

## Chapter 2. With Jix

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A teacher is one who is present when learning takes place.

– Eskimo proverb

“I don’t think a journalist has the right to disappear.” When Professor Richard Lloyd-Jones speaks, his words have a haunting quality about them.<sup>1</sup> They hover over students, rematerializing at the library, over a cup of coffee, in front of the television set. His writing classes have a way of sneaking up on students who will be nodding off, envisioning a late afternoon brew, when his words seep in. Students are often out the door and two steps from the stairs when his words filter through, drawing them back. Rushing to catch Professor Lloyd-Jones before he leaves the classroom, they stop him in the doorway, asking, “So you’re saying you can’t hide behind words? There’s no way around it? There is no neutral?” “All language is persuasive? Even the layout is manipulative?” And to these students, Lloyd-Jones responds, “It’s all an illusion.”

Lloyd-Jones has been orchestrating scenes like this one on the University of Iowa campus since his arrival in 1952. His work has been pressing on our assumptions about writing for decades. Preparing to unclutter his office after forty years in the profession, he’s certainly left a mark on the page, a trail of influence in the teaching of writing: *Research in Written Composition*, written with Richard Braddock and Lowell Schoer, a term as chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, another as president of the National Council of Teachers of English, numerous articles and essays, the first of CCCC’s Exemplar Awards honoring “a person who has served as an exemplar for the organization and represented the highest ideals of scholarship, teaching, and service to the entire profession.” Codesigning primary-trait scoring, collaborating on the CCCC Statement on “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” working as Director of the University of Iowa School of Letters for ten years, serving in other administrative duties for eighteen more—Lloyd-Jones has compiled more than one lifetime’s work.

Lloyd-Jones’s works and words drew me up to the fourth floor of the English-Philosophy Building. I plodded up toward his office, his words colliding in my mind. “When does persuasion become coercion? Choosing and not choosing are both choices. You can’t hide behind words. It’s all illusion.”

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I hesitated at the top of the stairs, pausing to collect my breath and my nerve. At the end of the hallway Lloyd-Jones's door stood open, light spilling out into the dim corridor. I inhaled, walking toward the office door. Then, momentarily relieved to find his office empty, I exhaled.

Actually this office wasn't empty at all. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases lined the walls, stacks of books teetered precariously from floor to window ledge. Books surrounded the room, crowded his computer and cluttered his desk top. Two red, white, and blue political banners stating "I'm another Jean Lloyd-Jones fan" clung to the slats in the window blind, and many more lay scattered on top of his desk beside the white telephone, nearly hidden among the papers and folders and journals and books. One of two grey metal chairs just inside the door served as a small desk, piled with print. The other was scooted back under an old green chalkboard, blank except for an inch-high yellow chalk message—Y GWIR YN ERBYN Y BYD—and a map of the British Isles scotch-taped beside it, perfectly square.

I stood at the doorway, thinking about Lloyd-Jones, how he had shaped writing and the teaching of writing in the nation. Although I had met him only one semester prior, Lloyd-Jones had been influencing my teaching for the past fourteen years. When I was troubled over standardized tests, primary trait scoring came into play. When I struggled with correct language usage in my classroom, I turned to his work on students' right to their own language. Many, many times I returned to pages in *The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language*, a collaborative report Lloyd-Jones and Andrea Lunsford edited to represent the work of sixty teachers from kindergarten through college.

From his writing, I knew him well, but he knew me only from a semester's coursework. So I stood peeking into his office, nervously waiting for Professor Lloyd-Jones, Jix as just about everybody knew him.

He appeared from around the corner, walking toward me, wearing one of his guayaberas, a long, square cotton shirt embroidered down the front, trimmed out with a New Mexican silver and turquoise string tie that I had come to expect each day in rhetorical theory class.

Jix is an extraordinary teacher, I thought as he strolled toward me, though I hadn't thought so at the beginning of last semester. Jix had these annoying habits. Not really teaching, just puttering around. He reminded me of my grandfather shuffling about in his garden, moseying from the peas to the war to a little lecture about matches. Never finishing one thing before halfway into the next.

I remember how irritated I had been in rhetorical theory class. Jix arrived early, taking a seat at the end of the table in front of the window. The rest of us wandered in, all distressed over some reading. Jix never started class. It began like an opening scene from a play, with actors not quite rehearsed, voices tentative and staccato.

