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*for Jessica*

## **Cast of Characters**

SYLVIA

TOM

*In their 20s, or early 30s.*

## **Time**

Present.

## **Place**

Three lightly suggested settings: (1) a subway car, (2) a one-bedroom apartment, (3) a hostel in Nice.

# **“WILL YOU PLEASE SHUT UP?”**

**by Dan O’Brien**

## **Scene 1**

### **“We Used To Go Out”**

*(A subway car, going uptown.)*

*(SYLVIA is sitting alone. TOM is sitting alone.)*

*(SYLVIA is whistling the tune to Eric Clapton’s “Tears In Heaven.”)*

*(A few seconds of this.)*

**TOM.** ...Sylvia?

**SYLVIA.** ...Tom?

**TOM.** Sylvia!

**SYLVIA.** Wow!

Tom!

**TOM.** *(The slightest hesitation:)* I knew it was you.

**SYLVIA.** I knew it was **you**.

**TOM.** I recognized our song.

**SYLVIA.** What song?

**TOM.** “Tears in Heaven.” *(Sings, sincerely:)* Would you know my name— ?

**SYLVIA.** *(Overlapping:)* That was “our song”?

**TOM.** *(Still singing:)* If I saw you in heaven—

**SYLVIA.** I thought our song was something else, something a little more— ?

**TOM.** *(Still singing:)* Would you feel— ?

**SYLVIA.** Okay, that’s enough, Tom—

**TOM.** The same, if I saw you in— ?

**SYLVIA.** —**TOM.**

That’s enough.

Thanks.

**TOM.** I was just trying to, you know—

**SYLVIA.** Thanks—

**TOM.** Jog your—

**SYLVIA.** Thanks.

*(Beat.)*

That couldn’t have been our song, Tom. I mean, that’s a really depressing song.

It’s about a dead kid.

**TOM.** It is?

**SYLVIA.** A kid who fell out a window.

**TOM.** Who fed you that propaganda?

**SYLVIA.** And anyway I wasn’t whistling that song.

**TOM.** You weren’t?

What were you whistling?

**SYLVIA.** You wouldn’t know it.

**TOM.** Come on:

**SYLVIA.** Korean Opera.

**TOM.** I didn’t know Koreans had “opera.”

**SYLVIA.** What, you thought they just had “groceries”?

Don’t be such a bigot, Tom.

*(A subway stop: people get on and off.)*

**TOM.** *(A second attempt:)* **So:**

Sylvia.

**SYLVIA.** Tom.

**So...**

**TOM.** Did you recognize me?

**SYLVIA.** No.

—Sure.

Not at first, no, but when you said Sylvia like that, you know, “Sylvia!” —

**TOM.** “Sylvia!”

**SYLVIA.** Right, because, you know, well: you look sort of different.

**TOM.** Well, I’m sort of bald.

**SYLVIA.** No...

**TOM.** I’m sort of heavier, than I once was, sort of almost “fat”?

**SYLVIA.** No, I wouldn’t say “fat” —

**TOM.** I’ve been institutionalized for the past eight months.

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** *(Bursts out laughing:)* O Tom!

**TOM.** Just “joking,” Kid-o!

**SYLVIA.** Always were a “joker,” Tom— !  
Always made me laugh, Tom—

**TOM.** *(Furious:)* **STOP.**

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** What, Tom?

**TOM.** Stop saying “Tom” like that. You’ve said “Tom” after ever sentence, “Sylvia.”

It’s really sort of getting to me. Sort of I don’t know straining my heart.

**SYLVIA.** I’m sorry.

I’m sorry, Tom. It’s just that it’s been a long time since I’ve had the opportunity to say your name, Tom. “Tom Tom Tom.”

**TOM.** Very funny, Syl—

**SYLVIA.** *(Cracking herself up:)* “Tom-tom!”

*(A subway stop. People get on and off, etc.)*

**TOM.** It's nice to see you haven't changed.

**SYLVIA.** O? In what ways haven't I “changed”?

**TOM.** Well, for one thing, you were sort of an “eccentric,” weren't you Syl? Never one to do things the “usual way”?

**SYLVIA.** If I recall, Tom, it was not my “eccentricity” that caused “problems” for us, it was your apparent “lack of soul,” if you will, that tore us apart.

**TOM.** “Lack of soul,” Syl?  
“Tore” us apart, Syl?  
Still writing plays?

**SYLVIA.** Still an I-banker, Tom?

**TOM.** Got out of banking long ago. No soul in banking.

**SYLVIA.** Since when do you have a soul?

**TOM.** Since I became a singer.

**SYLVIA.** A what?

**TOM.** “A singer.”

**SYLVIA.** What kind of “singing” do you do, Tom? You're not even musical.

**TOM.** What does music have to do with anything?

**SYLVIA.** You do sing to music, don't you?

**TOM.** No, I lip-sync.

**SYLVIA.** —Tom!  
No!  
Where?

**TOM.** “Where”?

**SYLVIA.** Where do you do it? the “lip-syncing”?

**TOM.** You wouldn't know it.

**SYLVIA.** Try me.

**TOM.** A place called... "Gepetto's Workshop."

*(A subway stop. People get off and come on.)*

**SYLVIA.** Tom—you'll excuse me for saying this—but isn't "Gepetto's Workshop" a sort of "gay" club?

**TOM.** It's not a "gay" club, Sylvia.  
"Jesus."

It's a club for drag-queens.

