

You Can Count on Me

(Drama) (2000)

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Major Characters

- Sammy**.....**Laura Linney**
 A single mother and bank loan officer who lives in her childhood home in the small town of Scottsville New York, who is trying to raise her eight year old son while working full-time.
- Terry**.....**Mark Ruffalo**
 Sammy's aimless younger brother who travels around the country, moving from one job to another, who decides to return home to visit his sister and nephew for the first time in years.
- Rudy**.....**Rory Culkin**
 Sammy's cute eight year old son who finally gets a chance to get to know his Uncle Terry, who he had not seen since he was five years old.
- Brian**.....**Matthew Broderick**
 The new manager of the bank where Sammy works, who is basically a nice guy, but whose management style upsets all the bank employees.
- Bob**.....**Jon Tenney**
 Sammy's boyfriend, who decides that he wants to marry Terry.

Plot Summary

This film is the story of a young single mother, Sammy, who is trying to raise her eight year old son, Rudy, in the small town of Scottsville, New York. More generally, it is the story of the relationships that Sammy has with the various men in her life, including with Brian, her new boss at the bank where she works, Bob, her boyfriend for the last few years, and most importantly Terry, her only sibling, and the brother she helped raise after their parents died in a car accident when they were still both young children.

Terry had left Scottsville years earlier to travel aimlessly around the country. Unlike Sammy, he has no interest in living a stable middle class life in a small and boring town, but when he returns home for a brief visit, he does realize that his family is still important to him. For Sammy, Terry's visit is a chance for Rudy to have a father-figure, since Rudy's real father was never a part of his life. And, of course, it is a chance for Sammy to reconnect with a person who always brings endless problems to himself and to her, but who is still someone she loves dearly, just because he is her brother.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Sammy tries to work out problems with her new boss at the bank while doing her best to raise Rudy.

Why do they always put braces on teenage girls at the exact moment they are most self-conscious about their appearance?

“Braces” are metal wires that are put around teeth to keep them straight and in place. If a person is “self-conscious,” they are nervous about how others see them.

Jesus!

A common way to express anger or frustration, even among those who are not at all religious.

Rudy, come on! I’m really late, come on.

The most important and semantically varied phrasal verb in English, here meaning “be serious,” and in the second case, “hurry up.”

What’s wrong with that? :: I just think its unstructured.

If something is “unstructured,” it is not clear, and thus it is hard to work with (Children don’t usually use this word, but Rudy uses it here to describe his homework assignment).

Don’t forget the knapsack!

A small bag that you wear on your back to carry personal belongings (It is similar to a backpack, but smaller).

I’m the lending officer.

A person responsible for deciding to whom a bank lends money.

I got held up.

Here, if a person is “held up,” it means they are delayed by unexpected events or problems (In other contexts, it can mean to be robbed).

Believe me; It’s nothing I make a habit of.

“To make a habit of” something is to start to do it often or on a regular basis, such as every other day.

Then I run real quick over to the sitter’s house.

A short way of referring to a baby-sitter.

Larry never seemed to mind about it.

If a person doesn't "mind" something, they are not bothered by it.

It's kind of a personal challenge for me to see what we can do to bring local service up to the kind of standards...

In this case, a "personal challenge" is a goal that is difficult to meet. "Standards" are the levels of quality or excellence that a person or organization tries to reach.

...we'd be trying to meet if we were the biggest branch in the state.

A "branch" is a local office that is part of a bigger organization.

Rudy Sr. isn't on the scene, so to speak.

"Sr." (Senior) is the older of two people who have the same name (often the father of a son). If a person isn't "on the scene," they are not involved or even living near by. "So to speak" is a way of saying "in so many words" when the speaker is not being completely direct or clear.

I can give you a few days to make some other arrangement.

In this case, an "arrangement" is an agreement which allows for a particular situation to be solved.

That's a terrific age.

A good alternative word to fantastic, excellent or wonderful.

Would it distract you if I put on some music?

If you "distract" a person, you annoy them or make it difficult to concentrate on what they were doing.

What about your father? :: It's just a made-up story about him.

If a story is "made-up," it is not true.

Rudy's father is a secret agent or something.

A "secret agent" is a person who works secretly for the government, often as a spy. "Or something" is a common way of ending sentences which actually means "or something like that."

It made me feel kind of weird.

An excellent word that means strange or bizarre.

He knows...I don't have the highest opinion of him, and I don't want to have to do anything with him, ever, but I've tried to keep it kind of neutral.

