

BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE
A Film Treatment By
Nancy Hersage and Molly Hersage

RICHIE ANDERSON (early 30s) has always known he's a smart guy; after all, he managed to get himself off the mean streets of Queens into the hallowed halls of Yale, didn't he? But he's also got this sabotage thing, which is why he nearly got kicked out of college and has lost three successful businesses over the past eight years. Just when he's starting to enjoy a little success, he seems to lose it--usually in a card game. And that's what he's done now. After three years of pouring his time and considerable talent into The Old Boys' Club, a classy little boutique strip joint on the outskirts of Vegas, he's just gambled it away at the black jack table to a mob-type named LEON GARBONZO (40s)-along with another \$50k he doesn't have.

Misery may love company, but Richie's employees would like to kill him. Especially the three strippers who are fired by the new management:

LUCY BLASQUEZ (21), a central American immigrant who workwithout a green and card has been managing to keep just one feather boa ahead of the INS.

VIVIAN VAN VLEET (20), a frustrated Broadway wannabe with nine years of dance lessons prone to pirouetting through her strip routines.

JENNIFER LANDRY (early 30s), one hot stripper with a fifteen-year-old secret who's just hit puberty.

Richie is desperate to leave town before Garbonzo hits him up for the fifty grand, but has no idea where to go. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door. It's BOBBY LANDRY (15), Jennifer's son, who can't understand what happened. I thought you were my mom's boyfriend, he says, how could you let her get fired? Richie lies, saying he had nothing to do with the sale of the club and convinces Bobby it was all out of his control. I knew you were gonna help us, Bobby says, relieved. Cornered, Richie is forced to let the 3 strippers move into his second bedroom and give Bobby the couch.

It's a tight situation. Especially the distance between Richie and Jennifer. We can see the sexual attraction between the two. But Jennifer's had enough guys betray her in life--and she's now convinced this is another one you can't trust.

It's enough to make any self-respecting former strip club owner climb to the top of Caesar's Palace and contemplate hurling himself into the wading pool below. And then Richie's cell phone rings. All at once, his ears perk up as he listens to the voice of CARL STUMFORD (late 20s), a classmate from Yale whose family owns half of Connecticut. When Carl asks how things are going, Richie is transformed and we see the master of bullshit at work. Carl has read in the Yale Alumni Magazine that Richie is a genius at turning businesses around (an article Richie wrote and submitted himself, btw.) When Carl asks what he's doing in Las Vegas, Richie explains that he's just finished working as an entertainment consultant. Great, says Carl, then I'd like to hire you to come East and rescue one of my family's failing businesses. Richie can't believe his good luck; do they want him to head up one of the Stumford banks, brokerages or bond companies, he wonders. We want you to head up my dear, dead father's favorite enterprise, Carl announces, *the Stumford Preparatory School for Boys*.

The once-prestigious Stumford Prep, it turns out, is going to pot - literally. The school is populated by poor little rich kids who are too dumb or too doped up to make it into the posher preps in New England. Ninety percent of the student body never graduates and the cricket team hasn't scored a point in nearly a decade. No one is more upset by the demise of the little Boarding school than CECILY STUMFORD (40), Carl's older sister, and a history teacher at Stumford. She's devoted her life to the school and would do just about anything to turn it around---except hire Richie Anderson.

So when her brother Carl announces that he has recommended that the Trustees hire Richie as the school's new Headmaster, Cecily goes ballistic. He's a lower-class scam artist, she reminds her brother. He cheated on half his exams in college and spent his scholarship money on jaunts to Jamaica, she argues. Carl points out that no one could ever *prove* Richie was cheating and he may be the only person in the world crafty enough to save Stumford Prep.

Richie can't wait to get out of Vegas and away from Garbonzo, the three strippers and the kid. Loathe to admit he has a new job, Richie packs his bags and skips town early one morning, leaving a jar of moldy salsa and a 'rent due' notice behind. The strippers are furious, especially Jennifer, who realizes Richie's betrayed her again. This time when Bobby tries to defend his idol, she's not having any of it.