*(Doors open and close again.)*

**TOM.** That guy just got stuck in the door.  
—Hey guy! You okay?

**SYLVIA.** Tom: Are you a drag queen?

**TOM.** Stop calling me "Tom"!

**SYLVIA.** What should I call you?

**TOM.** *(The slightest hesitation:)* Greta.

**SYLVIA.** "Greta"?

Tom, you're not even blonde—

**TOM.** WILL YOU PLEASE GOD PLEASE JUST STOP IT PLEASE?

*(Beat.)*

Three minutes and it's already back to the same old horror. You know what? I'm so glad we ran into each other today, because now I know—I **know** we did the right thing in breaking up. God, why can't you leave me alone?! I'm an adult now, Syl! Not a kid anymore, Syl! I've cured my chronic hives. I've been to Hell and back again, and I've learned a lot about my Self! And if I need to stand up on stage in fishnet hose and three inch heels and belt out Bette Midler tunes just to feel like a "whole person," then that's "okay." Okay? It's better than okay—it's fabulous! And you know why? Because I love it! Syl: Do you have any idea what it feels like to put on foundation, and "falsies," and "sexy" underwear and the finer points like mascara, eyeliner, lipstick, the wig. —The wig, Syl! O, how I love that gorgeous wig! It's blonde and Germanic and when I step out on stage...I know I'm beautiful.

*(Beat.)*

*(A subway stop; people get off and come on.)*

**SYLVIA.** Are you gay, Tom?

**TOM.** No I'm not gay.

**SYLVIA.** Because I always thought you were.  
A little—"gay."

**TOM.** Why does everybody just **assume** all drag queens are gay?

**SYLVIA.** I know. It doesn't make much sense.

**TOM.** Don't be such a homophobe.

**SYLVIA.** Ha!

**TOM.** You always were uptight.

**SYLVIA.** Ha!

Correction:

I "was" uptight with **you!**

**TOM.** O, so your "uptightness" was **my** fault?

Didn't you once say to me (maybe I'm confusing you with somebody else there's been so many), but didn't you once tell me you couldn't achieve orgasm unless you were fantasizing about your career?

*(Beat.)*

I rest my case.

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** So you still like women?

**TOM.** I love women.

I love women so much I want to be them.

**SYLVIA.** So that makes you, what, a "lesbian"?

*(A subway stop.)*

"Tom"?

**TOM.** Yes?

**SYLVIA.** I've been meaning to ask you, "all these years":

**TOM.** What?

**SYLVIA.** Why do you always do the—the quotes thing?

**TOM.** I'm sorry?

**SYLVIA.** You know. The "quotes thing"?  
With your hands.

**TOM.** I do that?

**SYLVIA.** Yeah.

**TOM.** "I" do the quotes thing?

**SYLVIA.** There—you just did it! Did you see that? Did you realize that, or was it like a tick or something?

**TOM.** I'm sorry: I do not do the quotes thing. Occasionally I may say "quote-unquote," when reading aloud from a newspaper perhaps, but I do not do the "thing" with my hands.  
—**You** do the thing with your hands.

**SYLVIA.** I do not.

**TOM.** Always did.  
You always did the "thing with your hands."  
You've been doing "the thing with your hands" this entire conversation.

**SYLVIA.** I may do the Thing from time to time, like any (quote-unquote) normal person, but—

**TOM.** You see—you see?

**SYLVIA.** I did not—I "**said**" quote-unquote—my fingers were never anywhere near my head—

**TOM.** This is not normal behavior, Sylvia, I hope you're aware of that—

**SYLVIA.** Tom: "normal people" do the "quotes thing" from time to time, but **YOU** do it all the time—

**TOM.** And it is not the Quotes Thing for your information or the “thing with your hands”—anybody who’s anybody knows enough to call it bunny ears.

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** Bunny ears.  
Why?

*(TOM shrugs.)*

**SYLVIA.** Why call it “bunny ears”?

**TOM.** Well just look at yourself.

**SYLVIA.** ...Well I don’t do this sort of thing normally. Not under “normal conditions.” And if I **do** do it, if I **have** been doing it this afternoon, it’s only because you’re here. You bring it out in me. Like a rash. That’s why we “broke up.” And if I occasionally make “bunny ears” as a reaction to stress, at least I “do” it around “appropriate words.” You do it whenever you fucking feel like it, “Tom.”