"To keep a relationship neutral" is to maintain relations that are neither too friendly nor angry or hostile (In a war, a "neutral" country stays out of the fighting and does not choose sides).

It's a little outside of my personal field of expertise.

A person's "field of expertise" is a subject that they know a lot about.

I'll be glad to give it some thought.

If a person is "glad," they are happy or content. "To give something some thought" is to think about it seriously.

Thanks for a lovely evening.

A British word for pleasant, nice or perhaps beautiful.

Terry finally return to Scottsville, but Sammy soon remembers that while she loves her brother very much, he always comes with many problems.

It's pretty much your standard woolen hat.

This is a slangy way of saying "This is a typical woolen hat"

Can you borrow some more from your brother?

:: That would involve speaking to him.

This is a clever exchange in which the second speaker is saying she doesn't want to borrow money from her brother because in fact she dislikes him so much that she doesn't even want to speak to him.

Can we just cut the puerile crap?

Here, "to cut" doing something is to stop it. "Puerile" is an educated word for immature or childish, and "crap" is a vulgar but common way of referring to nonsense, silliness or perhaps a stupid argument.

I love you. :: That was really convincing.

If something is "convincing," it makes you believe it is true.

Terry! Give me a cuddle. :: How are you doing? Good to see you, man.

A "cuddle" is a more gentle and longer lasting way to hug.

Note "man" is a common filler word added to the end of sentences.

Which way are you headed?

"To head" in a particular direction is to start going that way.

Keep enforcing the peace! :: It will be a little harder now that you're here.

Police are Known to "enforce the law," which is to make sure that it is obeyed, though one never really says "enforce the peace."

No, man, I'm reformed.

If a criminal has been "reformed," they have changed for the better, and thus will no longer be a danger to society.

Don't be a stranger, all right? :: Take care.

"Don't be a stranger" is one way of telling a person that they should keep in touch. "Take care" is a friendly way of saying goodbye.

It's just you're dressed so formally.

If a person is dressed "formally," they are wearing the type of conservative clothes that people often wear at important events like weddings or important business meetings.

I thought it was a special occasion, which it is.

A "special occasion" is any event that has great importance, from a critical business meeting to a wedding to a great sporting event.

This is the haute cuisine of garments.

"Haute cuisine" is a French expression that means excellent food. "Garments" are clothes, or the materials used to make clothes.

Are you staying in town for a while? :: I got all these things I got to do in Worcester.

A well known town in the state of Massachusetts.

It's a really worthy story, but I won't trouble you with it right now.

If a story is worthy, it is good enough to be deserving of your attention.

I was just wondering if we could get some more refreshments, actually.

"Refreshments" is another word for cold drinks.

I actually gotta confess to you....I've been unable to write on account of the fact that I was in jail for a little while.

Note that "have got to" ----> "gotta" in rapid speech. "To confess" is to admit or acknowledge something that is usually embarrassing or very personal.

I served a little time down in Florida. It was just for bullshit.

"To serve time" is to spend time in jail or prison. "Bullshit" is a vulgar but extremely useful way of referring to lies, nonsense or half-truths.

Does it occur to you that maybe I was wronged?

If something "occurs" to you, you start to think about it. If a person has been "wronged," they have been unfairly or unjustly treated.

I got into a fight...which I was not the one who instigated it at all.

"To instigate" a fight is to start it (This sentence is not grammatical).

Then they worked up all this bullshit against me and they threw me in the pen for three months.

“To work up” criminal charges against a person is to make them up or create them. “To throw a person in the pen” is a slangy way of saying to put them in jail or prison.

I just figured that you would figure that I was on the road for a little while.

“To figure” is to think. If a person is “on the road,” they are travelling from one place to another, often for a long period of time.

I can’t run around doing stuff or not doing stuff just because it’s gonna make you worried.

“Stuff” is a very general word for things.

I come back here, I tell you about my fucking traumas, and I get this wounded “I’ve let you down” bullshit over and over again.

“Fucking” is a very vulgar but not uncommon adverb that is often added to express anger or frustration. A “trauma” is a great shock or injury. If a person is “wounded,” they are injured or hurt, and “to let down” a person is to disappoint them.

It just cramps me. I just want to get out from under it, and now I’m back in this fucking hole explaining myself to you again.

“To cramp” a person is to make them feel stuck without the ability to move. “To get out from under” something is to escape from it, and in this case, a “hole” is Terry’s word for a small and boring town.

Please stop cursing at me.

“To curse” at a person is to use vulgar words when talking to them.