Students politely argued with each other, Jix watching, not saying a word. "I think as editors, Bizzell and Herzberg just threw in those Renaissance women because it is the politically correct thing to do."

“No, I think they represent a tradition that the preachers of the Middle Ages were trying to suppress.”

“Oh, Christine de Pizan and Laura Cereta were included to interrupt the male-dominated discourse.”

“The oral tradition of courtly love served as a defense of liberal voices. Look on page 497.”

“No, I don’t read it as a defense.”

Jix sat, silent, his chair slid back away from our table, his large frame resting back against the window, arms folded across his chest, one foot tapping. He glanced at his large turquoise and silver watch and removed his glasses to wipe a cotton cloth across the tinted lenses. Taking off the thick rubber band that held our papers together, he sorted them out, each one folded vertically and arranged alphabetically, fanning them across the table in front of him. But mostly he looked directly at us, leaning back against the window, appearing almost ready to slip out, tapping his outstretched foot and smiling. He watched and waited.

A high-pitched whistle from his hearing aids jarred us to attention. He fiddled with them and in a low, deliberate whisper said, “These darn things. You know, I can’t tell if they’re whistling unless you people jump.

“You know, I was watching the news last night,” he began almost in a whisper. “Did any of you see that commercial with the young soldier in Saudi Arabia saying, ‘I would like to say hello to my mother and my brother in West Virginia?’ Notice that he would like to say. Why would he choose to use indirect speech? What’s going on here?” Lloyd-Jones’s questions were followed by silence. He assumed his position against the window. Silence surrounded us. Beside me, Barb browsed through her own six-page Aristotle outline, underlining a phrase here and there. Jix offered up to the silence, “Where are we being driven and by what means?”

Prefacing my answer with a retractable hedge, I began, “Could it be that they want to create a greater distance? The inability to even speak directly?”

Jix grabbed hold of my comment, pinching it, then giving back a particle: “They?”

“The political filters,” Ken jumped in. “The military directly imposing upon network television to sway the general public toward a neutral stance.”

“Neutral?” Jix waited. Silence slowly and uncomfortably filled up the room. Students studied the ceiling, scratched phrases in their notebooks, frowned at their shoes.

Jix held up a University of Iowa publication that he had just received in campus mail. “Meet Hunter Rawlings,” he read the royal-blue copy. “Look at the layout. Notice the quality of the paper. In classical terms, the delivery. How are we to receive this?”

Barb scowled and flipped to Cicero. I looked at the bold blue, the sheen from this slick copy, jotting down invention, arrangement, delivery into my notes. The light glared, making the message invisible. I struggled to remember the other

elements. Five. I knew classical rhetoric had five. What were they? I leaned toward Barb. Someone was mentioning economic factors, the expense of printing. Again silence crept in.

Lloyd-Jones cleared his throat and paused, using his hands to orchestrate movement. “You know you have to begin reading as two readers, as a modern and also as a contemporary to the author, always playing at least two positions. Let’s look at St. Augustine.” He began reading aloud, enchanting us with quiet, soothing rhythms. As if from a pulpit, his voice embraced the room.

To them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as according to His purpose, are called. For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son: that he might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

Then abruptly, Jix raised his hand as if to signal that he was tagging one of us with some unstated question. He leaned back into the windowsill, crossed his arms, watching attentively as we tried to untangle the material. Sunlight folded in around his shoulders as he watched the discussion play itself out before him.

A hesitant voice, “Would that be considered grand style?” More voices: “The style represents the text as truth.” “Before the Enlightenment?” “Truth, with a capital T, existed within the text.”

As the discussion died, Jix leaned forward, asking, “What do you make of this?” pointing toward the blackboard, reading the white chalk text:

The whole duty of a writer is to please and satisfy himself, and the true writer always plays to an audience of one. Let him start sniffing the air or glancing at the trend machine, and he is as good as dead although he may make a nice living. (E. B. White)

My notes for that class looked like some strange worn rag rug. Bits held together by broken threads. Page numbers jotted against fragmented references. Pieces of stories knotted to textual analysis. Ends of sentences left dangling.

