**MIRANDA**

*(Smiles; tentatively.)* I am not a ... "happy" woman. I share this with you because you look like you might understand. I have suffered from unhappiness since childhood. A perfectly happy childhood, my mother has assured me, which I, somehow, failed to enjoy. Of course, we were not poor -- we were not starving like the people in China, out of consideration for whom, every night, we cleaned our plates. We had enough money -- but not too much, which is vulgar ... I had a favorite stuffed dog ... and when that died ... my parents told me to go out and make friends. It is not cool in childhood to look mysterious and sit alone. Adolescence was better, because everyone was miserable and, for the first time in my life, I felt I fit in. Briefly ...

*(Pause.)* I won't bore you with the next twenty years.

*(A happier subject.)* My husband is one of those people who says things like, "Wow, did you see the sky tonight? You could see Jupiter!" He's happy when his team wins, and even when his team loses, I suspect he's pretty happy yelling --

*(Like her husband.)* "Fucking umpire! He should get his fucking knees broken! Fuck!" One day I made a list of all the things he said he "loved" that day.

Grilled cheese, Rodin, God ... see-through underwear, physics, wine, my parents-

*(With wonder.)* He loves his parents --

The East Coast, and coffee.

He actually said --

I love these things. What can I tell you?

Couple of years ago, I realized that the century was almost over and I hadn't done much. I'd never been to Prague. I'd never done those Pilates ... Most of the people I knew were either in chat rooms or fictional ... I was about to turn forty, in just thirty-seven months ... When my husband looked up from the sports page and said --

You know what I'd really love? A child.

What do you say to something like that?

**NICK**

*(To audience.)* Okay, I'm gonna pick up the story and help her out. But first, you gotta understand something. I don't like to yell at my wife in the middle of Columbus Avenue -- who does that? I was taught to turn the other cheek! Besides, you talked back, some nun'd pull your sideburns. And let me tell you something else. Until I met that hamster -- I was a pretty happy guy!

*(Glances offstage.)* Unlike some people ... Sure I saw some bad things go down when I was a kid -- who didn't? I saw Nino Gallata push his brother off a balcony when they were moving furniture. Palmer Di Fonzo -- I cut off his eyebrow accidentally with a pen knife -- his mother came after me with a gun. Hercules Sorgini, smallest kid on the block, broke his neck in a sled accident, it was like this --

*(Leans head on right shoulder.)* For a year they called him, "Ten After Six." And Wee Wee Scomo had a heart attack right on the dance floor in junior high. Doing the Twist. He jumped up, did some splits, never got up again. Best dancer at Holy Savior. What are you gonna do? You gonna tell a kid, "Wee Wee -- don't dance"? Besides --

*(Glances offstage.)* If his mother had worried about violent television and the crap they put in the school lunches -- would it have saved him from the Twist!?

*(Yells offstage.)* THAT'S WHY I DON'T WORRY!

*(To audience.)* And that's why I've always been a happy guy. Like when I go to the bank. I don't think, "Oh shit --

*(A la Miranda.)* "What if the guy on the other side of the cash machine's got a drug problem?" I don't even cup my hand over the keypad when I punch in my pin, which happens to be "Jude" by the way, after the patron saint of lost causes -- and not on my worst days -- not even on the day my wife left me on Columbus Avenue would I have had a problem telling you that -- 'cause, hey, if you wanted to go out later, and use my favorite saint's name to steal my money --

*(Yells offstage.)* I JUST WASN'T GONNA WORRY ABOUT IT! Besides ...

*(Pause; remembers.)* I didn't have any money. I spent my last fifty bucks on paint for the baby's room. And then we sold the apartment. Pretty fast too, because the couple who bought it were expecting a baby any day. Then me and Miranda had that fight in front of this Starbucks they put up where my favorite used art book store used to be ... Then she went down to the sperm bank ...

*(Distraught.)* I did what any guy'd do --

*(Pause.)* I went home to my mother.

**JUDY**

And to tell you the truth, I don't consider this a job. It's a privilege!

*(Sits.)* See, before this I was an actress, and ...

*(Bitter.)* Well, let's just say this is a much more fulfilling thing to do. Even if I *had* gotten work ... I'm sure that all the money -- and the fame -- and the travel ...

*(Jumps up, goes to them.)* Well, I just know that all the standing ovations in the world could never have touched the joy I feel placing a baby in an infertile couple's arms.

My personal decision has been to be childfree. My work is my way of being a mom. Also I've recently discovered that I don't really like children. But that's just me. Are you familiar with open adoption?

Say a pregnant woman sees my ad in the Yellow Pages and calls me about placing her baby. I'll send her pictures and resumes of my clients, and she'll choose the couple she wants for her child. So you get to form a special bond with the birth mother. She gets to feel appreciated, supported --

*(Sits; mutters.)* Not like some piece of meat in a cattle call that gets tossed out after she sings her sixteen bars ...

They're great! You'll see. You'll meet the right birth mom and you'll just know. "This is right."

*(Beat.)* Of course, some are on drugs. Then again, sometimes the mom is totally clean. And Dad's a junkie ... But a lot of our moms are on Medicaid so they've had medical care throughout the pregnancy.

*(A plus.)* And some are in jail so you can be sure they've had medical care. And good nutrition.

**DR. JOHN WILDE**

Well, I have good news. I think we've finally nailed down the problem. Now, as you know, Nick's sperm count was just fine. The motility was ... within the range of average ... But the ability to penetrate the hamster egg, on a scale from one to ten, was ... basically ... zero. So ...