The woods of rural Connecticut are a far cry from the lights of sin city, but Richie is determined to pass himself off as a headmaster. He gets through the initial part of his interview with the Board like a pro, shoveling educational jargon like hot manure and promising an aggressive marketing campaign to attract new students. He's sure he's home free, when the President of the Board mentions there's just one small catch to keeping the school open for the spring semester. Three more faculty resigned over Christmas break and unless Richie can replace them in 48 hours, the school--and Richie's new job--are DOA.

Unfortunately, Richie's rolodex is a little lacking in educational contacts; the only degrees his friends hold are first, second or third. Frantic to find three live bodies he knows who don't actually carry firearms, Richie calls his apartment in Vegas and leaves a message telling the desperate dancers he's found them jobs. Get your buns on a plane tonight, he commands, and dress for an interview. Certain they won't show up if he tells them just what kind of jobs he's found them, he hangs up. See, Bobby tells the strippers when they all listen to the message, I told you we could trust him!

The minute Richie arrives at the Greenwich train station to pick up his three shills--he realizes his mistake. Besides bringing the kid with them, the titillation trio is in full regalia. Fearing they might be arrested for indecent exposure, he rushes them to the local Second Chance thrift shop. In less than twenty minutes, Richie manages to make them look more like dowagers than dancers, and then he whisks them off to meet the Board. There, the nine trustees stare in amazement as Richie bullshits them into believing the three women have done everything but win the Nobel Prize.

The strippers can't believe Richie expects them to be teachers! And at a boarding school?! Teaching is just another con, he tells them, all you have to do is baby-sit. But Richie is sounding much more confident than he actually feels about his little scam. Particularly because Cecily Stumford is watching him like a hawk.

As Richie sets to work on his marketing campaign to attract new students to Stumford, the three strippers prepare for their first day of school. Sticking with their dowager disguises, the terrified teasers face the boys of Stumford. Lucy is supposed to teach Shakespeare, even though English is her second language. The minute she opens her mouth, the boys are making fun of her 'taco talk'.

Meanwhile, Jennifer's math class is beyond bored; half of them are so stoned they can't remember their names for roll call. And, Vivian, the new cricket coach, is hauled off the field unconscious after trying to break up a brawl.

Hurt and humiliated, the three women withdraw into the little stone house they've been assigned on campus to lick their wounds and plan their escape. I don't think it's so bad, Bobby declares and reminds Jennifer that she's been trying to get out of the strip-tease business and this is her chance. I don't belong here, she tells her son, hiding her shame with anger, I can't do this. She tells him to pack his bags to leave.

Back in the Headmaster's office, an indignant Cecily Stumford drops by to let Richie know she still doesn't approve of him. When she asks him to tell her exactly what kind of marketing plan he has for the school, Richie smiles his winning smile and tells her to trust him.

Later, on the way into town, Richie catches sight of his new employees boarding the train for New York. In a panic, he hustles them into his car and back to campus. As they leave, a limo pulls into town--Leon Garbonzo and two henchmen have arrived.

Act 2

Back at Stumford, Jennifer insists the strippers are quitting. Richie tells them they haven't given the school a chance yet. But we know nothing about teaching, she protests. Remember, you don't have to actually teach these boys anything, he explains, just keep them *entertained* --isn't that what you usually do for a living? The three strippers look at one another, perplexed. And then a light slowly begins to dawn on their faces.

Bobby waits outside on the steps of the house. Did you convince my mom to stay, he asks, anxiously. Richie nods. You're a genius, Bobby says, and we know he'd like to hug this guy. Right, says Richie, rolling his eyes because he knows he's just one step ahead of disaster.