**TOM.** And this really irritates you.

**SYLVIA.** It does, yeah. Always has.

**TOM.** “Always” has.

**SYLVIA.** “Al-ways.”

**TOM.** Really “gets on your nerves”?

**SYLVIA.** “It sure as Hell does.”

**TOM.** I’m “sorry,” Sylvia, I’ll “try” to be “more careful” in the “future” not to “get on your—

**SYLVIA. STOP IT STOP IT PLEASE GOD JUST STOP IT!**

*(A subway stop.)*

*(A second or two in silence.)*

**SYLVIA.** *(As if nothing’s happened:)* Hey, Tom?

Sorry about that.

Sorry about the “STOP IT STOP IT PLEASE GOD STOP IT!” thing. I guess it’s just a little strange, seeing you after all this time.

All this Time.

“Time.”

I usually don't think about you, and when I do I like to pretend you're dead.

*(Beat.)*

I'm a different person now too, Tom.

I've been through a Hell of a lot.

**TOM.** Like what, Sylvia?

**SYLVIA.** Well:

For starters:

I found God.

**TOM.** *(He means this:)* Really?

**SYLVIA.** Yeah. And then I lost Him.

**TOM.** *(He also means this:)* Jeez, that sucks.

**SYLVIA.** Yeah.

**TOM.** How did you find Him?

**SYLVIA.** I read somewhere that people in their twenties either find God or go schizophrenic, and you know how much I hate schizophrenics.

**TOM.** Sure, who doesn't—

**SYLVIA.** I mean, they sort of really freak me out—

**TOM.** Sure, sure—

**SYLVIA.** You see them at book stores, near the escalator, standing in front of a cardboard cut-out of the universe, saying things like Power will come in the final days when the mother returns to Earth and makes love to the sons of Man—

**TOM.** Right, I hate that.

**SYLVIA.** So I decided I'd hedge my bets.

**TOM.** And find God before you went schizophrenic.

**SYLVIA.** You think I'm crazy.

**TOM.** No!

**SYLVIA.** You do.

**TOM.** Well, I always thought you were a **little** schizophrenic. But I understand that need. Wanting to find something, to make some sort of sense.

I just can't believe you found Him, Syl, that's all. I'm jealous.

**SYLVIA.** Well let me give you some advice: He's not everything He's cracked up to be.

**TOM.** No?

**SYLVIA.** It was a very one-sided affair. But in every relationship there always has to be one person who loves the other person more. Right?

**TOM.** Where'd you find Him?

**SYLVIA.** Who?

**TOM.** God? Where'd you find God?

**SYLVIA.** At a bookstore, in front of this cardboard cut-out of the uni—

*(Subway stop. People on and off.)*

And then I lost Him because my sister died. You “remember” Jane?

**TOM.** You're doing it again.

**SYLVIA.** What?

**TOM.** The “thing.”

**SYLVIA.** Am I?

**TOM.** Jane's dead?

**SYLVIA.** O. Yes.

**TOM.** God—how?

**SYLVIA.** Kidneys failed.

**TOM.** Both kidneys?

**SYLVIA.** Yeah, if you can believe it.

**TOM.** Don't those things usually happen one at a time?

**SYLVIA.** Not in Jane's case. Two kidneys, same day. **Ppphhhttttt.**

**TOM.** Wow.

Jane.

I can hardly believe it.

—Really healthy Jane?

**SYLVIA.** What.

**TOM.** —What?

**SYLVIA.** Why'd you say it like that? "Really **healthy** Jane?"

**TOM.** I don't know. She was just always sort of "healthy."

**SYLVIA.** You had the hots for her.

**TOM.** What? No, I did not have "the hots" for your "healthy" sister Jane—!

**SYLVIA.** You would've fucked her if you had the chance—

**TOM.** Syl, I would not have "fucked" your—

**SYLVIA.** "**You fucked her**"! O my God.

*(To the subway car:)* He "fucked" my dead sister!

**TOM.** I did not "have sex" with "your" "dead" "sister."

*(To the subway car:)* And she was alive, when I knew her.

*(As an afterthought:)* She was **a swimmer!**

*(A subway stop. People on and off.)*

*(A few seconds in silence.)*

**SYLVIA.** Well.

I'll just have to, sort of, take your word for it.

And what's a little cheating now five years gone?

And she was a gymnast, for your information, not a "swimmer."

