

think I better not exercise today."

"Is there anything I can do?" she puts her arm around me. "Are you not well?"

"No, Jeanette, I'm just not happy. I'm afraid I haven't been happy for some time." (She looks up at the audience.)

I don't blame the ladies in the locker room for how I feel. I don't blame any of us. We're all concerned, intelligent, good women. (Pause.) It's just that I feel stranded. And I thought the whole point was that we wouldn't feel stranded. I thought the point was we were all in this together.

Thank you. (She walks off.)

END SCENE

SCENE 5

5 Ford

1987, a children's ward in a New York Hospital. On the TV is a late night Christmas movie like "Miracle on 34th Street." A young man in a doctor's uniform is sitting on a child's chair and smoking. There are various toys and stuffed animals on the floor. There are faded Christmas decorations. Heidi awkwardly enters the room carrying boxes with records and toys, as Dr. Ray turns off the television.

HEIDI. Excuse me. Can you help me? I just have one more box.

RAY. (Sits up.) What?

HEIDI. I just . . .

RAY. I'm sorry, the children's ward is closed to visitors after nine o'clock. Can you come back tomorrow?

HEIDI. Well, actually, no, I can't. Well, I want to make a donation. So I'd like to, uh, drop this off tonight. Maybe if you could, tell Dr. Patrone.

RAY. I'm sorry, he's on the phone. (Peter enters, quite agitated.)

PETER. Heidi!

HEIDI. Peter.

PETER. (Curt.) What are you doing here?

HEIDI. This is a men's and women's hospital and I feel the

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art here does not reflect the make-up of its constituency. So. So. You tell him.

RAY. She's making a donation.

PETER. At midnight!

HEIDI. I tried to reach you all week to say I was coming. Are you here every night?

PETER. When I'm not at the track.

HEIDI. Peter . . .

PETER. (Very angry.) Heidi, you don't burst into a Goddamn hospital at midnight because you have boyfriend trouble or some other nonsense! Sorry, Ray.

HEIDI. Sorry, Ray.

RAY. That's okay. (He extends his hand.) Thank you for your generous gifts. Merry Christmas.

HEIDI. Merry Christmas. (He exits.) He seems very nice.

PETER. You seem completely insane.

HEIDI. I have been trying to reach you.

PETER. Well, I'm here every night. It's a hectic social schedule. Cha-cha lessons at five, cocktails and limbo party at six, dinner under the stars at seven, and free love with safe sex at eight.

HEIDI. I thought you went home to Chicago. I found out you were working through the holidays in some Metropolitan News column.

PETER. It was *The New York Times*. "Science Tuesday."

Page C1. What did you think of the picture?

HEIDI. I thought you looked good.

PETER. I thought I looked jowly. Turned out the photographer was an ex very close personal friend of Stanley's. He certainly made sure no one would call me. Not even you.

HEIDI. I called you. I couldn't find you.

PETER. Enough. End of narcissism. What can I do for you?

HEIDI. (Kisses him.) Merry Christmas.

PETER. (Chilly.) Thank you.

HEIDI. You're brimming with holiday cheer.

PETER. Heidi, last night three immune-deficient children in Queens were burned out of their home because an entire neighborhood preferred they not return to school next year. I don't know who the hell wants to get in here at midnight. But I can assure you that I'm not very happy that they can.

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HEIDI. I should have called again.
 PETER. I'm sorry, Heidi. I'm not feeling very communicative. Unfortunately, things here are for real. Not farina.
 HEIDI. I've never heard that. For real. Not farina.
 PETER. Stanley used it.
 HEIDI. How is Stanley?
 PETER. Oh, he's fine. What's all this?
 HEIDI. Nothing.
 PETER. This gets better and better. You came here at midnight, Christmas Eve with boxes of nothing.
 HEIDI. It's boxes of books. Records. Clothing. One girl's complete collection.
 PETER. Thank you. We accept. Winter cleaning before the New Year?
 HEIDI. (*Mumbling*) No, well, actually, I'm leaving tomorrow.
 PETER. Heidi, you're mumbling.
 HEIDI. I'm going away tomorrow.
 PETER. Chicago. See your parents.
 HEIDI. I'm going to Northfield, Minnesota. Where the Jesse James band was stopped.
 PETER. Are you planning to rob banks and get caught?
 HEIDI. I thought I'd finish my new book in the Midwest. I had an offer to teach at Carleton College there. So I accepted.
 PETER. (*Surprised*) This is sudden.
 HEIDI. Well, yes, but . . .
 PETER. But why not?
 HEIDI. Peter, I came to say goodbye.
 PETER. Goodbye.
 HEIDI. That's it?
 PETER. What do you want me to say?
 HEIDI. I don't know. You'll call me.
 PETER. I'll call you. Heidi, what do you want me to say? You're a brave and remarkable woman. A proud pioneer. My Antonia driving ever forward through the unknown.
 HEIDI. (*Softly*) Peter, sweetie, what is it?
 PETER. (*Moves away*) Nothing. (*He begins straightening the room, putting toys away*) So you're going to Northfield, Minnesota to start again. Goodbye, New York. Goodbye, mistakes. Make new friends. Give donations to the old.