Richie sits in his office alone at night. He hears something rustling in the next room and is on the alert. He looks around for a weapon, finds a cricket bat in the corner and holds it up as he yanks the door open. He starts to bring it down on the intruder, when he realizes it's Jennifer. She says she wants to talk. She warns Richie that the only reason she's staying for another minute is that Bobby seems to like the school. He thinks this latest scam of yours is for real, she snaps, but I don't trust you. As soon as I can find another job, I'm outta here, she announces, and in the meantime don't do anything to screw things up. Thanks for the tender words of support, he calls out to her as she slams the door.

A SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS, as we watch the three strip-teachers begin to metamorphosize:
LUCY in her English class room as she slowly takes her hair down and the boys stare in amazement.

JENNIFER in her math class with a pocket calculator bouncing across her boobs as some of the boys in class begin to wake up.

VIVIAN in tights lecturing a stunned cricket team on working together.

LUCY reading Shakespeare to a mute class of boys who can't take their eyes off the unbelievable slit up her ankle-length skirt.

JENNIFER checking her bra strap where she's written an equation as her students snap to attention, and begin to drool.

VIVIAN in short shorts and sports bra, leading her out of shape, but mesmerized players--like the Pied Piper--through the basic ballet steps to strengthen their muscles.

END THE SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS: as the three strippers relax after class, thinking Richie's little prep school scam just might work.

One of Garbonzo's henchmen walks along a Greenwich street at night and stops a man, asks where the local strip joint is. The man stares at him as if he's crazy, says Greenwich doesn't have any strip joints!

Club night at Stumford Prep. Students gather to sign up for extracurricular activities. To Cecily Stumford's astonishment, the usually empty gym is packed with hot, sweaty boys. She stands watching in awe as the boys crowd into three giant clusters around the English Department's Dead Poet's Society, the Math Department's Perfect Proportions Club and the Cricket Team's Pep Club. Curious, Cecily draws nearer to discover that the advisors are the three new teachers. They seem oddly transformed from their initial conservative appearance, and even she can't take her eyes off their provocative outfits. Just when she decides to confront them about their attire, Richie walks into the room. Where did you find these new teachers, she demands. Trade secret, he replies, smiling at the turnout. And we know Cecily isn't satisfied with his answer.

Telling his secretary to hold all his calls, Richie locks himself in his office and opens an envelope labeled 'Ad Campaign'. He takes out several glossy mock-up ads for Stumford Preparatory. The camera pulls in on an ad where we see two beaming boys in school blazer and tie, standing at Stumford's stone gates, gently entwined by green leaves. As we pull closer, we notice the foliage looks more like marijuana than ivy. The ad line reads: IF THEY'RE GOING TO SEND YOU AWAY TO BOARDING SCHOOL, WHY NOT SUGGEST OURS? STUMFORD--GET HIGH ON EDUCATION. Richie chuckles, opens his desk drawer, and takes out a copy of *Spin* Magazine. Then he picks up the telephone, dials the magazine and says he'd like to place an ad.

The other Garbonzo henchman walks down the street and asks a man where the girlie action is. The man dials 911 on his phone and the henchman takes off.

Meanwhile, a suspicious Cecily begins surveillance of the three new teachers. Hiding in the classroom closet, she watches in astonishment as Lucy asks how many of her students have read *Twelfth Night*. Every boy in the room raises his hand. All right, she announces, who can name all thirteen sexual innuendoes found in Act III, scene 2? The entire class jumps to its feet, ready with the answer. Very good, Lucy says, now I want you to read me each one and then give a modern day translation. Cecily gasps for air as the boys begin their analysis.

Cecily spies on Jennifer's math class from an overhead heating duct. Jennifer is teaching the boys how to memorize equations through the art of association. You can remember the circumference of a circle, she points out, by simply using a person's anatomy. We all have two nipples, she says, pointing out her own. And pie goes in our tummy, she says, exposing her midriff. And well, R is just eleven letters after G--and we all have a G spot, don't we? At least some of us, anyway. So when you want to know the basic equation to get around anything, imagine a body--just like mine. Mimicking her strip routine, she says: go from two, to pi, to R and circle back again! Cecily is so upset, she nearly falls out of the ceiling.

