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oath
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by Michael Cheikin

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Synopsis

OATH is a one-act drama where a young ER physician is drawn into a mysterious relationship with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hospital, and his wife.

Production Information

Actors: total 4
men: age 43 (white), 32 (black)
women, 2: ages 41, 32 (both white)

Set: one set, an ER examining room. Exam table, two chairs, small desk, phone.

Playing Time: approximately 30 minutes

Props: Small pill cup with fake pill (tic tac)
Small water cup
Garbage can
Clip board with computer printout
Beeper
Reflex hammer
Wallet with bills
Two cans Diet Coke
Box of tissues

Prescription pad
Small cards
Business cards
Sling
Boxes of medicine samples

TERRY'S LAB COAT: Pen, Prescription Pad, Reflex Hammer,
Beeper

DESK: small cards, business cards, Sling,
Samples of medicine

Time

Present.

Place

An ER examining room. Examining table, two chairs, small desk, assorted equipment.

Dramatis Personae (in order of appearance)

NURSE, PAT WASHINGTON	black male, age 32, masculine, one earring, strong, caring, with some attitude (comic).
JAMES FRANKLIN	white male, age 43, upper class, very pleasant and well-mannered. Bow tie.
NANCY FRANKLIN	white female, age 41, attractive, spoiled, elegant
DOCTOR, TERRY ZANAKOS	white female, age 32, a chief resident physician (an important position, in her last year of training) attractive, feminine

NOTES

[Lines in square brackets are optional.]

(CAPITALIZED lines in parentheses are for actors' clarification.)

Cutoffs begin-- --and end with dashes

Overlaps / begin and / end with slashes

(TO THE ACTORS: This play is heavy in subtext. Much of what is going on is not spoken.)

(LIGHTS COME UP ON EMPTY EXAM ROOM IN A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.)

(PAT, A NURSE, LEADS NANCY, A PATIENT, AND HER HUSBAND, JIM, INTO THE ROOM. (NANCY IS HOLDING HER RIGHT ARM.)

PAT:

Here, make yourself comfortable. The doctor will be in soon.

(HE MOVES TO EXIT.)

JIM:

Will it be long?

PAT:

Don't know. Friday night's busy.

JIM:

We, uh, left our little boy with a neighbor.

PAT:

(TRYING TO EXIT) I'll see what I can do.

JIM:

(OFFERS HIS HAND) By the way, I'm Jim Franklin. What's your name?

PAT:

(RELUCTANTLY SHAKING) Pat.

JIM:

Pat. I'm a golfing bud of Pete McCabe. Know him?

PAT:

The CEO! Yeah? You play him for that watch?

JIM:

Listen, Pat, my wife's in pain. So please, get the doctor.

PAT:

What if I ask the doctor for some pain medicine?

JIM:

Why don't you have the doctor--

(PAT OPENS DOOR, MOVES TO EXIT)

PAT:

--OK, I'll go ask Dr. Zanakos.

JIM:

Wait. Zanakos!? Is that Terry Zanakos?

PAT:

Yeah.

JIM:

That's great. Could you please tell her Jim Franklin is here?

PAT:

(HESITATES)

JIM:

Could you do that, please, Pat?

PAT:

OK.

(PAT EXITS)

NANCY:

This stinks.

JIM:

Gee honey, I hate to see you in pain. Here, let me help you get your coat off.

(THEY TRY.)

NANCY:

Careful. Ow, ow, no, stop, stop you're hurting me!

JIM:

(TINY FLARE) JE-sus! I'm just trying to help.

NANCY:

(CRYING) What am I going to do (about tomorrow)?

JIM:

(CALMLY) You're going to let the doctor take care of you. Just sit down. I'm sure Terry will come right in once she knows I'm here.

NANCY:

Terry?

JIM:

The doctor. She's on my QA committee. Quality issues. Worse than this. Just last week--

(TERRY ZANAKOS, THE DOCTOR ENTERS. ONE SIDE OF HER LAB COAT COLLAR IS FOLDED UNDER.)

