

JANICE. You're standing there screeching that you would not stand for me to talk to you and judge you like that. You would not stand for it.

SUSIE. That was how I felt.

JANICE. But I wasn't judging you, I kept trying to tell you. I was judging him, I was warning you.

SUSIE. I just was so in love with him. How did you stand it?

JANICE. I don't know. And then you went into the baby madness! (*Grabbing up the bear*)—and I thought, "She's berserk. This is paranormal." I wanted to ask you, do you care nothing for the aesthetic requirements of the world? I mean, the Environmental Protection Agency is going to post your name on some official penalties list you start procreating with this set of chromosomes, they have a face like a cannoli, somebody took a bite out of it—they threw it away, somebody else stepped on it, he's what's left. How does anybody manage such a nose that takes so long to arrive at this idiotic point, and these eyes set in there like day-old rat turds in the snow. I mean, "Is this what you want to inflict upon us?" That's what I wanted to ask you—"yet another environmental disaster?!" (*Thrusting the bear into Susie's arms, JANICE strides up to the shelves by the window, where SHE finds a bikini.*) I did not know what to conclude except that you had lost your mind! I mean, THERE WE WERE in the land of surferbodies, the land of the lean, the sun-tanned and the blonde—guys who were the product of the beach and vitamins and oil and nautilus, and there you were in this adolescent snit over this meatball from an unknown planet. He should not have left Mulberry street ever! It was incomprehensible!

Begin

SUSIE. You know, Janice, I think maybe— (*SHE stops.*)

JANICE. What?

SUSIE. No, no, I was going to say something, but I think I shouldn't.

JANICE. What?

SUSIE. No, no, I don't want to get into an argument with you.

JANICE. Will you give me a break here, for godsake? I always want to know what you're thinking. It's very important to me.

SUSIE. Well, I just SORTA feel—I mean RIGHT NOW I feel, and I'm sure I'll feel differently in a couple weeks or more, or months anyway if not weeks—but right now I think maybe you are trashing Phil a little unnecessarily. Being a little—

JANICE. I'm what?

SUSIE. Harsh, you know.

JANICE. Are you serious?

SUSIE. It's just what I feel, and I said I didn't want to fight with you, okay. So I don't.

JANICE. I don't either—I just need to know what you're suggesting—I mean, you are not suggesting that you have taken offense because I have defamed this bozo?

SUSIE. Have I not established the fact—I hope I have established the fact—I have been trying to establish the fact that I don't want to talk about this anymore. (*SHE leaps up.*)

JANICE. Why?

SUSIE. (*Storming to the bedroom closet, SHE grabs a laundry bag.*) Because I don't wanna fight with anybody anymore. That's what I am trying to explain. I'm

seriously, like opposed to fighting from this day forward, okay. That's what I'm saying. It gets me nowhere. It's just all this screaming, and you might as well, you know, drink Drano. You might as well put your hand in the garbage disposal and stick a fork in your eye. *(Flopping down in the swivel chair SHE sorts the clothing.)*

JANICE. We're not fighting.

SUSIE. Oh, sure, that's easy for you to say, but I am, in my heart—see—sick of everybody being mad at me because I'm just trying to live my pathetic little life, you know, and fulfill a few of my ridiculous—I know they are—dreams—but if I have wanted something, and it's in my head, like what am I supposed to do? I can't help it how I feel!

JANICE. Just because a person is trying to point out certain things you might rather avoid does not mean they are fighting with you.

SUSIE. Well, I think you are. Can I tell you something? I think you're trying to see how far you can push what is your own personal individual animosity about Phil, and this is just an opportunity for you, and you have lost track of the fact that my marriage is maybe disappearing from the planet but all this has nothing to do with me, because I don't hate him. You hate him.

JANICE. You're the one he whacked around—unless you've forgotten that? I'm just saying good riddance—that's all I'm saying—

SUSIE. Well say it nicer, okay.

JANICE. Wait a minute.

SUSIE. That's all I'm asking.

JANICE. What are you asking? That I should say good riddance nicer?

SUSIE. See, you're attacking me. You're so goddamn judgmental, Janice. I can't stand it.

*(As SUSIE moves in on Janice, JANICE flees to the kitchen to refill her wine glass.)*

SUSIE. I feel like you just feel everything I do is stupid and everything I say and everything I think, and you feel my hair is stupid and my house and furniture. And my husband is stupid!

JANICE. Your husband is stupid.