I came to expect long silences interwoven with a steady stream of story about television or text or his sons or his wife’s re-election to the Iowa Senate. Silence became an entity, no longer an absence but a rich presence that surrounded the language and called for connections. I found myself more willing to interrupt the talk, always holding the silence as sacred. Thinking back about that class and seeing Jix walking toward me in the hallway of the English-Philosophy Building, his round, Welsh face smiling, I relaxed.

“Howdy do,” he greeted me at his door. “What can I do for you today?” He scooped up the papers from the chair and tossed them with others on the computer table. Between the screeches of his chair, I fumbled about, explaining my plan to capture him on paper, inviting myself into his writing classes—SW:131 Writing for Public Policy and SW:10 Expository Writing—and asking to visit with

him and his students regularly. Jix replied, “You’re welcome any time. It’s an honor to be asked.”

I spent several hours listening to Jix talk about teaching, about writing, about the limits of language. I visited the two classes he was teaching, often forgetting myself, struggling to keep quiet when Jix would toss out something like, “Why do you think some people resist the validity of metaphor as a way of knowing?” His writing classes meandered about, lingering here and there whenever a topic struck someone’s fancy.

The baseball cap with the ponytail noticed me first as I entered SW:131 Writing for Public Policy: “So you gonna take a test drive with Lloyd-Jones?”

“Yes, I’m interested in seeing how he teaches.”

“Better sit close. Lloyd-Jones is hard to hear.” I sat down beside this young man. “If you’re gonna tape, you better move closer to the window.” I got up and sat beside a red-headed woman with her area of tabletop piled with books.

“God, you’re not taping us, are you?” She slid her notebook away from me, uncapped a pen, and recrossed her arms.

Jix appeared in the doorway, a large three-ring notebook tucked under his arm. He moved to the end of the table, taking a seat in front of the window. Opening up the notebook, he removed a stack of papers and spread them out across the table. Students casually arrived, taking seats around the long rectangular table.

“Well, actually, I’m taping Lloyd-Jones, but . . .” Jix cleared his throat, and the woman began taking notes before a word was uttered.

Papers rustled, chairs creaked, The Cubs cap looked up from digging in his faded green backpack and groaned, “It’s the rain. This isn’t conducive to discussion. Not gonna have much to say.”

“Something may boil up if it gets hot enough in here,” Jix replied, handing out a revised schedule, explaining the next “amusement,” Jix’s word for each writing assignment. Students studied the mimeographed handout while Jix explained the task. “It’s a potential reader stand. That is to say, it’s a kind of examination we’ve been stumbling around with. It’s a way of making a guess about what your likely readers know, understand, and believe. It’s a way of controlling the knowledge rather than being controlled by it.”

Students worked to wrap this next task around their semester project. They wrestled with possibilities. Panic flickered across the red-headed woman’s face. She struggled to connect the assignment to her project on the fading interest of Americans to volunteer. “VA hospitals depend on voluntarism. My point is that we are no longer a nation of volunteers.” She hesitated. There was just a hint of question in her statement. Jix answered her unstated questions. Other students posed concerns for the group. Jix encouraged students to reshape the task to fit their needs. He suggested that one student ignore the task altogether and proceed with his own plan.

Turning attention back to paper seven, Jix suggested looking at student work. “Go, man,” the Cap coaxed his buddy who began reading from his handscrawled

paper. "One way our opinions are altered is one-to-one speech, cocktail party and kegger talk . . ." He continued reading from his wrinkled page.

"Reactions? Reactions?" Jix invited discussion with a wave of his arm.

Students remained silent. Jix, too. One woman studied her fingernails. The man beside her reread his paper, crossing out phrases and drawing lines in the margins. Finally the reader took a stab at it. "I believe something from a friend. I believe what a friend tells me."

"Are you thinking of a particular incident? A particular friend?" Silence. Students looked at Jix and waited. The man beside the Cubs cap frowned and squinted. The reader shuffled through the pages of his copy.

The red-headed woman entered the conversation. "If my friend has some incredible statistics, and I know more, I'm not going to believe my friend."

Jix looked directly at her and leaned forward, asking, "How do you know you're going to believe your information?"

She cocked her head. Her mouth dropped open. Her pen froze. "What?" she whispered.

Lifting his right arm to dismiss them for the day, Jix repeated his question exactly: "How do you know you're going to believe your information?" Sending them off on a side trip, curving back roads, touring one of his "amusements," the daily writing tasks, designed to take away the "big deal" of any one paper.