TERRY:

Hi Mr. Franklin!

(SHE SHAKES HIS HAND FAMILIARLY.)

JIM:

Hi Terry. Thanks for seeing us.

TERRY:

I'm really sorry, I didn't know you were here. I hope you weren't waiting too long.

JIM:

No. It's just that my wife is in pain.

TERRY:

Oh, hi, I'm Terry. Nice to meet you. (LOOKS AT CLIP BOARD) I see you fell. Are you in a lot of pain?

NANCY:

What do you think?

TERRY:

Right--just hold on. I'll go rush the nurse.

JIM:

Here, Terry...

(HE GOES TO FIX HER COAT COLLAR.)

What? TERRY:

Just... JIM:

(CONFUSED BY HIS CROSSING HER BOUNDARY) Oh? TERRY:

(SHE GOES TO THE DOOR, OPENS IT)

It's, uh, a zoo out there tonight--understaffed again. TERRY:

(TERRY EXITS.)

(HE SITS ON SECOND CHAIR) Now we'll get some attention. JIM:

I hope so! NANCY:

This ER's the best in the city, honey. Please relax. JIM:

I don't want to relax. I want to know if I broke something. I have to be at the botique at 7 am. NANCY:

I thought we already settled-- JIM:

(PAT ENTERS WITH A PILL CUP AND CUP OF WATER.)

Here. This should help. PAT:

I really appreciate this, Pat. JIM:

(A TOUCH OF SARCASM) It's my pleasure, Sir. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have a few zillion patients out there. PAT:

(PAT EXITS)

NANCY:

What the hell kind of "best ER" is this.

JIM:

We'll make a call in the morning. I'm sure Terry will see you as soon as possible.

NANCY:

It's not like half the hospital isn't named after your family.

JIM:

Come on, Nanc, I have to save that card for when we really need it.

(TERRY RE-ENTERS)

TERRY:

There are a few others ahead of you, but I'll try to move you along.

JIM:

Great!

NANCY:

What is your specialty?

TERRY:

Emergency Medicine.

NANCY:

I'd like to see an orthopedist.

TERRY:

Well, --

JIM:

--Nancy, she's the chief resident--she's the best in her program.

NANCY:

I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but I know what I want.

TERRY:

Look, it'll take a few hours to get an orthoped here. Let me get you started / and then--

NANCY:

(TO JIM) --Can't / you make a call?

JIM:

Please, honey, you're embarrassing me.

NANCY:

(SARCASTIC) Oh, I wouldn't want to embarrass you! Geez, like what I'm asking is so hard!

TERRY:

Mrs. Franklin, I'll treat you just as I would my own mother.

JIM:

But Terry, isn't your mother dead? (PAUSE, TO NANCY) Just joking, honey.

(JIM AND TERRY TRY NOT TO SMILE AT EACH OTHER AS NANCY SCOWLS.)

NANCY:

Look, we're imposing on our neighbor and I have a very important commitment in the morning. So let's just get moving.

TERRY:

OK. Now, tell me what happened. You fell?

JIM:

Yes, she unfortunately fell down a few stairs.

TERRY:

Protocol is that the patient answers the questions?

JIM:

Oh, sure.

TERRY:

How many stairs?

NANCY:

I don't know. It was between the first and second floor.

JIM:

They're carpeted. Good thing, right?

TERRY:

(IGNORING) Right. How did you fall?

NANCY:

(PAUSE) I, uh... (PAUSE)

JIM:

--She slipped. She was moving too fast. She's never had good balance. Right, Nanc?

TERRY:

(TO JIM) Are you testing me, Mr. Franklin?

JIM:

No. What do you mean?

TERRY:

I'm nervous enough as it is, taking care of your wife. I have to stick to protocol to make sure I don't miss anything. Isn't that what you say in your QA meetings?

JIM:

Yes, yes, you're right, I'm sorry. Just relax. Do your job, doctor.

TERRY:

Thank you. (TO NANCY) Now, did you fall forward, or backward, or to the side.