**TOM.** You feeling all right, Syl?

**SYLVIA.** “Fine.”  
You?

**TOM.** “Fine.”

**SYLVIA.** In love—with anyone?

**TOM.** Ah, love.

**SYLVIA.** “Love.”

**TOM.** No. You?

**SYLVIA.** I was. Until recently.  
A recent sort of break up.  
It’s okay, though:  
My career’s really taking off.

**TOM.** Mine too.

**SYLVIA.** I don’t know why you don’t just **sing**.  
Chuck lip-synching.  
Let it go:  
You’ve got a beautiful voice.

**TOM.** You think so?

**SYLVIA.** Yes.

**TOM.** —What are you doing now? you know, for a living?

**SYLVIA.** I write TV.

**TOM.** Really.  
What? A TV show? Like a drama?

**SYLVIA.** A comedy.

**TOM.** “A comedy”?!  
Wow.

**SYLVIA.** What.

**TOM.** What’s it called? the show. Maybe I’ve seen it.

**SYLVIA.** I don’t think so. It’s a romantic comedy.

**TOM.** Come on:

**SYLVIA.** It's for girls, really—

**TOM.** Try me.

**SYLVIA.** “We Used To Go Out.”

*(Beat.)*

**TOM.** Wow.

**SYLVIA.** Yeah.

**TOM.** Such a—”honest” title.

**SYLVIA.** Honesty's hot.

**TOM.** I think I've seen it. I think I've seen that show.

**SYLVIA.** It won a couple Emmys.

**TOM.** What's it about?

**SYLVIA.** Well, there's this youngish attractive woman who's a struggling playwright. And she's dating this guy, this balding, sort-of-fat “I-banker” with no “soul,” per se. But they're both funny people. I mean, they hate each other, but they love each other too, and that's what makes them entertaining to watch. I don't know why.

**TOM.** Was there an episode where he wanted her to get a bikini wax and she wouldn't?

**SYLVIA.** Right, because she was insecure about showing her “ ” to a Korean woman—

**TOM.** Right! I saw that one!

**SYLVIA.** It's one of our most popular episodes!

**TOM.** Wow!

**SYLVIA.** Yeah!

**TOM.** Wow wow!

**SYLVIA.** Yeah, “wow”!

*(Beat. A subway stop. People on and off.)*

You think I sold out.

**TOM.** No! I’m really happy for you.

**SYLVIA.** I’m happy for **you**.

—Are you happy?

**TOM.** Sure.

—About myself?

**SYLVIA.** About anything.

**TOM.** I’m happy about—lots of things.

And I’m happy for you.

**SYLVIA.** Then I’m happy we’re both happy.

*(Beat.)*

We’re square.

*(Beat.)*

**TOM.** I’m just surprised, that’s all.

**SYLVIA.** What do you mean?

**TOM.** Well you used to have such, I don’t know, sort of—”principles.”

**SYLVIA.** What does “that” mean? What does “principles” mean?

**TOM.** —You’re doing “it” again.

**SYLVIA.** “**I’m doing it for emphasis!**”

**TOM.** I’m not trying to get you all riled up. I’m just a little shocked, I mean, because you used to be so against television, in the early days, right? Writing “fluff.” I mean, a “romantic comedy,” Syl? You always said love was stupid.

**SYLVIA.** Love is stupid.

**TOM.** So how can you write this TV show?

**SYLVIA.** Look, Tom. I don’t write the show for Love. I write it **about** Love. And I write it for Money. I’ve got a kid to think about—

*(Beat.)*

TOM. You've got a "kid"?

SYLVIA. Sure.

TOM. Is he mine?

SYLVIA. Not unless he gestated in my womb for forty months.

TOM. What's his name?

SYLVIA. Jack London.

TOM. "Jack London," the novelist? *Never Cry Wolf*?

SYLVIA. That's Farley Mowat.

Jack London's better.

TOM. You were considering "Farley Mowat"?

*(Another subway stop.)*

SYLVIA. I was in New Mexico, living on a yoga commune—O never mind how I got there. The point is I was driving alone at night and I became lost in this forest of darkness and night. —I didn't even know they had forests in New Mexico, did you Tom? But there I was, lost and driving and feeling very strange, very Holy Mother, when this wolf came trotting out of the trees. It had blue eyes, Tom. Cold, lunar eyes, like Paul Newman. It stopped right in front of my car, and I slowed down so as not to run it over, and he just stared at me with his Paul Newman eyes, right through the windshield, and I returned his gaze. Our eyes locked. A surge **entered** me. Through my eyes and down into my neck, and down deeper into my womb. My **womb**, Tom...

*(Beat.)*

Nine months to the day, I gave birth to Jack London.

He's got the bluest eyes...

You should see him.

TOM. "Jack London."

SYLVIA. That's right.

TOM. Your "wolf boy."

SYLVIA. I know.

**TOM.** That’s incredible.

**SYLVIA.** Isn’t it?

**TOM.** —So incredible I’d be tempted to say it didn’t happen.

**SYLVIA.** Don’t be so close-minded.

**TOM.** Unless this wolf happened to insert his penis in your birth canal and ejaculate.

**SYLVIA.** It’s just his **eyes**—

**TOM.** Syl: correct me if I’m wrong here, but you’ve always been a bit of a liar.

**SYLVIA.** I am not lying, Tom! Of course I got pregnant in the usual way. But it did happen in New Mexico. The father worked at a bar called the Wolf Pit and his favorite movie was Cool Hand Luke. But there’s a “spiritual connection” here I’m trying to “get at”—

**TOM.** You’re doing the bunny ears again— !

**SYLVIA.** “**FUCK MY BUNNY EARS— !**”

*(Beat. To the subway car:)* I was in a skiing accident last year. I have a pacemaker.