"It's an issue of facility," he told me later. Seated near Jix in his office, beside the 1930 proposed map of the campus, across from the wooden coat rack holding one black fur cap, surrounded by texts, the words of his friends and colleagues, I came to know print differently. Text with ink not quite dry, smudged and erasable. Voices pressed onto paper, still wriggling.

I sat there, scrounging about the room visually: a draft of Peter Elbow's new book, *What Is English?*, someone's M.A. thesis, a roll of maps, the university's 1992 possible building sites. Jix's voice interrupted my canvassing: "The one thing I want any writing class to do, even a graduate theory class to do, is to make people conscious of the problematic element about the knowledge that they are so sure of. That they are, in fact, controlled by language as much as they control the language."

He explained to me that what he wanted that young man to do in class today with his issue of a friend's opinion was to bring the abstractions down to a concrete somebody affected by concrete incidents. "Since one way or another the thing human beings retell to each other is their sense of abstraction: how they control the world, how they shape it. You can't do it if you don't present the detail, but the thing that you are presenting is the world view, the structure." And so Jix was always playing those questions, twisting them slightly. In expository writing, students had been conceptualizing a job. One student had divided his income into categories: entertainment, car, beer. Jix asked, "What do those categories represent?" Several voices replied, "Expenses."

"Yes, but I wonder if that's the best term." He paused. "I wonder if you think of it as the value. You create categories that represent things that are important to

you. When you organize a budget, what you are really doing is organizing a reality.” Jix folded his hands at his mouth as if in prayer. “You have promised the reader a structure,” he said through his hands, opening them out, palms up. “What do you mean by balanced budget?” His hands swayed to indicate imbalance, always leaving them with a question, complicating the seemingly simple.

When I ask him after class how students in Writing for Public Policy would be able to do the next assignment, which was to explain the basic idea of their project using metaphor, Jix leaned back into his squeaky, old chair and smiled. “They won’t.”

Now it was my turn to pause. I glanced first to my notes and then to my tape recorder, the small red light indicating the recorder was on. “You see,” he continued, “when they adopt a different language, they adopt different imperatives about what they know and don’t know and how they handle it. Metaphor really requires you to have an insight. You have to see it—literally see it.”

At that moment, I realized another reason for this interviewing project, the selfish pleasures of being in the presence of a language lover. Over the telephone, Jix had told me once but then again in his office, making sure that it was recorded on tape, “A teacher of writing must love language and be a writer.” And Jix satisfied both of his own categories. When we were talking about research, about empirical data and qualitative studies, Jix used the word “joy,” reminding me why I was really here, engaged in graduate studies in rhetorical theory. “We talk about the political but not about the importance of language as play.” It wasn’t fancy theory but fancy, I think, that positioned Jix as a leader in the field.

Jix was preparing to retire after nearly half a century, here in this office on the fourth floor of the English-Philosophy Building, not because he had made a conscious decision to become a teacher of writing, but rather because he, like many of us, “fancied himself a poet.” He told me that he had always favored the idea of college teaching because his two uncles and two aunts had all taught in college. “My father was the only one who didn’t, and my mother had no siblings, so that all the exposure led me to believe that teaching in college was a good idea. It never dawned on me that it might not be an appropriate thing to do, so I sort of slipped into it.”

He had slipped into writing by accident, he said. When he got out of the army, the Veterans Administration did testing to “rehabilitate this medically unfit person.” Jix expressed interest in English or philosophy. The VA people said, “Nobody wants to hire a philosopher.” So, having no real quarrel with that, Jix studied literature with an emphasis in philosophy. Through a secretary in the art department who was giving piano lessons to his wife, Lloyd-Jones landed an assistantship, teaching business writing in the commerce college. The next year he shifted to technical writing in the engineering college.

When Jix talked about his younger days, I could hardly imagine him a school boy in rural Iowa, participating in debate with dyslexia and hearing loss. As an active member of his high school’s debate team, Jix always elected to be last.

Without notes, he would listen carefully and prepare his delivery in his head. “I have a very hard time making marks on the page,” Jix said. “I leave out words. I leave out pieces of words. I will suddenly be into the next word and a word will begin one way and end another.” However, he had very little negative experience with writing in school, mostly because “there wasn’t any.” Working with debate, he perfected systems of discourse without ever “having the irritation of producing manuscripts.” He succeeded all the way through college and graduate school without ever taking notes. “I simply used the system of listening in class,” he said, “rearranging material in my own structures and then possessing it. It was a response to my dyslexia and also a response to the hearing. It could have been a limitation but actually it worked to my advantage. It has encouraged a habit of my mind that tends to run from association to association. I think you said that digression does not exist in my world.”