It’s not like I’m down there in some redneck bar in Florida and I’m having an argument with some stripper’s boyfriend and then I suddenly say to myself...

“Redneck” is a very negative adjective to describe a poor and uneducated person (often one who likes guns and is conservative).

A “stripper” is a person who takes off their clothes at a nightclub.

“Hey, this will be a great time to stick it to Sammy and get myself locked up for a few months.”

“To stick it” to a person is a slangy way of saying to treat them badly. “To get locked up” means to be thrown in prison.

I don’t know if you’re alive or dead, and then suddenly you show up out of nowhere and tell me you’re in jail!

If a person “shows up out of nowhere,” they arrive unexpectedly, after a lot of time in which it was unknown where they had been.

I'm in a slight predicament. :: What do you need, money?

"Slight" is an excellent adjective meaning very small or insignificant.

A "predicament" is a good word for a problem or difficult situation.

I'm broke. I gotta go back to Worcester tomorrow.

If a person is "broke," they no longer have any money.

I just need to borrow some money. Whatever you can spare.

If a person can "spare" some money, they can afford to loan it or give it away (On city streets, poor people often ask "spare any change?").

Come on, Sammy. Can we not talk about that shit?

Here, a general and vulgar way of referring to an unpleasant topic.

Can you tell me, without degrading what I believe in?

"To degrade" something is to talk about it in a very negative way, or to look down on it as inferior, stupid or silly.

I think it's primitive, OK? I think it's a fairly tale.

If something is "primitive," it is very simple or crude, or reflective of ancient societies before they got modern technologies. A "fairly tale" is a story for small children involving fairies, elves and other fantastic forces and beings that don't actually exist.

You've lost hold of not just your religious feeling but of any kind of anchor.

An "anchor" is a large hook that keeps boats safe in their harbors, or anything that grounds or keeps people stable and healthy.

No wonder you drift around so much. What's to stop you?

If a person "drifts around," they move from place to place without a particular goal or destination. One way of saying to wander aimlessly.

I'm just trying to get on with it.

This is Terry's slangy way of saying he's just trying to get by or survive.

Of course I want you to visit, you idiot!

A great insult word meaning fool, jerk, ass, etc.

(Often said between siblings).

I had no idea that you were just broke again.

I wish you'd just send me an invoice.

A receipt that is given in business transactions where it is shown what has been bought, and for how much.

I'm trying to get a hold of Shelia.

In this case, "to get a hold of" a person is to contact them.

***Rudy gets to know his Uncle Terry while
Sammy continues to have problems at the bank.***

Mabel, don't those colors hurt your eyes? :: Oh no, keeps me fresh.
Here, "fresh" is another word for energetic and lively.

Did you want us to hand those time sheets
in at the end of the day or the end of the week?
"Time sheets" are official records that show how many hours an
employee has worked on any given day (A sheet is a piece of paper).

It seems like an awful lot of extra paperwork.
"Awful" can mean very bad, or as in this case, function as a word of
emphasis. "Paperwork" refers to the type of work that goes on in an
office, where lots of papers must be filled out, filed and read.

When someone slams into us and you go sailing through the windshield,
that's liable to be uncomfortable, too. Now put on your seatbelt.
"To slam into" something is to hit it with great force or speed. In this
case, to go "sailing through" something is to forcefully move through
it, and a "windshield" is the front window of a car. If a person is "liable
to" do something, they are likely to do it.

They have to be filed by the account number, not alphabetically.
"To file" papers is to organize them in a logical or systematic way.

Sammy, please see me ASAP. [Sign]
A common abbreviation for "as soon as possible."

I had a false alarm about my son. :: I kind of
thought you we're gonna work that out.
A "false alarm" is a scary incident or event that is later found not to be
dangerous or harmful (An alarm is a device used to wake people).
"To work out" something is to come to an agreement with somebody
in order to find a solution to a problem.

What are you doing leaving here in the middle of the day,
without so much as a word of explanation to me, Sammy?
A complicated way of saying "without saying anything to me."

He just never struck me as the marrying type.
"I never thought of him as a person who would get married."

We're you a **wild** kid? :: Not as wild as your mom.

In this case, a "wild" kid is one who was perhaps always getting into trouble because of drugs or parties or sexual activity.

Mom, were you? :: No comment.

"No comment" is a classic two-word reply that politicians use when they don't want to answer a question (A comment is a statement).

What are you doing? :: Just reading some of your compositions.

A "composition" is a piece of writing or music.

If you tell a joke or story, he always had to tell a better one. Kind of gets **annoying** after a while.