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HEIDI. I hate it when you're like this and I . . .
 PETER. Heidi, you arrived at midnight and promptly announced you're leaving tomorrow. I'm just feeling my way through this.
 HEIDI. I thought you would be the person who would completely understand.
 PETER. (*Quite angrily*) Understand what? Looking back at your life and regretting your choices? Deciding your work, your friends, your history are totally expendable.
 HEIDI. You have a life here that works for you. I don't.
 PETER. Right. So I am expendable, too.
 HEIDI. Peter, stop it!
 PETER. (*Very distant*) I'm not doing anything. I was going to spend a quiet Christmas here with the Hardy Boys.
 HEIDI. The Hardy Boys?
 PETER. For our last midnight donation, we received my sister-in-law Paula Patrone's complete childhood collection of Nancy Drew, the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, Honey Bunch, and *Heidi*, which I actually perused last night in your honor. (*He picks up a book from the floor*) Did you know that the first section is Heidi's year of travel and learning, and the second is Heidi uses what she knows? (*Softly*) How will you use what you know, Heidi?
 HEIDI. I've been sad for a long time. I don't want to be sad anymore.
 PETER. This is hard, Heidi. This is very hard. (*He begins going through her boxes*) What have we got here? The Mamas and the Papas, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs. (*He picks up a record*) "Theodore Bikel Sings Favorite Worksongs from the Fourth International."
 HEIDI. Scoop's. From his red diaper period.
 PETER. H. W. Jansen. *A History of Art*. Jakob Rosenberg, *Rembrandt's Life and Work*. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*. Alice Elizabeth Chase, *Famous Paintings—An Introduction for Young People*. *Mary Cassatt and Philadelphia*. Thank you. We don't have any of these.
 HEIDI. (*Smiles*) I thought not.
 PETER. The next time some reporter arrives with a surly photographer, I'll tell them, "Never mind the kids' immune system, ask them about the secret life of Salvador Dali."
 HEIDI. I think your starting this unit is remarkable.

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PETER. Your friend Susan's production company sent us a very nice check. Who would have thought three women in a Houston loft would capture the national imagination? It's odd what people find comforting.

HEIDI. What, sweetie?

PETER. Nothing. I was thinking about what people find comforting. I'm sorry. Generally, I try to stay fairly chipper.

HEIDI. Honey, you don't have to be chipper around me.

PETER. You know what's as unappealing in its own insidious way as my sarcasm?

HEIDI. What?

PETER. Your trying too hard. The high voice, the gratuitous "honey" or "sweetie." I can't tell what the hell you're thinking! *(He throws one of the dolls across the room.)*

HEIDI. Peter, where is all this coming from?

PETER. Truth.

HEIDI. It'd be preferable.

PETER. Okay. Heidi, I'd say about once a month now I gather in some church, meeting house or concert hall with handsome men all my own age, and in the front row is usually a couple my parents' age, the father's in a suit and the mother's tasteful, a pleasant face. And we listen for half an hour to testimonials, memories, amusing anecdotes about a son, a friend, a lover, also handsome, also usually my own age, whom none of us will see again. After the first, the fifth, or the fifteenth of these gatherings, a sadness like yours seems a luxury.

HEIDI. I understand.

PETER. No, you don't. Not really. I left out one other thing. My friend Stanley isn't very well. That was my call when you so adventurously arrived. That's where all this is coming from.

HEIDI. Peter, I . . .

PETER. *(Quietly, with feeling.)* You see, my world gets narrower and narrower. A person-only has so many close friends. And in our lives, our friends are our families. I'm actually quite hurt you don't understand that. I'm very sorry you don't find that comforting.

HEIDI. There is no one precious to me in the way you are.

PETER. But obviously I can't help you. And you can't help

me. So . . .

HEIDI. So . . .

PETER. My best to Jesse James. *(Pause.)*

HEIDI. Peter, we could try.

PETER. Not if you're off to become someone else.

HEIDI. I could become someone else next year. Postpone it.

If that's not a little too understanding.

PETER. A little, but I'm listening.

HEIDI. I promise you won't lose this member of your family.

PETER. Who? The sad one or the one I spotted twenty-five years ago at a Miss Crain's School dance?

HEIDI. Split the difference? *(Pause.)*

PETER. However, if you do stay, I have one specific request.