SUSIE. I can just feel you looking around at all of my things, they might as well have come out of a backed-up sewer the way you look at them. Don't deny it. *(Stroking the swivel chair in a way that suggest it's hers.)*

JANICE. Well, you do have a tendency to want some chintzy pieces, Susie. But that's okay. That was one of the first things we had a lot of fun with together, the fact that you wanted me to educate you a little about interior decorating. I mean, it wasn't a big deal. We just did it. But you know every nice piece you have is something we picked out together.

SUSIE. But I like some of my own things—some of the things I picked out on my own. I like some of them. *(Sitting down on the couch.)*

JANICE. *(Joining her, trying to explain, to be patient.)* But you told me you wanted everything replaced if I thought it clashed or lacked pizzazz. That's what you told me.

SUSIE. Because you're so goddamn self-centered I told you.

JANICE. What?

SUSIE. I knew it was what you wanted to hear.

JANICE. You lied? You lied to me?

SUSIE. No.

JANICE. If it isn't true, it's a lie.

SUSIE. I half-lied. (*Fleeing.*)

JANICE. You placated me? Is that what you're saying?

SUSIE. I mean, it's true that I admire your taste in things, like clothes and furniture, I envy your taste, actually, but I'm just saying I like some of the things I picked out myself. (*Picking up the green statue of a swan from the liquor cabinet, SHE moves to pack it in the suitcase.*) I like them a lot.

JANICE. Not that? You're not suggesting—you like that piece of—

SUSIE. See, you're just attacking me—you're mocking me and fighting with me, and picking on me and belittling me and making me feel shitty and if everybody doesn't stop picking on me—I'll kill myself, goddamnit. (*Rushing off to the bedroom.*)

JANICE. Oh, don't start that.

SUSIE. Because I can't stand it. (*SHE rushes into the bedroom, slamming the door behind her.*)

JANICE. Oh, don't waste your personalized monogrammed manipulations on me, okay. (*SHE starts cleaning up, folding clothing.*) Save them for Phil!

SUSIE. (*From off.*) Shut up.

JANICE. Because I am not interested in your suicidal razzle dazzle, all right. I have my own.

~~SUSIE. (*Coming out of the bedroom, SHE sits on the shelf in front of the picture window.*) But I just never had anything in my entire life, Janice. I haven't. Growin' up in the desert, for godsake. I mean, everybody goes to the~~

~~desert for a vacation, but I grew up in it. I looked out the window, I saw the sand. I mean, what do I know about buying furniture or having a life. My mother liked these lamps with women on them, their tits lit up when you pulled the switch. She liked them. She ran off so many times I was surprised when she was home. Most kids run away not their mothers. You gotta know what I'm tryin' to say.~~

~~JANICE. Susie, honey, the background is the background and the foreground is the foreground and sure they bleed together—nobody knows that better than me. (*Crossing to the kitchen, SHE sits at the table, facing away from Susie, pouring a little wine.*) But what I'm concerned about is that somewhere in that marshmallow you have for a brain you are hoping to reconcile with this guy, he might as well be a blunt instrument—and maybe he is a genius in bed, I don't know, it could be—I personally doubt it—but I want to go on record, that if you are thinking of taking him back, I am no longer available. for your goddamn three a.m. phone calls, I am your nine-one-one, you are desperate in the middle of the night, you are feeling anxious, Phil didn't come home, or worse, Phil DID come home, you are feeling you have lost your self, you are feeling empty. Do you know why you are feeling empty at three a.m., Susie? Because you are empty. And do you know what else, Susie? Everybody's empty. Susie. I'm empty. That's the way it is today—people are empty. They don't have anything inside them, and so they eat a lot or drink a lot or watch T.V., or they go to church, because everything is outside them. Or better yet, they watch church on T.V. while they eat and that's best of all—SO GIVE ME A GODDAMN BREAK, SUSIE!~~

SUSIE. Oh, you're such a snot sometimes, Janice.  
*(Moving forward, SHE goes back to packing.)*

JANICE. I mean, it's like the time came to get the pacifier out of my little boy's mouth, it was time to get him outa diapers, I was sick of diapers, I was sick of the pacifier, I told him I was bored of diapers, I was bored of the pacifier, and that's what I'm saying to you. It's time to drink from a glass and wear big boy pants, Susie. Grow up and throw Phil out! Do you understand me?

SUSIE. Is that what you want? You want me to just casually throw my marriage out the window.

JANICE. Well you better throw your marriage out the window before this Guinea from Hell throws you out the window.

SUSIE. You know what? I am really getting sick of your so-called jokes at the expense of what is for me the desperation of my entire little life, okay?