An alternative to irritating, disagreeable or distracting
(Note the elliptical second sentence where "It" is dropped).

Plus, I thought it was pretty scummy how he split on you and your mom. He was a prick.

In this case, "plus" means also. If somebody's behavior is "scummy," it is immoral or very bad (Scum is the mold that grows in between bathroom tiles). "To split on" a person is to leave them behind.

A "prick" is an asshole or jerk (and a vulgar word for penis).

My friends are here. I like the scenery.

"Scenery" is the view of the country or landscape.

There's nothing to do here. It's narrow, it's dull.

"Narrow" means small from one side to the other, restricted, or the opposite of wide. If something is "dull," it is boring and uninteresting.

They have no perspective whatsoever. No scope.

"Perspective" is the ability to see how things really are with the help of distance or the passage of time. "Whatsoever" means "at all." If a person has no "scope," they have no sense of perspective or range.

They might as well be living in the 19th century because they have no idea what's going on, and if you....tell them that, they wanna fucking kill you.

This is Terry's way of saying the people in Scottsville are conservative and ignorant. Note that "want to"-----> "wanna" in rapid speech.

This doesn't apply to you, but I've noticed some of the employees are setting their PC monitors to all kinds of crazy colors.

If something doesn't "apply to" a person, they are not the one being discussed. A "PC monitor" is the screen for a personal computer.

Purple. Polka dot. What have you.

“Polka dot” is a pattern on clothes with lots of different sized dots.

“What have you” is a way of saying whatever other types that people happen to think of.

It's no big deal...but it's really not appropriate.

If something is “not a big deal,” it's not really important. If an action is not “appropriate,” it is not in good taste or suitable.

I'm asking people to use a more, quote,
unquote, normal range of colors in the future.

“Quote, unquote” refers to the “ ” signs, and is a way for the speaker to bring attention to their choice of words (perhaps because the speakers themselves don't believe the words are true or accurate).

No, my computer palate is pretty conservative.

A person's “palate” is usually their taste in food. “Pretty” is a common adverb meaning somewhat or generally.

What's up? :: Do you know you have an enormous
leak coming form the upstairs hallway here?

“What's up” is a common way of addressing a person; It's a way of asking “What's new in life?” If something is “enormous,” it is very big.

The pipes are corroded the whole length of the hall.

If pipes are “corroded,” the metal has turned rust-colored and become weakened.

So lights out at 10:00 and don't spend the whole night watching TV.

“Lights out” is a direct and even military way of telling a person at what time they should go to sleep.

Two hours, tops.

A slangy way of saying at the very most.

Do you know how to play pool?

Another word for the game of billiards, in which small balls are hit with a stick on a large table top.

If we get into any trouble, you let me do the talking, OK?

One way of telling a person that they should keep quiet.

I got 100 bucks here, says me and my nephew can beat anybody in here.

A “buck” is a very common slang word for a dollar. This is Terry's way of saying that he wants to bet \$100 on a pool game.

Boys, it's all over but the crying.

A colloquial way of saying that the game is almost over.

I know I haven't been the most decisive guy in the past, but I know I am tired of fooling around.

If a person is "decisive," they decide things quickly. If someone is just "fooling around," they are not being serious (Here, Bob is criticizing himself for not taking his relationship with Sammy more seriously).

I want to think about it. :: Fair enough.

A good little expression for when a person has given you a response that is perhaps unexpected or difficult.

Just make sure to hit it really gentle, but firm.

A good little word that means strong, or with some strength that resists pressure.

And hit it a little low so that you get some back spin.

An expression used to describe when a billiard ball moves itself in a backward direction after it is hit, even though it is rolling forward.

What do you mean, kiss it? :: I mean tap it.

"To tap" something is to very gently strike or hit it.

We creamed those guys.

"To cream" the other team is a slangy way of saying to badly beat them.

We were out doing some star gazing and we lost track of time.

"To gaze" at stars is to spend time looking at them with great focus or attention, often while camping or sleeping outside.

My mom used to take me and Uncle Terry out at night to look at the constellations.

"Constellations" are groups of stars that form the shapes of animals and other interesting objects.

***Sammy and Brian change their relationship,
and Rudy and Terry continue to get to know each other.***

Brian, get off my ass! I did not change the color on your stupid computer screen!

"Get off my ass" is a crude but colorful way to tell a person to leave you alone, or to stop harassing you.

If you think that riding people in this petty ridiculous way is going to improve service at this bank or anywhere else, you're **out of your mind!**
 In this case, "to ride" a person is to put a lot of pressure on them to behave in a certain way. If a person is "out of their mind," they are crazy (Colloquial and very common).

