. Didn't like *Nashville*. I liked *The Long Goodbye*. It has that sort of...I dunno...disorganized coolness?

NAKAMURA

Like you?

MIRKO

Ouuu! *(He gives her an air point)*

NAKAMURA

Did you see *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*?

MIRKO

Yeah! *(excited)* When the guy is dancing on the ice! That was sooooo...beautiful! ...I had a dream about that the other night. Only it was my best friend from Bosnia. Kasam. He was dancing on the ice. Like that guy in the movie. ...That was weird.

(He finishes trouble-shooting.)

Looks like it was just your memory. It's a little dusty. *(playful)* Yeah. It happens when you get older. ...You need to spray a little Dust-Off in there. I got a can at home. I'll bring it tomorrow.

NAKAMURA

Thanks.

MIRKO

No sweat.

(Beat)

So what's in the box?

NAKAMURA

It's a medal. My father's

MIRKO

...Can I see it?

(She gives it to him.)

NAKAMURA

It's the Distinguished Service Cross. I brought it for the sophomores. We're doing a unit on war poetry. My father was in the army in World War II. The Purple Heart Battalion.

MIRKO

I didn't know Japanese people fought in the war. I thought they were all in internment camps.

NAKAMURA

No.

MIRKO

So what did they think?

NAKAMURA

They weren't very interested.

MIRKO

That's too bad.

(MIRKO carefully puts the medal back in the box, lays it on the desk. He regards her awhile.)

Actually, Ms. Nakamura, I been thinking. These are the last couple weeks of high school and I really wanna do something *memorable* before I leave.

NAKAMURA

Aren't you involved with that mural on the stairwell?

MIRKO

Yeah. But that's not...I'm talking about something that matters.

NAKAMURA

That mural will be there for fifty years. In 2053 students who haven't even been born will walk up that landing and see it.--

MIRKO

Nobody looks at murals, Ms. Nakamura. And besides, it's not *personal*.

NAKAMURA

Not personal. I'm not sure I'm following you.

MIRKO

...Do you believe in destiny?

NAKAMURA

Destiny? ...No.

MIRKO

I been thinking about why I had the dream. And about my friend. ...I wanna do something for him. ...I mean...I can't...now. ...He's dead. ...But in his memory.

NAKAMURA

I'm not sure I follow you, Mr. Sobot.

MIRKO

When we were kids we were gonna come to America together. And play professional hockey. *(elegiac)* For the Toronto Maple Leafs! *(laughs)* We didn't even know that Toronto wasn't in America. He was a great hockey player. ...I dunno. I get goofy ideas in my head. ...

(MIRKO begins to leave, pauses, regards her.)

So what did he win it for?

NAKAMURA

He and another private captured two German soldiers. And those soldiers provided information that allowed the Allies to break out of Anzio Beach. Have you ever heard of Anzio Beach?

MIRKO

It was the D-Day of Italy.

NAKAMURA

I'm impressed!

MIRKO

My father was in the army. In Bosnia. *(ironic)* They gave him a medal too.

(Beat. He watches her put the medal in the box and then in her purse.)

Do you remember what you said when we were looking at *Bridge on the River Kwai* last week? You said, there are those moments when you just can't think of the consequences. You simply have to do what you have to do.

NAKAMURA

...You're a good student, Mr. Sobot. Thorough. Thoughtful. You're going to Champaign, right? Engineering? They have a great program there. Not many kids get in. ...Finish off these last two weeks. Cross your t's, dot your i's, enjoy your summer, and begin your new life in the fall.

(They measure each other)

MIRKO

See you tomorrow, Ms. Nakamura.

(He exists. She regards her purse)

BLACK