I’m intermittently medicated.

*(Another subway stop.)*

**TOM.** Hey Syl?

**SYLVIA.** Yes Tom.

**TOM.** I’m sorry about the comment about the wolf ejaculating in your birth canal.

**SYLVIA.** I understand...

**TOM.** I bet Jack London’s a great kid.

**SYLVIA.** He is.

**TOM.** —Do you ever wonder?

**SYLVIA.** Sure.

**TOM.** How awful our lives would be if we’d stayed together?

It would've been awful. Immeasurable suffering—

**SYLVIA.** Sure.

**TOM.** Riding the subway together home from work. Another day at the office, me at “Gepetto’s Workshop”—where men can be women—and you at your hit show “We Used to Go Out.” Going home to our child, our wolf-child, who’s up late with the Dutch nanny, learning how to read, how to stop eating his own feces. We wouldn’t talk much because we’d grown so used to each other. “Speech” would be redundant. We’d **understand** each other wordlessly, by osmosis even—Had a bad day, hon? Let me massage your heart. And I’d touch you, on the subway even, who cares who’s looking...

*(Beat.)*

*(They look as if they might kiss, or at least embrace.)*

**SYLVIA.** *(Separating:)* —We were wrong for each other.

**TOM.** Got that right.

**SYLVIA.** If we had stayed together, think of all the fun we would have missed!

**TOM.** Fun unlimited!

**SYLVIA.** You never would have come to grips with your “lesbian” tendencies.

**TOM.** You never would have been impregnated by “White Fang.”

**SYLVIA.** Right!

**TOM.** Right!

**SYLVIA.** **It’s good that we broke up!**

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** ...Why did we break up?

Tom?

Whenever I try to think of the reason...I get so confused.

*(A subway stop.)*

**TOM.** *(Standing:)* This is my stop.

*(Blackout.)*

**Scene 2**

**“Honey, Have You Seen The Cats?”**

*(An apartment, a few years earlier.)*

*(SYLVIA is sitting at an antique typewriter, contemplating the keys.)*

*(TOM's voice is heard offstage, humming a few bars from Eric Clapton's "Tears In Heaven.")*

*(SYLVIA obviously finds this distracting.)*

*(TOM suddenly stops whistling.)*

**TOM.** *(Off:)* Syl?

**SYLVIA.** Tom?

**TOM.** Sylvie, darling?

**SYLVIA.** Tommy-gun?

*(A burst of canned laughter, like a TV sitcom.)*

**TOM.** *(Entering:)* A question for you.

**SYLVIA.** Question for **you!**

**TOM.** You first:

**SYLVIA.** No, you:

**TOM.** No. **You.**

**SYLVIA.** **You:**

**TOM.** **You:**

**SYLVIA.** **You:**

**TOM.** **You:**

**SYLVIA.** **You:**

**TOM.** **You:**

**SYLVIA.** **You:**

*(Beat.)*

God, we're selfless.

*(More canned laughter.)*

**TOM.** All right:

My love:

Me first:

My question for you is this: “Have you seen the cats”?

**SYLVIA.** Have I seen “the cats”?

**TOM.** That's right. The cats.

Our cats.

**SYLVIA.** O.

I threw them out.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** I'm sorry?

**SYLVIA.** Why?

**TOM.** I thought I heard you say you “threw out our cats.”

**SYLVIA.** I did just say that.

**TOM.** I see.

And you would have thrown them out **where**?

**SYLVIA.** The window.

**TOM.** Out the window.

**SYLVIA.** Yes. This one here.

**TOM.** And may I ask why you threw our cats out the window?

**SYLVIA.** Listen, Tom: I haven't gotten to ask **my** question yet, Tom, which is about my antique typewriter here—

**TOM.** No, dear, darling, don't try and change the subject here, “darling”—I want to know why you threw our cats out the window.

**SYLVIA.** That's easy. They were plaguing me.

*(More canned laughter.)*

**TOM.** Pepsi and Ginger were “plaguing” you?

**SYLVIA.** They were making my life a living Hell.

*(TOM is speechless.)*

**SYLVIA.** All done?

Nothing more to say?

*(Laughter.)*

*(TOM is still speechless.)*

**SYLVIA.** Good. Tommy dear, Domestic Partner:  
The T is stuck. The T on my typewriter will not print.  
Do you have any idea what happened to my T?  
This is, of course, a rhetorical question.