Near the athletic field, Cecily sits in a bunker with field glasses, doing reconnaissance on the cricket team. The scantily-attired Vivian addresses her boys with a bullhorn. Don't kid yourselves, she bellows, it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you LOOK out there on the field. Some of you need

to lose more weight. Diet, diet, diet! And you all still move like elephants. I'm looking for great muscle tone and grace in this game. And nobody goes up to bat until you've had a hair cut and manicure, understand? Turning to her play Board, she continues: now I've finally finished that book on How to Play Cricket and I've choreographed our opening number. Let me just run through your moves before our first game tomorrow. Back in the bunker, Cecily is furious.

Garbonzo sits in Greenwich bar trying to look sophisticated, but can't. The mobster shows Richie's photo to one of the local patrons, asking if anyone knows the man and awkwardly implying he's a fellow Yale alumni. Everybody at the bar gets up and leaves. Frustrated, Garbonzo starts to light up a cigar, but the woman bartender tells him it's a nonsmoking establishment.

Richie leads an intrigued group of perspective parents and--some of the sorriest looking perspective students imaginable--on a campus tour. Cecily barges in to confront him about the teachers. He deftly turns on the charm and introduces her to the group, saying she is one of Stumford's finest teachers. Flabbergasted, she looks at the number of students, then looks harder at how motley they are.

Richie returns to his office to find Cecily going through his desk and file drawers and holding his copy of *Spin* Magazine. We can tell she's smoldering. I've pulled the files on your new teachers; they're empty, she says, no resumes, no references. I bet they haven't even been to college. Not true, Richie shoots back, defensively. When she demands to know their credentials, he explains that Lucy actually studied English literature--in Guatemala City. And Jennifer was once an engineering major at Sacramento State, but she got a little pregnant and had to drop out a bit early. And nobody has had more athletic training than Vivian, even if it was only ballet.

I want you to fire them, Cecily demands. Richie reminds her that Stumford is a private school and that the women don't need teaching credentials. You're from Queens! she declares, and I have a feeling you're ruining Daddy's school! I don't know what you're up to, she says, unconsciously throwing down the copy of *Spin*--but I won't let you do it! Just then the secretary comes in to tell Richie that Carl Stumford is on the phone, wanting to congratulate him on the record number of new recruits! Cecily storms out in disgust. On the campus, she passes several of the new boys, all with a copy of *Spin* tucked under their arms.

Bobby is studying when he hears a group of upper classmen who have Jennifer for math. He flushes with shame when they start talking about how hot she is. He's about to bust in and start a fight, when one of them says she's the best math teacher he's ever had. The others agree, and Bobby smiles--proud of his mom for the first time.

The three strippers are in the teacher's lounge. They're so busy talking about the kids and their classes that they don't notice Richie. Something has happened to these three women; he sees it and so do we. They are animated, more self-confident. Even their dress looks more normal. He asks how they're doing and they admit they like their new jobs.

Richie takes Jennifer out to dinner at a pricey Greenwich restaurant. She looks stunning, more sophisticated than we've seen her. We almost look like we belong, he kids her, as he looks around at the upscale couples. She lets her guard down for the first time, apologizes for not trusting him. Maybe I've changed, he says, tentatively. Maybe we both have, she admits. After dinner, they drive to the beach, kiss in the moonlight.

Leon Garbonzo and his two henchman decide nobody in his right mind would hide out in a place like Greenwich and can't wait to get out of the tony town. But as they're walking down the street, they pass an odd-looking group of prep school boys and suddenly discover their wallets are missing. They catch up with the boys. As the boys give the wallets back, one of them recognizes the photo of Richie folded inside. You know this guy, Garbonzo asks. It's our headmaster, the boy says.