You and I are going to have to find a way to work together, but that's not going to happen with the attitude, the lateness.
 A person's attitude is the way they think and feel about a situation, as well as the way they express themselves (Attitudes can be positive or negative, supportive or hostile).

OK, you're all set.
 Here, a common way of telling a person that their problem has been fixed (This is the plumber speaking to Terry).

I can give you a ride. ::
 "To give a person a ride" is to take them somewhere in a car.

I am really glad you guys are getting along so well, like you have no idea.
 If two people "get along well," they enjoy being around each other.

If you're such a baby that you got to tell your mommy about us playing pool, when I asked you not to...Now I got to listen to that shit all day.
 "Mommy" is the word that very young children use when calling out to their mothers.

She's not ill, she's just.... :: Pregnant?
 Another word for sick.

Well, it can make you kind of cranky.
 An excellent word for irritable, upset or in a bad mood.

I'm sorry that we've been stepping on each other's toes.
 If two people are "stepping on each other's toes," they are bothering each other, or more colloquially, getting on each other's nerves.

I'm not that bad a guy. :: I know you're not, but you're driving everybody crazy.
 "To drive a person crazy" is usually to make them very upset, angry or frustrated.

I'm trying to do my best, and I'm getting it from all sides.
 This is Terry's way of saying that everybody all around him is always criticizing him.

I could use a beer. :: I could use a tranquilizer.

“I could use” is a colloquial way of saying “I would like.”

A “tranquilizer” is a drug that relaxes people or makes them fall asleep.

I’m starting to think my wife wouldn’t mind a crack at it.

“To take a crack” at something is a slangy way of saying to try and do it.

It’s just hormones. :: It isn’t, but never mind.

The natural chemicals in the blood that control such things as growth, menstrual cycles and sexual desire.

Here’s to improved employee-management relations. :: Amen.

“Here’s to” is a way of offering a toast with raised glasses, or in this case, of presenting a wish or desire. “Amen” is the word that Christians use to end their prayers.

You can’t judge all of Scottsville by the people in that bank.

This is Sammy’s way of telling Brian that not all of the people in the town are like those in the bank.

Kind of a later dinner, ain’t it?

A very ungrammatical conjugation of the verb “to be.”

In this case, you should say “isn’t it?” instead.

The fucking plumber came. :: Terry, just **give me a break!**

Here, “fucking” functions as a very vulgar adjective. It means nothing, but it expresses emotion such as anger or frustration. “Give me a break” is an excellent expression which means “Be serious,” or perhaps “Stop acting like such an idiot.”

Wanna smoke some pot?

A common colloquial word for the drug marijuana.

The minute he asked me, it was like someone

was trying to strangle me. :: Whoa, bad sign.

“To strangle” a person is to try and kill them by choking their neck or cutting off the air they need to breath. “Whoa” is a way of saying “uh oh,” and here, “bad sign” means that things do not look good.

Terry, I fucked my boss.

The classic and extremely vulgar verb meaning to have sex with.

I just didn’t want him to be scared. :: That’s cool.

In this case, “cool” means fine, OK or understandable, though in other contexts, it is a very common slang word for good or excellent.

I think his problem is that he is totally sheltered.
If a child has been sheltered, they have been protected from the bad things that happen in the world.

It was a little clandestine thing we did for fun.
An educated word for something that is done in secret, often because it is illegal.

He's so freaked out that he disobeyed your orders that he's got to fucking squeal on me and I gotta listen to your shit.
To be "freaked out" by something is to be made extremely scared or nervous by it. "To squeal on" a person is to tell a person's parents or perhaps the police that that they are doing something illegal or wrong.

I don't give a shit if you take him out to play pool. I was mad at you because you left him at the bus stop in the rain.
"I don't give a shit" is a vulgar but common way to say "I don't care."

I don't want you telling him not to squeal because I don't want him put in that position.
This is Sammy's way of saying he doesn't want Terry to force Rudy to choose between being loyal to him (Terry) or her (Sammy).

I don't know, Bob. It's not like we've been going steady for the last few months.
If two people are "going steady," they become romantically involved and go out on many dates. A fun and romantic but old-fashioned expression that most people associate with high school.

It's a personal matter that has to do with Mabel.
"A personal matter" is something that is considered private, that should not be discussed with others.

I'm sorry I said you squealed on me. I was totally out of line and I really owe you an apology.
If a person is "out of line," they are saying things that are outrageous, or they are acting in an outrageous or ridiculous manner.