**TOM.** I don't want to talk about your T, I want to save the cats—

*(He runs out.)*

*(SYLVIA sits down to type. She types for a few minutes, banging on the T to no avail. She looks at what she has typed, and is profoundly dissatisfied.)*

*(TOM reenters.)*

**TOM.** They're gone.

**SYLVIA.** They'll come back. They always do.

**TOM.** Have you done this before?

**SYLVIA.** We're only on the second floor, dear! They're cats for Christ's sake! They know how to fall!

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** This is wrong.

**SYLVIA.** Don't be such a girl.

**TOM.** This is morally reprehensible.

**SYLVIA.** Pardon me for saying, but don't you think you're being a little bit of a pussy?

TOM. What?

*(Laughter.)*

SYLVIA. A “pussy,” Tom.

Don’t you think you’re being just the tiniest little pussy?

TOM. We could get in trouble—

SYLVIA. O please— !

TOM. What if someone was out there when you threw them out?

SYLVIA. —Tom! Dear! They’re not dead! You went out there yourself! They landed on their feet, as cats do, and they hit the fuckin’ road!

*(More canned laughter.)*

TOM. You never loved them.

SYLVIA. Correction: I hated them.

TOM. I didn’t know you “**hated**” them...

SYLVIA. Profound, undistilled hatred. For your little pussy cats.

TOM. You were always very nice to them.

SYLVIA. That’s because I’m a nice person. Because you loved the cats, and because I love you, I was “nice” to them

TOM. Why did you stop being “nice” today?

SYLVIA. They broke my typewriter.

TOM. I don’t understand:

How could our cats break your typewriter?

SYLVIA. —They’re not “cats,” dear! They’re demons! Changelings, hob-goblins, it doesn’t matter, **they’re evil and they’re destroying my life**. I come in here this morning, picture this, me with my cup of coffee, my little nugget of inspiration tucked up in here—I was going to write it today, Tom! The key to my success, Tom! The “story-idea” that was gonna make our life so incredibly unbearably “**nice**”! And there was Pipsy. Or whatever the fuck her name is. With her ass on the keys. Just sitting there, the fat slob, on my typewriter. And I said, “Easy there, Pips, back off now, girl. Momma

needs her antique typewriter this morning!” And she gets this look in her eyes, more like in her mouth really, like the Cheshire cat, only more malicious, more sinister, and she starts pressing the keys with her little paw, tic tic, tic tic, in particular the T, cause she knows, **the bitch knows** that the T is one of the most necessary letters in the English alphabet and if she fucks with my T I’m screwed. Ruined. —You know how she gets with chipmunks, mice? Stepping on their tails, letting them go, batting them back and forth? Well that’s what she was doing with my T. Batting the T, batting the T, tic tic, tic tic, tic tic tic tic tic—”no Pipsy, no! Let Mommy have the typewriter—**PLEASE PIPSY!**”—and I lunged for the bitch, knocked the wind out of her, knocked the friggin’ typewriter off the table too, and before I could even think what I was doing, Pipsy was out the window.

*(Beat.)*

And then I threw Ginger out the window too. For good measure.

*(Beat.)*

**TOM.** You’re just not a cat person. That’s the problem here.

*(Laughter.)*

**SYLVIA.** That’s not the problem.

**TOM.** That’s very surprising in a woman. Not liking cats.

**SYLVIA.** —What’s your excuse?

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** —And it’s “Pepsi” by the way. Not “Pipsy”!  
“Pipsy” is a character in *Great Expectations*, I think.

**SYLVIA.** Who names their cat “Pepsi”?

**TOM.** **If a cat likes Pepsi you name the cat Pepsi!**

*(Beat; laughter.)*

Syl.

I’m sorry.

They were my mother’s cats.

**SYLVIA.** It’s not like I threw your mother out the window.

**TOM.** You probably would've, if she were alive.

*(Laughter.)*

**SYLVIA.** If she touched my damned typewriter, you bet your ass.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** Okay: Listen: I don't want to argue anymore.

**SYLVIA.** Who's arguing? I wasn't "arguing"—I was explaining.

**TOM.** Well people don't "yell" when they "explain."

**SYLVIA.** The problem with you, dear, is you don't know what "yelling" is, "dear," because you were raised by a family of deaf mutes. Thanksgiving at your house is like visiting a soup kitchen for out-of-work mimes.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** —I loved those cats!

**SYLVIA.** Whoa!

**Tom!**

**That's it: let it rip!**

**TOM.** I'M LETTING MY FEELINGS OUT!

**SYLVIA.** "You loved those cats!"

**TOM.** AND YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO THROW THEM OUT THE WINDOW BECAUSE EVEN IF THEY HAVE SURVIVED THEY ARE GOING TO BE VERY, VERY SUSPICIOUS OF PEOPLE FROM THIS POINT ON!

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** You're right. I was wrong.  
Do you forgive me?