Act 3

Stumford's first cricket game of the season. Jennifer attends and is surprised to see Richie in the crowd. She's even more surprised to see him sit down in the bleachers with the pep club and lead the cheers. Vivian has the boys looking fabulous and we watch as they use ballet moves and even a few strip positions to handle the ball. Richie is on his feet as Bobby scores their first point and, when they actually win the game, he helps the boys lift Vivian onto their shoulders (and anywhere else they can manage to put her.)

Cecily Stumford demands a meeting with Richie, Carl and the President of the Board. Cecily tells the President that Richie is lowering the standards of the school and should be dismissed. Carl insists enrollment is rising because Richie is bringing in new students and the old ones have stopped leaving. He thinks Richie should stay. The President of the school Board has a compromise. He's going to enter Stumford in the Blue Ribbon School Competition. If Stumford is selected as a Blue Ribbon School, Richie stays. If it's not, the new headmaster goes---along with his three teachers. Cecily is ecstatic with the proposal. Carl looks worried. What's the Blue Ribbon School Competition, Richie asks. Only New England's finest prep schools enter, Cecily explains with villainous delight, and with the students Stumford has at present, we don't have a chance.

Richie calls all the teachers into his office for a special meeting to announce that Stumford will be entering this year's Blue Ribbon School Competition and asks for volunteers to lead the teams. It's clear that Cecily has already talked to all the other teachers, who flatly refuse. All right, Richie says, we'll go with what we've got. He looks at the three strippers, who are dumbfounded.

Jennifer corners Richie after the meeting, asking him what's going on. Nothing, he lies. We don't know what the hell we're doing, she tells him, you can't send the three of us out to compete with real schools that have real teachers. You'll do fine, he says, but the bravado is missing.

The strippers struggle to prepare their three teams for the competition:

Lucy tries to get her boys to recite Shakespeare's poetry with passion but they end up sounding like rappers.

When Jennifer holds a team rehearsal to get her boys to memorize equations using her association system, the session degenerates into a fist fight over which body parts to use.

And most of the boys on Vivian's cricket team are so intimidated by the idea of competing in the Blue Ribbon games that they form a betting pool, taking odds on how much they'll lose by.

That night at dinner, the strippers conspire to find a way to avoid going to the competition, but Bobby objects. He argues that Richie would never have entered the competition if he didn't believe that the school--and the three teachers, could pull it off. Vivian and Lucy shake their heads, saying that every time you trust Richie Anderson, he ends up screwing you over. Reluctantly, Jennifer tells Bobby that she agrees. Angry, Bobby turns to leave, saying, you're just like all the other teachers at Stumford, you think the kids here are just losers--and that's what you think about yourselves, too. The women look at one another, and they know it's the truth.

The next morning, the strippers are up bright and early, collecting their teams and loading them onto the bus to take them to the Blue Ribbon Competition. Bobby beams, as Vivian leads the cricket players through a series of lewd team cheers. Lucy huddles with her team at the back of the bus, telling them that passion takes imagination and she's going to give them something--very vivid--to imagine during their performances. And Jennifer tells the math team to listen up, she's giving the body signals at the competition, so they better pay attention. By the time Richie shows up to give the kids and teachers a send off, everyone is stoked. As the bus pulls away, Bobby leans out the window and says, You're the best, and gives Richie the thumbs up. Richie smiles, give Bobby the thumbs up, too.

Walking back to his office, Richie wonders if his teachers and the kids might just pull things off. For the first since coming to Stumford, Richie is actually enjoying himself. At his desk, he answers the phone, Headmaster!, and we believe him--he believes himself. It's the secretary, saying there's a prospective parent waiting outside in his car. He must have bucks, she says, because it's a limo. Richie looks outside and is suddenly on the alert. He tells the secretary to go out and invite the man in. She taps on the limo window and as it slowly rolls down, Richie sees Garbonzo and knows the game is over. He slips out the back.