What's on your mind, Sammy? ; Well, a lot, but principally, I was just wondering if you had an opinion.
In this case, another word for primarily, or perhaps most importantly.

They just can't quite get a hold of themselves.
In this case, "to get a hold of oneself" is to show self-control, or engage in acceptable behavior.

I got a new rod and reel, five lures...and a fish scaler.

The wonderful vocabulary of fishing!: A “rod” is a long tool used to catch fish, and a “reel” is the thin cord that is attached to the rod. A “lure” is any kind of food that is used to attract fish, and a “scaler” is a type of knife that is used to cut fish for cooking.

I'll get it.

Note that when a doorbell rings, the only acceptable verb tense is the contracted future (“I’ll get it,” not “I’m going to get it”).

Sammy looks to her Priest for help in solving her problems, and those of her brother.

I know I haven’t exactly been the model citizen since I got here.

A “model citizen” is a person who is admired by all in the community, or perhaps a person who never breaks the law.

I find it kind of discouraging that you seem to think I’m in need of some sort of spiritual guidance or what have you.

If something is “discouraging,” it is disheartening or saddening.

“Spiritual guidance” is the help of a spiritual or religious person in trying to understand the nature of God or the universe.

“What have you” is a way of saying “or other similar things.”

So much so that you’re willing to disregard the fact that

I don’t believe in any of this stuff at all. I find it kind of **insulting**.

“To disregard” something is to pretend that it is not there, or that you don’t see it. If something is “insulting,” it’s personally offensive to you.

And that doesn’t mean she’s supposed to be a saint either, if that’s what you’re smiling about.

A “saint” is a person who is honored by the Catholic Church as a holy person after they die, or more generally, a very moral person who is always doing good works for others.

A lot of people come to see me with all kinds of problems...drugs, alcohol, marital, sexual problems.

“Marital” problems are those that have to do with marriage.

I don’t feel that my happiness and comfort are based on closing my eyes to trouble in myself or other people.

Here, the priest is suggesting to many people ignore the problems of others because it is easy to do so.

I don't feel like a negligible little scrap floating around in some kind of empty void with no sense of connectedness to anything around me...

If something is "negligible," it is totally unimportant. A "scrap" is a tiny piece of torn paper or perhaps some other type of trash. A "void" is a completely empty space, and "connectedness" is the feeling of being connected to others.

...except by virtue of whatever little philosophies I can scrape together on my own.

"By virtue of..." means thanks to, or with the help of. "To scrape together" various things means to use a variety of different sources.

Do you think it's important in the scheme of things, not just because it's yours or you're somebody's little brother?

"In the scheme of things" is a very general expression which basically means "when viewing life as part of the universe as a whole." It's an expression that asks people to look at things with great perspective.

I really don't get the impression that you do.

"To get the impression" about something is to form an opinion about it, based on what is seen or observed.

I don't think anybody's life has any particular importance, besides...whatever we arbitrarily give it.

"Besides" is another way of saying "except for." To do something "arbitrarily" is to do it randomly, or without following a specific set of rules or guidelines.

A lot of what you're saying has real appeal to me...but I want to believe or not believe it because I think it's true or not.

Terry's way of saying that he *likes* a lot of what Christians believe, but he still can't believe what they do unless he actually *thinks* it is true.

Isn't there anyway for you to believe that without calling it God or religion or whatever term it is that you object to?

A "term" is another word for a precise word or expression.

So Sammy, what example will you be setting for us tonight?

"To set an example" is to behave in a way that other people, especially children, may choose to follow or imitate.

I'm sure if you put your mind to it, you can think of some other way of getting back at me besides this.

If a person "puts their mind to" doing something, they decide to try and work at it very seriously. "To get back at" a person is to get revenge or hurt them in some way, after they had mistreated or hurt you.

You suck!

A crude and very slangy way of telling a person that they are awful, immoral or perhaps just badly behaved.

I don't know what the church's official position is on fornication or adultery these days.

The "position" of an organization is its official opinion on any particular subject. "Fornication" is sex between two people who are not married, and "adultery" is a married person who has sex with a person they are not married to. The Catholic Church dislikes both!

I felt really hypocritical not saying anything to you about it before.

A person is "hypocritical" if they say one thing, but their behavior makes it seem that they don't really believe what they're saying.

Well, it's a sin. But we try not to focus on that aspect of it right off the bat.