I denied it, laughing, wondering if I could have been the one who said it first. I asked Jix about his first writing teacher. A long line of my own writing teachers, ones like Mrs. Brown, the kind, nurturing type, and Mr. Till, the harsh you’ll-thank-me-one-day type, and Jix, all paraded before me. “Well,” he leaned back into his chair and studied the air. “Actually, I was essentially my first writing teacher—or rather my colleagues were.” Sharing a classroom with his colleagues, Jix watched their classes in operation. They watched Jix. Their office, a row of desks in the back of their classroom, became a teaching lab. They shared materials, texts, and observations. Craft was a part of the daily routine of sharing. “It was a master-apprentice relationship,” Jix said. “And when it was my turn, I had to be more conscious of what I was doing to pass it on.”

Jix lectured in Writing for Public Policy one day, a rare occurrence. He began the class from the end of the table. “I’m going to do a little filibustering today. You’ll notice on your papers today, I’ve been a little too grandfatherly. Giving you more advice than you probably want, and you can always choose to ignore that. But many of you have latched onto a slogan.” He continued, explaining about generalizations and commitments and passion.

Students looked bored. One young man stretched out, closing his eyes, his head resting back against the wall. Marsha sat, slumped back away from the table, her notebook closed, her head down, waiting for class to end. With materials crammed in her book bag, Marsha rushed for the door. I stopped her in the hallway. “You know he was talking to me today,” she mumbled as we paused by the drinking fountain. “I don’t have a focus. I wasn’t interested in welfare, but it seemed like something I could do. All these assignments. It’s like some giant puzzle, but you have no clue. You can’t make out the picture.” She headed down the stairs.

“I was talking to Marsha today and folks like Marsha,” Jix caught up with me on the stairs. “She’d latched onto a slogan, and now she is finding that slogan to be inaccurate. She’ll be able to look beyond the slogan next time. Or we hope she will.”

He paused at the top of the stairs. “Most students want to connect the dots with straight lines. I don’t know why they can’t connect them like this,” he said, extending his fingers, looping his hands, designing s’s and /’s and o’s in the air. Students often claimed that Jix leaves them hanging in the wind. I confronted him with this accusation. “I do leave them hanging in the wind,” he said, “but it is my hope that they will learn to enjoy hanging out there. The desire for certainty and closure is a mistaken academic ideal.”

Arriving at his office door, Jix dug in his pocket for the key. I teased, “I always imagine you carrying around a pocketful of stories, ready to be flipped out like quarters.”

“Well, I guess I do, ones that have worked in the past, ones that illustrate a particular point. But of course, new ones emerge.” We entered the office, Jix switched on the light, and I clicked on the tape recorder.

“Stories,” I said. I really preferred to listen rather than talk. “You just never know what may turn up,” Jix had said weeks earlier. Most of the time, I didn’t like to interfere, waiting to see what would turn up, allowing a full silence to surround his stories.

I especially enjoyed hearing Jix retell a piece of Hamlet in one class. It was clear that he wanted students to understand how the metaphor, the structure, the single word could alter how a reader would receive an entire piece.

Once again around the large table, students were whispering, chattering about spring break, complaining about the work. “Florida, how rad. I’m just gonna go to Des Moines.”

“Finally got assignment number 16 done. I’m caught up.” “I’m behind three papers, you jerk.”

Lloyd-Jones’ classes all looked the same. I checked my calendar to determine which class I was in. It was the 26<sup>th</sup> so it had to be Writing for Public Policy.

Jix waited and then began, “One reason that women feel uncomfortable in the business world is that they are constantly exposed to male metaphors. Rather than talk about abstract theory, which I love to do, mind you, I’ll bring up a few instances.” Jix cleared his throat, retelling the story of Laertes and Ophelia. “One of the things we are told about Ophelia is that she has not so large a tether as her brother. What do you understand about Ophelia when you are told she has not so large a tether?”

“She’s on a shorter leash than her brother.”

“Where do you ordinarily associate a leash?”