JANICE. Well I'm sick of—what I'm sick of is being over-identified with you. It's ruining my life. I mean, maybe my shrink is right—maybe I really need a break from all this—

SUSIE. Oh, PLEASE, I don't wanna hear about your goddamn shrink again!

JANICE. Why not? Because you might hear the truth?

SUSIE. What truth?

JANICE. Because Sarah says I'm undermining myself just being around you as long as you are in this idiotic marriage with Phil. Because it keeps me trying to work out the way my parents were in this hopeless miserable marriage.

SUSIE. YOUR PARENTS?! Now we're going to talk about your parents, for god's sake?! Gimme a break!

JANICE. No, no, no! I'm talking about you and Phil!

SUSIE. "My shrink" this, "my shrink" that, "my mother, my father " Jesus Christ, live in the present tense, okay? I mean, ever since you have started going to this nasty bitch—you have not been a supportive, trustworthy person—you have been someone that another person has to think twice about if they can survive your so-called affection.

JANICE. That's a lie.

SUSIE. As if I never had to put up with your endless tale of woe from, you know, the land of barbarian surfers.

JANICE. That was a long time ago.

SUSIE. But I put up with it, didn't I—for what seemed like the duration of several boring centuries, when you were pregnant and Brian of the endless summer had vanished with some other sun-damaged Bimbo.

JANICE. You're not comparing Brian and Phil.

SUSIE. No, I'm not. Brian was boring.

JANICE. Brian was gorgeous—he was fascinating and gorgeous.

SUSIE. He was also made out of the spare parts of some abandoned space project with a prick for a brain.

JANICE. *(Moving to gather her purse and bag in order to leave.)* I mean, the next time I bore you, Susie, and you don't want to talk about me and my concerns, please don't humiliate me by not telling me, okay?

SUSIE. But I did talk about you. That's all we did.

JANICE. But you resented it. You resented talking about me and wanted to be talking about you.

SUSIE. No.

JANICE. That's what you're saying. You don't even know what your saying.

SUSIE. I'm talking about you're undermining me now—undermining my hopes and hurting my feelings.

JANICE. What have I ever done to undermine you?

SUSIE. You have undermined me by undermining me, that's how you have done it, by just sort of naturally and thoughtlessly undermining everything I wanted with Phil, or my desire to have a baby—

JANICE. By offering you some healthy advice?

SUSIE. WHAT healthy advice?

JANICE. *(To make her point, SHE marches back to Susie.)* Because that's all I'm doing. I mean the reality is—if you want to know what the reality is—the reality is, I think, that being in the slightest proximity to somebody who is actually trying to make some healthy adjustments in their life is experienced by you as this overwhelming threat to all your cozy little neurotic stratagems by which you keep yourself pumped up and ready to self-destruct but which you are too cowardly to even start to examine!

SUSIE. BULLSHIT! *(Turning her back, SHE sits down in the kitchen chair.)*

JANICE. And so I am experienced by you as UNDERMINING you, for godsake, for suggesting that you might be a little ungrounded when you are relating to this semi-professional psychotic who knocks you around the room JUST TO POLISH HIS ACT, but you treat him as if he has been sent to you by some divinely-connected Dial a Date?! Well, this whole relationship is exhausting, Susie. It's exhausting. I don't know how much more I have left for it.

SUSIE. Whata you mean?

JANICE. *(Once again moving for the front door.)* I don't know how much more I have left for you—

END

SUSIE. I told you we were going to have a fight.

JANICE. No, no, no. It's better that we express these things.

SUSIE. It is not. It isn't! How is it better? Now we're mad at each other. How is that better?

JANICE. Well, we know the truth.

SUSIE. I don't.

JANICE. About how we feel.

SUSIE. I don't. We're just mad at each other, that's all I know. I shouldn't have said what I said and I knew it, but you made me. You told me you wouldn't get mad at me and then you did. It wasn't fair.

JANICE. You're right.

SUSIE. That's what you did.

JANICE. But if we don't talk about these things, what would we talk about?

SUSIE. There's gotta be something else. There's lots of other things. We could find something.

JANICE. Maybe we shoulda gone somewhere. We coulda gone out. Maybe we shoulda gone to a movie. You wanna go to a movie?

*(Looking around SHE spies the newspaper on the ledge of the picture window and starts toward it.)*

SUSIE. I don't know.

JANICE. Maybe we still could.

SUSIE. *(Collapsing into the swivel chair with the bear.)* I don't have the strength. I feel like I'm totally made out of some artificial like tacky material, it has no function, it was never meant to function. You know like they've set up this direct line by which to pump toxic