A "sin" is the official word for an act that the church feels is immoral. "To focus" on something is to pay a lot of attention to it. An "aspect" of a subject is a side or part of it. To do something "right off the bat" is to do it immediately (A bat is wooden stick used in the game baseball).

Maybe it would be better if you told me that I was endangering my immortal soul, and that if I don't quit, I'm going to burn in hell.

A person's "immortal soul" is the non-physical part of them that, in theory, lives on after they die. If something is immortal, it never dies, and in fact, most Christians believe that after a person dies, they (or their soul) goes to heaven or hell.

It would be a lot better than the "Why do you think you're in this situation?" psychological bullshit you hear all the time.

This is Sammy's very direct (but grammatically complicated) way of saying that she thinks that "self-analysis," popular among some psychologists, is a lot of nonsense and a waste of time. Note that all the words in the quoted question function as an adjective for the noun-phrase "the psychological bullshit you hear all the time."

Terry decides to introduce Rudy to the father he never knew.

If he wasn't such a pain in the ass, he would have been a lot of fun to be around.

"A pain in the ass" is a very slangy and common way of describing a person who is disagreeable or always causing problems.

You ever been curious about meeting him? :: I guess so.
To be “curious about” something is to be interested in it.

I’ve been going through a really hard time lately....
If a person is “going through a hard time,” they are having a lot of difficulties or problems.

.....and I think getting engaged to you or anybody else would be the stupidest most self-destructive thing I could possibly do.
To get “engaged to” a person is to agree to marry them. If doing something is “self-destructive,” it will hurt the person who is doing it.

This is Rudy. :: You don’t say.
A curious way to show surprise or interest in what was just said.

I’m trying to be polite, alright? Would you just take off?
“Polite” is an important word that means respectful and well behaved. “Take off” is a colloquial way of saying to leave.

Get out of here, all right? :: You’re still a fucking asshole.
A very vulgar insult! Understand it, but don’t use it.

Listen officer, I came down to talk to the guy and he starts shoving me.
“Officer” is a very respectful way of addressing a policeman.
“To shove “ a person is to aggressively push them.

You’re not the boy’s legal guardian?
A legal term for any person who is legally responsible for taking care of another (Parents are usually the legal guardians of their own children).

You’re a fucking lying piece of shit.
Another colorful and very vulgar insult that you should understand but probably not use!

You can hear; They’re out of their minds.
If a person is “out of their mind,” they are considered crazy or insane.

Look how aggressive he is. He started the whole thing and now I’m being arrested.
“Aggressive” means too forceful or combative or perhaps even violent.
If a person is “arrested,” they are stopped and taken by the police and usually officially charged with a crime.

He’s not my goddamn kid.
A common filler word to express emotion such as anger or frustration.

Oh my gosh!

An alternative expression of shock, similar to “Oh my God.”

Could we give it a rest?

“To give something a rest” is a slangy way of saying to stop it, at least temporarily.

We’ve had a great little fling, so why push it?

A “fling” is a short sexual affair. In this context, “to push it” means to continue it, even though this creates unnecessary risks.

A ’97 red Subaru Outback. New York plates.

“Plates” is short for the license plates that are found on the front and back bumpers of cars (A Subaru Outback is a type of car).

Thanks for coming over. ∴ I want to have a car handy, just in case.

In this context, if something is “handy,” it is close by or easily available.

I’ve called the highway patrol four times.

The “highway patrol” is the police force responsible for guarding the highways between cities.

What the hell happened to you today, lady?!

A common filler term that is added to Wh Questions which is used to show anger, surprise or other emotion.

You’re fired!

If a person is fired, they are told they can no longer work at their job.

I heard him tell the cops.

A very common slang word for referring to the police.

He doesn’t need you to rub his face in shit because you think it’s good for him.

This is Sammy’s way of telling Terry that he should stop insisting that Rudy see how many bad people and things there are in the world, since he is still a young child.

Why don’t I just leave, period?

“Period” is a good way of ending a sentence when you want to say that there is nothing else that is necessary to say.

You are the most important person to me, but I’m saying I can’t take any more of this.

If a person “can’t take” something, they can no longer accept it because it is too difficult or painful.

If you have any sense, when you get older, you'll get out of here, too.
Another word for good judgement or intelligence.

I'll tell you one thing about your mom; She's a bigger fuck-up than I ever was.
If a person is a "fuck-up," they are constantly doing things that are harmful or self-destructive. Crude, but useful.

I know I messed up, OK? You think I enjoy being thrown in jail?
If a person "messes up," they do something very badly, often creating serious problems.