*(He pauses, smiles.)*

*(Pats Nick's shoulder.)* Ten years ago, you wouldn't have had a shot in hell of being a father. Today we have an answer. The procedure is called -- ICSI.

*(Pronounced "icksi.")* We'll inject the sperm straight into the egg, and we'll do it in conjunction with IVF, so your treatment will go like this. First we'll start Miranda on a drug which puts the body into a sort of temporary menopause --

This will enable us to have total control over ovulation because only the hormones we give you next will be circulating through your system.

Now these hormones will cause you to "superovulate," producing a number of eggs. We'll retrieve the eggs and inject them with Nick's sperm --

Then the resultant embryos will be transferred back to the uterus, and hopefully ...

*(Pause; smiles.)* We will be pregnant.

*(Pause.)*

Well, you think it over.

*(Notices something in their chart.)* Hmmm. Maybe have a chat with your insurance company.

*(Smiles.)* We'll be here.

**YOLANDA**

I don't gotta define it and I don't even got to talk about it because I just did it without making a federal case and nine months later I had a kid. Dear mother of God in heaven. Now I got to skip my haircut and get off the train at Ninety-Sixth and say a novena for you --

*(To Miranda; restrained.)* Because I don't know about no Episcopalians -- but for us this is a sin! And it's unsanitary. Let me tell you something, if God wanted you to have a kid, you would have had one by now.

*(To Nick.)* Make me a ham and cheese.

Okay, look. Sometimes things turn out good. Sometimes you suffer. Maybe you did something bad,,,

\*\*spoken line by someone in the audition room in the middle\*\* (**MIRANDA**  Oh, right, God is punishing me for having an abortion, and he's blessing the crack addict next door with her seventh learning-disabled child.

*(Pause. Yolanda rises.))*

*(Very quietly.)* Abortion ...

Give me that.

*(She thrusts the knife into the sandwich.)* That's what you're doing to my heart!

*(To Miranda.)* You don't cook anything, you don't make dinner --

*(Wipes knife, hands it to Miranda.)* Here, why don't you just cut out my heart?

*(To Nick.)* And you wonder why she can't give you a child.

*(Grabs him, pulls him aside.)* Listen to me. This is a test. You're a good boy, a nice boy, and right now you could do real good and talk to Father De Santo and maybe get an annulment. Or you could do bad and give your mother a stroke. This is a test. You hear me?

*(Shakes and smacks him.)* God is testing you!

**LILA**

*(Laughs.)* Really? Oh dear. You know the last time somebody asked me that?

Your father and I were watching the news and he said to me, "Lila, what the hell do you think about this lousy war?" And I said, "You know, Bud, I've never seen anything like it on television." I went in to read you a bedtime story -- I believe it was *Eloise* ... And I remember, all night long the television was on. And when I woke up in the morning, all my Valium was gone, and when I went to turn off the TV, he was dead.

**TINA**

Well –

*(Gary coughs. To no avail.)* Has anybody ever heard of santería?

*(Silence.)* Well, I have this neighbor who's Cuban and she couldn't get pregnant, and then she did, and she took me to see this woman in Brooklyn who really helped her --

*(Excited.)* Well, I had to buy this honeydew melon in the name of Oshún who's goddess of the river ... And then I wrote a letter asking Oshún for a child, and I put it inside the melon through through this little slit I made on the side, along with six strands of pubic hair from my husband --

*(Gary nods.)* Then I wrapped the melon in a yellow handkerchief and lit a white candle to Oshún, and at the end of five days, I'm bringing the melon to the river with twenty-seven cents.

**LUPE**

Hi, I'm Lupe, come in.

*(She picks up toys, straightening up.)* Sorry I couldn't meet you at the Burger King like we said. One of my kids fell down 'cause the stairs was broke again, and I had to take him over to Mt. Sinai to make sure he was okay. Why don't you sit down?

So I already filled out the medical forms ... I don't take no drugs, and one of my kids was taken away for a little while, and it's on my record, but I'm just gonna tell you straight out, it was his father called the child welfare on me because he wanted Michael to go live with his parents.

You're Christian, right? Me too. Only now I go to this other church with the Pentecostals, and they tell me it's a sin to give up my baby, and if I take Jesus into my heart, the baby will be okay. I told them I already have Jesus in my heart, and could they lend me the money for diapers and formula, and they told me to pray --

*(Sounds of kids yelling. Lupe goes to a "door.")* Put it down, Michael! Don't be throwing things at your sister. Oye, the TV is not a toy.

*(To Nick and Miranda; smiles.)* He's a good boy.

*(To Miranda.)* So you can't have kids, huh?

I don't- I don't want money for this. I don't want nothing. You just ...

*(Starts to cry.)* You just love her, okay? That's all. You just let her know that I loved her and -- and this wasn't about her, okay? I want her to have a room that's hers! I want her to go outside!

*(Fighting the tears.)* And you let her know about Jesus. You let her know that ... she'll be fine.

**SAL**

Wha -- ? What are you talkin'? It ain't gonna be your kid! Blood. Blood makes it your kid. I don't wanna hear about physics in this house. You see these hands? My father gave me these hands! And I gave 'em to yous! You coulda been Joe DiMaggio with these hands!

College kid. Maybe if you weren't so busy usin' your *head* –

Jesus said, "Love thy neighbor" -- not "adopt him!"