**TOM.** What? No.

**SYLVIA.** Why not?

**TOM.** I'm not ready to "forgive" you.

**SYLVIA.** Come on, Tom. Let's work together. Let's get over it, "move on."

**TOM.** I'm not ready to "move on."

**SYLVIA.** Well that's not a very positive attitude, now is it.

**TOM.** I don't care if it's "positive." It's how I feel.

**SYLVIA.** O! "The new Tom"! The new and improved "Tom-who-expresses-his-feelings"!

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** Dear: love-twin: soul-mate: I am mad that you threw my cats out the window.

In fact, I'm probably also mad that you never liked my mother.

Who is dead.

So no, I do not forgive you.

No.

Not yet.

*(Laughter.)*

**SYLVIA.** See, this is a problem, Tom. This is a problem between you and me. You have to learn to let things go. If I said I was sorry, and you refuse to relinquish your niggling position of power and forgive me for what I have done (which you have to admit was pretty understandable considering that Pipsy is the Antichrist), then you are the one at fault here, Tom. Either you can forgive me, or you can not. Be honest—

**TOM.** I am always honest with you—

**SYLVIA.** You keep everything "inside." It's not healthy. You don't "say" anything, unless its "thoughtful" and "objective" and preferably in quotes—

**TOM.** I try to be nice—

**SYLVIA.** It's oppressive, Tom! Your niceness is oppressive! I just threw your fucking cats out the window and you have nothing to say to me— !

**TOM.** I HATE YOU I HATE YOU—GOD I FUCKING HATE YOU!

*(Beat.)*

*(Laughter for a long time.)*

*(TOM is crying.)*

**SYLVIA.** *(She moves to him:)* There, there.

*(TOM continues to sob.)*

**SYLVIA.** There, now don't you feel better?

**TOM.** ...A little bit.

**SYLVIA.** See how much better you feel when you just say what's on your mind?

**TOM.** I said “I hate you.” Doesn't that make you mad?

**SYLVIA.** No. I know you didn't mean it.

*(Laughter.)*

*(SYLVIA goes back to typing.)*

*(TOM finishes up crying.)*

*(He gets up, tries to make a go at “moving on.”)*

**TOM.** *(He means this:)* Well I feel better.

**SYLVIA.** *(She also means this:)* Good.

**TOM.** Whatcha typing?

**SYLVIA.** *(Not unkindly:)* None of your damn business.

*(Beat.)*

**TOM.** All right.

That hurt my feelings.

But that's all right what you just said, because it was on your mind, and you let it out.

—Hon?

I'm gonna be right over here, at the window, calling out to the air for our cats.

*(He moves to the window. SYLVIA goes on typing.)*

**TOM.** Here sweetie-sweetie-sweetie-sweeties.

Here kitty-kitty-kitty-kitties.

Here pussy-pussy-pussies—

**SYLVIA.** Tom dear?

**TOM.** Dearest Sylvie?

**SYLVIA.** What are you doing?

**TOM.** O was I sabotaging your creative process?

**SYLVIA.** I don't think you should be saying "Here pussy pussies" out our window.

**TOM.** Why not?

**SYLVIA.** It could be misunderstood.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** And I suppose throwing pussies out the window is a very clear, unambiguous statement.

**SYLVIA.** I did not throw "pussies," I threw "cats," and if you can't understand the difference that might explain our confusion of late in the bedroom.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** Wow.

That hurt my feelings even more.

**SYLVIA.** Well love hurts.

**TOM.** Why are you being so mean?

**SYLVIA.** Because I'm Hitler.

**TOM.** We're dating. Doesn't that mean anything to you?

**SYLVIA.** We're not "dating." We're "living together." There's a difference.

**TOM.** Like what?

**SYLVIA.** Like "living together" is a lot closer to "being married."

**TOM.** We're not married—

**SYLVIA.** I said "closer" to being married, like on the "relationship spectrum" it's way over here near indigo-violet—

**TOM.** We're not married—

**SYLVIA.** I know we're not married, because if we **were** married we'd be making some decisions, like “career” decisions, or “family decisions,” and not just treading water—

**TOM.** You want to get married?

**SYLVIA.** You obviously don't.

**TOM.** I'm asking you a question: **Do you want to get married?**

**SYLVIA.** **Maybe I do!**

**TOM.** **Fine! Let's get married then!**

**SYLVIA.** **Fine!**

**TOM.** **FINE!**

*(Beat.)*

**I don't want to get married.**

You know why I don't want to get married, Sylvia?

Because I don't think I like you.

I don't hardly **know** you.

If we had a kid, and he accidentally brushed up against your typewriter, you'd probably throw him out the window.

**SYLVIA.** I would never throw our kid out the window.

**TOM.** I think you might be insane.

**SYLVIA.** I think you might be gay.

**TOM.** You make me feel gay!

**SYLVIA.** Well you make **me** feel insane— !

**TOM.** **I want to slap you— !**

**SYLVIA.** **I want to fucking kill you! I want to roll over on my side while you're sleeping and grab the top of your head and twist like a pickle jar—snap—and everything comes out. Pouring out.**

*(Laughter, for a very long time.)*

*(Beat.)*

**TOM.** Wow.

Did you mean that?

