

STUDY GROUP

by Adam Pasen

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SYNOPSIS: When fate throws jaded exes, Anne and Bill, into the same geology study group, the estranged couple ends up taking a crash course in romantic chemistry. Aided only by their sharp tongues and the help of the outrageously geeky Gertrude, the two set out to make things right. Full of barbed wit and quick reversals, *Study Group* is nothing like any class you took in high school.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

BILL (m)Average, everyday American teenager.
 ANNE (f).....The female version of Bill.
 GERTRUDE (f)Bill & Anne's friend; brainy and perky almost to a fault.

TIME: Present day

SETTING: Present day; a sitting room in a public library.

AT RISE: *Lights up on ANNE and GERTRUDE at a table, surrounded by study paraphernalia. GERTRUDE is deeply engrossed and ANNE is detached. A third chair remains empty.*

GERTRUDE: *(Bantering.)* I find quartz to be the most exciting of the silicates. Just thinking about all that conchoidal fracture... mmm... makes me go limp! Of course, I'm also partial to feldspar.

ANNE: *(Sighs.)* Uh huh.

GERTRUDE: What's wrong, Anne? You can usually talk me into the ground on any topic.

ANNE: I don't know. Nothing. It's just... Hey, where's this mysterious third party who's supposed to be studying with us? The final's on Tuesday, right?

GERTRUDE: It's still early. He's not supposed to meet us for another minute and eight seconds. *(Checks her watch to see how close SHE is; it's a game SHE plays.)* Twelve seconds.

ANNE: God, I'm never going to get a decent grade in that class... at least not with Fink handing out the grades. Can you believe he's married?

GERTRUDE: Really? I thought he, like, lived in a cave, observing stalactites and stalagmites all day and taking measurements or something. *(Considers this.)* Hey, I'd marry him! Wait, help me think of a good pickup line... Okay how about, "Hey, Mr. Geology Man, stop testing that calcite's cleavage and come test mine!"

GERTRUDE dissolves into giggles that culminate in several loud snorts, resulting in a loud "Shhh!" from offstage. ANNE rolls her eyes and drops her head on the table just as BILL enters carrying books.

BILL: Hey, Gertrude. I ditched soccer practice so we have as long as we need to stud— *(At the sound of BILL's voice, ANNE raises her head and their eyes lock. It is immediately clear that there is tension between them.)*

GERTRUDE: Bill! You're 47 seconds early *(Checks her watch hungrily.)* 39... shoot.

BILL: (*Acknowledging ANNE coolly.*) Anne.

ANNE: (*Equally cool.*) Bill.

GERTRUDE: Oh, you know each other already. Great! We can skip the introductions and get right down to “transportation and deposition.” First off... alluvial fans, these form when running water holds matter in suspense and then *dumps* it as soon as it gets to some open space... (*SHE looks up, blissfully ignorant of the situation. ANNE and BILL are knocked out of their trance.*)

BILL: Yeah... uh, listen, Gertrude. I really can't stay. I'm, um, late for soccer practice and...

GERTRUDE: What? Oh, Bill, don't be ludicrous. This geology final is much more important than some dumb ol' game.

ANNE: (*Has risen to leave as well.*) Actually, I just realized I have to go, too. I, uh... forgot to set my VCR and I think Pacey's going to dump Joey tonight...

GERTRUDE: You guys are being silly! This is going to be really fun! You can't just go... puh-leeeeeeeeeze? (*BILL and ANNE ad lib excuses for why they must leave and start packing up their stuff. GERTRUDE suddenly explodes into an uncharacteristic fury.*) Listen! My grade in this class is contingent on my performance on this test. If I don't get an A on the test, I won't get an A in the class. If I don't get an A in the class, I won't maintain my 4.0. If I don't maintain my 4.0, I won't get into MIT, and if I don't get into MIT you are both... *DEAD!* (*Another shush from offstage.*) *OH SHUSH YOURSELF!* (*SHE picks a book off the table and launches it offstage toward the voice. There is a smack and a yelp as the book finds its mark.*) I have worked hard and kissed butt and sacrificed and smiled the whole time and I am not getting screwed around because you two have prior obligations. Now *SIT... DOWN!* (*ANNE and BILL slump shocked into their seats. GERTRUDE immediately reverts to her cheerful self.*) Thanks. Um, let's start with Chapter 2, okay? Yeah? Good? (*Hurried nods of approval.*) Fine. (*A hint of the prior menace of fine, then SHE delves into the textbook.*) Ooo... atomic crystal configuration. Okay, does everybody understand molecular bonding?

The following scene should increase in speed and intensity and the sense that ANNE and BILL are the only two really talking until GERTRUDE's departure:

BILL: (*Awkwardly.*) Well, I guess I'm having trouble understanding the ways the atoms hold together.

GERTRUDE: Oh, great! Well, actually, there are two ways: ionic and covalent.

BILL: Oh, yeah, but ionic is stronger, right?

GERTRUDE: Well...

ANNE: (*Interrupting.*) Actually, covalent bonds are stronger because they're based on a mutual sharing of electrons rather than just raw attraction, but then I wouldn't expect you to know that.

GERTRUDE: Wow, very impressive, Anne, which brings us to cations and anions—

BILL: (*Interrupting and never taking his eyes off ANNE.*) Oh, anions are just ions that always have a negative charge, right?

GERTRUDE: Yes, that's exactly right—

BILL: I find it strange that anything could be so negative all the time; don't you, Anne?

GERTRUDE: Well, actually, there's a perfectly logical reason for—

ANNE: Maybe they're just ticked off that the cations go and hook up with every halogen-headed bimbo that comes along.

GERTRUDE: (*Making a note.*) E-lec-tron prom-i-scuity - fascinating! Have you discussed your theory with Professor Finkelstein?

BILL: It's called recombination. That's how matter continues to exist. Otherwise, we'd just be a bunch of stagnant, radioactive isotopes decaying into nothingness.

ANNE: Well, maybe some isotopes are short a few neutrons and don't seem to realize what they're leaving behind.

BILL: Well, maybe some isotopes wouldn't get left behind if they didn't feel the incessant need to whine, "Does it look like my atomic mass is increasing? Does it look like my atomic mass is increasing?"

ANNE: Well, maybe some isotopes are just stupid.

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