Cecily goes to Richie's office to insist that any student participating in the Blue Ribbon competition be marked absent. There, she finds a very perturbed Leon Garbonzo. When he discovers who she is, he smiles. I'm here to tell you that you're headmaster is a con artist, Leon announces. Tell me something I don't know, Cecily replies. Okay, three of your teachers are actually strippers. Cecily stares at him in amazement, while the secretary is out the door to spread the gossip.

INTERCUT SCENES:

Word spreads like wild fire as boys get off on telling each other the news, their parents the news and the news media the news.

Richie packs his bags to make his exit.

Cecily meets with the President of the Board to share her indignation.

An anxious Lucy watches as one of her students recites *Romeo and Juliet* before judges. With his eyes glued to her bosom in the back of the room, his delivery is not only passionate, but flushed and panting. The judges are amazed by the young man's authentic presentation.

A shocked parent picks up the afternoon paper that reads, BABES IN BOYLAND.

The President of the Board of Trustees calls other Board members to set up a special meeting that night.

Richie looks out his window, wondering how to escape undetected.

An anxious Jennifer watches as one of her students is quizzed on formulas by a panel of judges. In the back of the room, we see her urge the boy on with an amazing array of bodily-associations. The judges sit in disbelief as the student recites pi to the 23rd decimal.

Cecily pours herself a well-deserved martini and calls her brother Carl.

An anxious Vivian watches as her cricket team plays a school of far bigger, more skilled boys. Needing to change the defense, she suddenly screams, bump and grind!. The boys reposition themselves and make the play.

Richie sneaks across campus, carrying his suitcase.

The sun sets as the Board assembles and a crowd of parents gathers to watch.

Exhausted, Stumford students and teachers Board the bus to return home.

Richie waits anxiously on the Greenwich train platform.

Cecily smiles slyly, as the Board of Trustees votes to fire Richie Anderson.

The bus returns to Stumford. As Lucy, Jennifer and Vivian step off the bus, they're asked to report immediately to the auditorium.

Bobby hears the news and is mortified. Runs off.

Richie paces the train platform, looking at his watch.

Boys and more parents stream into the auditorium, as the three strippers are called up on stage and asked their previous occupation.

Bobby leaves campus with his suitcase and makes his way to the train station. He runs into Richie. The two stare at one another. This is you're fault, isn't it, Bobby says. Richie tries to turn on the charm and lie his way out of it, but Bobby isn't buying this time. The boy turns to walk away. Where are you going, Richie wants to know. Back to help my mom, he says, if I leave now, I'd be just like you. Richie tries to say something more, but the boy is gone. He turns back toward the arriving train in the distance and his phone rings.

Back in the auditorium, Bobby watches as the Board President calls for a vote to fire the strippers. But just as the trustees begin to raise their hands, Richie bursts in the door. Before you let these ladies go, he shouts, you should know that Stumford has just been named a Blue Ribbon School---and that we received superior ratings in three categories: poetry, math and cricket! The crowd goes crazy. Kids hug each other, hug their parents and, of course, *especially* their teachers (lining up for the opportunity.) The Board President tries to call the room to order, but there's no stopping the celebration. We CLOSE IN ON Jennifer and Richie as they approach one other and Bobby watches. Richie opens his arms and after a moment's hesitation, Jennifer walks into them. HOLD ON Bobby's satisfied smile.

TAG: A school dance. Boys line up to dance with their three favorite teachers. Richie steps outside with Jennifer and is just about to kiss her, when Garbonzo's limo pulls up and the henchmen drag Richie into the car. The mobster puts a gun to Richie's head and says, I got a little problem. I know, Richie says shaking, the fifty grand. Screw the money, Leon says, it's my son. Richie stares at him blankly. The kid needs boarding school, the mobster sobs, can you get him into Stumford?

Richie smiles and all's well that ends well.