*(She moves to her typewriter. Continues typing.)*

I'm sorry, Syl.

It's my fault.

There's no excuse for how I've been acting. I think it's these Hives I've got. Have I mentioned my Hives? At first I thought it was some early symptom of West Nile Encephalitis, then I thought maybe, who knows, "the clap." —I can't believe I'm telling you this after so long keeping it to myself... Do people still get "the clap" anymore? I don't really know. And if I must sign my name as "Signore Gonorrhea," where did I get it from? From who? You? We're monogamous, right? I mean, we're not like the gibbon monkeys, are we? the most promiscuous animals in the animal kingdom who go so far in their friendliness as to give complete strangers genitals-kisses in response to the slightest hint of attraction—no, we're a loving, young, "**human**" couple. But maybe you had the clap before we met...and you didn't know? Is it possible? Maybe that ex-boyfriend of yours, that one in the devil-rock band, that really rancid hair-band from St. Paul, maybe he got it off one of his groupies and passed it off to you? Huh? Do you think it's possible? It's possible, right? Which gets me thinking some pretty morbid thoughts, really morbid things I'm embarrassed even to admit about the meaning of irony and Wouldn't it ironic if some teenage groupie in Minnesota gave me the clap? or worse, you know, through the matrix of your ex-boyfriend, and I, who have not had sex with more than three people in my entire adult human lifetime die of The Clap.

*(Beat.)*

But it also got me thinking nice thoughts.

Nice, profound thoughts. Like:

If people are capable of being connected to all these other people through webs of diseases or viruses or the Internet, then isn't it possible, just possible, that we're all connected by **good** things too, say the finer points, say "love"?

*(Beat.)*

**SYLVIA.** I'm sorry about your rash.

*(Laughter.)*

**TOM.** It's not so bad.

**SYLVIA.** I didn't even know you had a rash.

*(Beat.)*

Let me get you some lotion.

*(She exits.)*

*(TOM goes over to the typewriter. Begins reading what she's been typing.)*

*(SYLVIA returns.)*

**TOM.** What is this?

*(He reads:)* “Dear om. I have given his much hough and have decided ha his is he right hing o do.”

I don't understand.

**SYLVIA.** The T's broken.

**TOM.** “Goodbye, om.”

*(Beat.)*

Is this what you want?

**SYLVIA.** I want to go back in time.

I want be back someplace nice, like Nice, when I lost our baggage and we stayed in a disgusting hotel for a week and did nothing but sleep and have sex.

I want to be in love, again.

*(Lots of laughter, fading out to black.)*

**Scene 3**

**“When We Were in Nice”**

*or*

**“Just Like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in Love”**

*(Lights up: a hostel in the south of France.)*

*(The time is communicated through lighting. Maybe the sound of church bells in the distance.)*

*(6 a.m.)*

**TOM.** Sylvia?

**SYLVIA.** Tom.

**TOM.** I missed you.

**SYLVIA.** I missed you, too.

*(8 a.m.)*

*(TOM and SYLVIA wake up again.)*

**SYLVIA.** Tom?

**TOM.** Sylvia?

**SYLVIA.** Do you believe in love?

**TOM.** Do I believe in love?

**SYLVIA.** Yeah. Do you think it really exists?

**TOM.** Why are you asking me this?

**SYLVIA.** It's a very important question.

**TOM.** I think it's like asking, Do you believe in God?

*(1 p.m.)*

**SYLVIA.** What time is it?

**TOM.** The watch was in your bag.

**SYLVIA.** It was?

**TOM.** Uh huh.

**SYLVIA.** O God.

**TOM.** You were distracted.

**SYLVIA.** One minute it's on your shoulder, the next minute it's gone.

**TOM.** You were distracted.

**SYLVIA.** I was kissing you.

**TOM.** It's not your fault.

**SYLVIA.** I was distracted.

*(6 p.m.)*

**SYLVIA.** I had the weirdest dream.

**TOM.** What was it?

**SYLVIA.** We were on this train, through Italy, and there was this old man in our compartment who kept trying to press himself against me. You kept saying things like, you know: Excuse me, and Perdoname Signor, but he wouldn't respond. He just kept on pressing himself against me...

*(Beat.)*

I'm having trouble remembering it now, Tom.  
What do you think it means?

*(11 p.m.)*

**TOM.** This is nice.

**SYLVIA.** This is Nice.

**TOM.** That's an awful joke.

**SYLVIA.** Do the French even understand that? I mean, did they name it Nice on purpose, for what, the benefit of the English-speaking tourists? —Does it mean anything? Nice? What if it means the opposite of what it is? What if it's all a joke, you think you're in Nice but you're really in Hell.

**TOM.** I don't know French.

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