“A dog. Something to be dominated.”

“Just dogs?” Jix pushed.

“Animals.”

“All animals?” Jix wouldn’t let go. “Just domesticated animals.”

Circling back, Jix asked, “What are we supposed to understand about Ophelia?”

Discussion took off. Many voices. Cows, pigs, dogs, mavericks as metaphors. They moved on through Gulliver’s Travels. Jix led them to the less visible. He

collected slivers of thoughts, melding them together like an alchemist. “So what you’re saying is,” he paused, “it’s more than just the words. It’s the way the word is elaborated. The word is the vehicle for the metaphor. The meaning that we draw out of it is the tenor.”

Back in his office he told me, “The teacher must be able to hear the question the student is asking when the student isn’t able to ask it very well. When the student gives an opinion, the teacher needs to get them to go beyond their response. You have to listen, anticipate the moves of fifteen to twenty students.” His voice intensified. “But it’s dangerous. It’s bullying. When I reshape their words, students must be able to recognize them as their own.” And I sat and wondered if Jix will mind my working over his words.

On my next visit, I found Jix at his desk, working through students’ papers, writing tiny words in the margins with a black pen. Interrupting him from his task, I asked how he felt about all of this interviewing stuff. “After however long I’ve been doing this business and after reading things that people have written about what I have allegedly said, I’ve become quite philosophical about what gets stated,” he laughed. “That’s not wholly fair. Whatever one says is going to be transmuted. By definition there is no way you can say anything that will not be transmuted.”

Later, after sorting through stacks of notes and Jix’s writing tasks, journal articles and books and tapes, I once again climbed the stairs for some kind of wrap-up. The room was brighter, a bit tidier. “Ah, you’re moving out.”

“Well, the stacks are smaller.”

“More light,” I replied, surveying the room once again, detecting this time what was not there. The fans were missing. The chairs empty. Some books had disappeared. The computer table clear. I plopped myself down. Jix swiveled his chair out away from his desk, his grey sweater blending with the chair. I clicked on the tape.

“I look at that slogan up there,” he motioned to the old green chalkboard, “and I think that represents the kinds of uncertainty and posturing and a few other things. That was the product of an eighteenth-century Welsh slate mason who revived the Eisteddfod, the great song fests of Wales, and created the Gorsedd, the contest of bards. This guy was a poet who took the bardic name of Iolo Morgannwg. His real name was Edward Williams. It roughly translates ‘truth against the world.’ It is one of those phrases that in a way doesn’t mean a damn thing, but there’s a certain kind of self-righteousness in it. Probably the world in this case meant people in general. Y BYD, the great world, common opinion, and the truth is a little hard to be sure of. Very Unitarian, I guess, in its insistence on truth. In a way, it’s a rallying cry.”

Silence.

“Our value systems cannot survive unless we have education because education will enlarge your sense of who you are as a human being, but it will also make you more effectively part of a community that has to carry on the life we all have

to lead. There was a time when the church provided that commonality. A time when patriotism provided that commonality.”

Silence.

“In the humanities in general, and in writing in particular, where you are always trying to deal with the most complex thing that the language can represent, you’re always blurring out into those other areas. So I can josh about being a grandfather or a bully, which in a sense is joshing about roles, relationships. You can’t solve the writing problems until you have sorted out the content. Which is to say in most cases, you couldn’t make some sense of what it means until you have sorted out your place in society. Your relationship to some other human being in society. I was consciously making a commentary about human roles.”

Silence.

“You can’t even walk through a room without making somebody different for the fact that you walked through the room. The stakes are multiplied many times over every time you go into a classroom. And the context is always larger because when you go into a classroom, all of the receptors in that classroom have already been anesthetized by previous receptions, expectations. They’ve set up filters. They’re tired. They only see or hear you a small fraction of the time. They don’t pay attention, but it’s a little broader than that. They’ve been anesthetized. They simply cannot receive unless you break through that stereotype, and you never quite do. You are always their stereotype. You are who they make you, and so I think one of the roles you play is constantly trying to get them to recategorize you. And sometimes you succeed, and sometimes you don’t. It’s the sand in the oyster. You don’t want to have so much sand that you kill the oyster, but you want enough to have a pearl every now and then.”

Silence.

“A little disruption is not a bad thing.” Jix leaned forward. “You ought to be upsetting.”