HEIDI. What?

PETER. That you still plan to donate this very fine

collection.

HEIDI. All yours. *(Peter begins going through the records*

again.)

PETER. Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. Gary Puckett

and the Union Gap. Nelson and the Rocky Fellers. How did

we ever become friends?

HEIDI. I'm a sucker for a man of taste and talent.

PETER. You have such distinguished taste in music. I can

tell you're very bright. Tell me, since I value your fine opin-

ion, what did you think of Dr. Ray? *(He sits in one of the*

children's chairs.)

HEIDI. I told you I liked him. *(Heidi sits in a child's chair*

beside him.)

PETER. Yes. And I like Greg Louganis. But I don't know if a

diver is the best choice for me.

HEIDI. Is Dr. Ray a diver?

PETER. No. But he's a man of taste and talent.

HEIDI. *(Picks up two dixie cups.)* It's a lovely evening, don't

you think?

PETER. What?

HEIDI. The stars above us. The sea below us. Tell me, how

long have you been on this cruise?

PETER. Oh, around twenty-five years. I tried to pick out

your name. Amanda, Lady Clara, Estelle.

HEIDI. *(She notices him crying.)* It's . . .

PETER. I know. It's Heidi. Your old grandfather told me. Are you from the Alps?

HEIDI. Yes. Like chocolate. I want to know you all my life. If we can't marry, let's be great friends.

PETER. I will keep this goblet as a memento beside my pillow. *(He looks at her. She takes his hand and gets him up.)*

HEIDI. Ah, "The Shoop Shoop Song." Baroque but fragile.

PETER. I'm not familiar with the work. *(She begins to sing very softly to him.)*

HEIDI. "Is it in her eyes?"

PETER. *(Very softly, after a moment.)* "Oh, no, you'll be deceived."

HEIDI. "If you want to know if she loves you so . . ." *(Peter embraces Heidi.)**

PETER. Merry Christmas, Heidi.

HEIDI. Merry Christmas, Peter.

END SCENE

end

SCENE 6

1989, an empty room with fireplace. The room has been freshly painted white. Warm afternoon sunlight streams through the window. A rocker. Heidi, seated, is reading through a book galley. Scoop enters. He is dressed for a business lunch in a suit and raincoat.

SCOOP. *(Loud.)* Hello. Hello.

HEIDI. Scoop!

SCOOP. Hello. I'm canvassing for Eugene McCarthy for president. Miss Holland, you might be interested in my publication. *The Liberated Earth News*. We tell the truth. The way the people see it. So what's up? This is a nice apartment. What do they call it? Raw space with rocker?

HEIDI. I moved in last week. Furniture hasn't come yet.

SCOOP. You know what you could use here? Chintz. Chintz curtains would be very nice. But not shiny. Be specific.

HEIDI. What do you know about chintz?

SCOOP. Now that's sexist. That's really sexist. I've deco-

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rated at least four houses, and I've edited a magazine for ten years that was responsible for the chintz renaissance as we know it today. In fact, do you know why warm Mediterranean colors have returned to the home palette?

HEIDI. Because *Boomer* magazine warned us against the disastrous side effects of too many pastels. Scoop, what are you doing here?

SCOOP. Maritime art.

HEIDI. You came to my raw space for maritime art?

SCOOP. I have an offer to buy maritime art. April Lambert's husband is into equestrian art. So horses are out of the question for me. But I'm considering maritime art. I've always liked Turner.

HEIDI. Well, you can't go wrong with a Turner.

SCOOP. Or a Winslow Homer. So, are you happy?

HEIDI. What?

SCOOP. I made a list the other day of the people I care about. And you made the top ten. In fact, I reworked the list a few times, and you were the only one who made the top ten through three decades. Yup. You and Smokey Robinson were the standards. So if I can keep you on my list, you can tell me if you're happy and why. Mmmm. Good cookies.

HEIDI. "A+" pecan. "B-" sandy.

SCOOP. Better. "B+" sandy.

HEIDI. Actually, I am seeing an editor I seem to like.

SCOOP. Good. Time for my life now. See, I've grown over the years. We did you first. I think that shows remarkable control and sensitivity. Can you keep a secret?

HEIDI. If this involves someone in fishnets twenty-five or younger, not really.

SCOOP. I hate it when you're prissy. Does your editor know you're prissy?

HEIDI. Yes. He's even more prissy than I am. Scoop, why are you here?

SCOOP. Touch base. There aren't that many people in my life who really know me. I sold *Boomer* magazine two hours ago. You're the first to know.

HEIDI. What? Why?

SCOOP. I was at lunch at Lutece with the potential buyer and his lawyer and I made a deal with myself. If I could get

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