I wanted you to face that prick, your dad, like a little man.
A crude word for a penis, or a person who is an asshole, jerk or bastard.

I got a little carried away, I know it. And I lost my temper a bit, which is not the end of the world, either.
If a person gets "carried away," they get too emotional or take extreme actions. If a person "loses their temper," they become very angry.

Just for future reference....
A phrase people will say when they announce a fact that they think listeners should remember when they later discuss a subject.

She's going to throw me out of my own house because I fucked up a little bit, which I totally admit.
"To fuck up" is also to do something very badly, often creating problems, but it is obviously much more vulgar than to mess up.

He is not in control of himself and I don't want him hurting your feelings anymore, or mine.
"To hurt a person's feelings" is to hurt them emotionally.

Sammy saves her job, and Terry decides it's time to leave Scottsville...

You made a pretty good speech the other day, about people sticking to their commitments...
A "commitment" is a serious promise to do something in the future.

.....and to working things out with this tough new son-of-a-bitch boss of yours.
"To work things out" is to solve problems or disagreements between people. "Tough" is an important adjective meaning strong or capable of surviving great pain or harm. A "son-of-a-bitch" is a common word for a mean or abusive man, though note here it used as an adjective.

Whatever may have passed between us after hours doesn't mean that you can just walk away from that commitment.

If something "passes between" two people, it occurs or happens in a way that deeply effects both of them.

Even if you have a **legitimate** family emergency.

A good word meaning real or authentic, as opposed to fake or false.

In the calm, cold light of day, you and I have to think really hard about whether you really want to continue on here at Outpost Banker's Trust.

This is Brian's way of saying that when they have time to think calmly, both Sammy and Brian may decide that Sammy should no longer work at the bank (The name of the Bank is Outpost Banker's Trust).

You gotta be kidding!

A common way of telling a person that you don't think that what they are saying should be taken seriously because it's too ridiculous (Note that "have got to"----> "gotta" in rapid speech).

It's no good for you, and it's sure as heck no good for the bank.

An old-fashioned filler expression which is added to sentences in order to show frustration or other emotions.

If I were you, I would be a little nervous about firing an employee I just had an affair with, OK? :: Don't threaten me!

An "affair" is a secret sexual relationship, usually involving one person who is married. "To threaten" a person is to suggest or imply that you may harm or injure them (Here, Sammy is noting that an employer who fires a worker with whom he has just had an affair could find himself with many legal problems, including charges of illegal sexual harassment).

I just think it's an area we ought to explore.

"To explore" something is to examine or study it.

Fine, why don't you just take over the whole bank?

"To take over" something is to take control of it.

Now you got to **cut this out!** :: What did I do?!

"Cut it out!" is a very common way of telling a person to stop what they are doing.

Can I give you a lift?

"To give a person a lift" is to transport them in a car (the more American version is to give them a *ride*).

You better get your sneakers on.

A type of shoe that is often worn when playing sports.

That's nice for you, because I write a pretty goddamn interesting letter.

A somewhat vulgar filler word that is added to express emotion.

I don't really have a concrete plan, yet.

A "concrete plan" is a specific and perhaps detailed plan of action.

I thought I'd try and show my face---let her brother have a crack at me.

In this case, "to have a crack" at somebody is to have the opportunity to try and beat or defeat them.

It's really good to know wherever I am and whatever stupid shit I'm doing, that you're back at my home rooting for me.

"To root" for somebody is to support them (At ball games, fans will root for their favorite team by screaming loudly when they score).

Depending on what happens there and in Worcester, I'm going to try and see if there's some work out West for me.

If you're living on the East coast of the US, "out West" refers to the Western states of the US, such as California or Colorado.

And if there isn't, I'll figure something else out.

"To figure out" a solution to a problem is to think of a solution.

Before things got so messed up, I was doing pretty well out there.

If things get "messed up" in general, there are lot of difficult problems that need to be addressed in life.

I'm just a pilgrim on this road, boys. [Song]

A "pilgrim" is a person who travels to a foreign land.

You Can Count on Me

Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a small town like Scottsville? Would you want to live there?
2. Is Sammy a good mother to Rudy?
3. Is Terry a good uncle? A good brother? A good person?
4. Which lifestyle do you prefer---Sammy's (relatively) stable middle class existence or Terry's endless life on the road?
5. How would you describe Brian?
6. Do you have any siblings? How would you compare Terry and Sammy's relationship with the one that you have with your own brothers or sisters?
7. Why do you think very conservative Americans would dislike this movie?
8. What did you like and dislike about this movie?