NANCY:

Geez, can't you... streamline this? I fell. What difference does it make if I went front or back?

TERRY:

It tells me what areas you might have hit, or twisted. You could have a low back problem tomorrow. OK? (TERRY TOUCHES HER) OK?

NANCY:

I'm sorry, Doctor. I'm just upset about my arm.

TERRY:

I understand, just trust me, OK. Now, which way did you fall?

NANCY:

I think to the right.

JIM:

Yeah, that's it.

TERRY:

(DEMONSTRATING) And you landed on your right shoulder.

NANCY:

Yes.

TERRY:

Now are you having any neck or back pain?

NANCY:

Maybe a little in my neck. But on the left.

TERRY:

You could have stretched it as you fell.

JIM:

You're a regular Sherlock Holmes!

TERRY:

Oh, and look here, you also bruised your face?

(THE BRUISE IS ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HER
FACE, BY HER EAR)

JIM:

You know, Terry, Arthur Conan Doyle was a doctor.

(TERRY TOUCHES THE BRUISE.)

NANCY:

Ow!

TERRY:

Sorry.

NANCY:

I, uh, must of hit myself on the way down.

TERRY:

I thought you fell to the right.

JIM:

--Hey, Terry, I think that's enough detail. She's in pain. She says she hit her face on the way down, and that's what she did, OK.

TERRY:
(PAUSE) OK. (PAUSE) Any other falls?

(JIM AND NANCY LOOK AT EACH OTHER)

NANCY:
(PAUSE) No.

TERRY:
Good. I guess that's all the questions I have.

(TERRY GOES TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT)

NANCY:
Now what? Our neighbors--

TERRY:
--Well, now we'll take some x-rays. (CALLING) Pat!

NANCY:
How long is this going to take?

TERRY:
I'll make it as quick as possible. Mr. Franklin, you can wait here.
(PAT ENTERS)

JIM:
(TO PAT) Ah, Watson.

(PAT LOOKS AT TERRY, CONFUSED.)

TERRY:
Pat, Mrs. Franklin needs a shoulder and neck series. Make her next.

PAT:
OK.

JIM:
I think I'd like to go with her.

TERRY:
That's really not necessary.

JIM:

You want me to go with you. (PAUSE) Don't you, darling?

NANCY:

Yes.

TERRY:

Sorry. No one allowed in xray besides the patient.

JIM:

But she wants me with her.

TERRY:

Well, you're the Chairman. If you insist, I guess--

PAT:

(A DIG) --You don't want any of those xrays zapping you, Mr. Franklin.
Don't you worry, I'll take good care of your wife. We'll be back
real soon.

JIM:

Well...

NANCY:

Jimmy, it's OK.

JIM:

OK then. Just be careful, honey.

(HE KISSES HER ON THE CHEEK
TERRITORIALY. NURSE AND NANCY EXIT.)

.....

TERRY:

I'm sorry to put you through this, Mr. Franklin, but because I know you
personally I really have to--

JIM:

I understand, Terry. I hope I'm not being too--

TERRY:

--No, no. The ER is always high-stress. You learn to stay calm and
focussed.

JIM:

You're doing a great job.

TERRY:

Thanks. Now I have to ask the next question, so, please, don't take this personally.

JIM:

Shoot.

TERRY:

I see you were here about 10 months ago. Is it possible that Nancy drinks?

JIM:

(LAUGHS) Nancy? No, she's just clumsy... her whole life.

TERRY:

Is she on any medication? Her mood seems... (PAUSE) Are you OK?

JIM:

Well, please don't say anything to her, but she does have this mood thing. Once she took an overdose...

TERRY:

Is she getting help?

JIM:

She did then. But now,... (WHISPERS) It's been hard for her.

TERRY:

Hmmm.

JIM:

And now, she's been fixed on this, uh, uh, botique thing. It's supposed to open tomorrow. I've been humoring her, but... She can barely keep up with the house and the kid. I've been trying to get her to put it off. You know, if you could arrange it so she stays in the hospital a day or two--

TERRY:

--For an upper extremity problem? I don't think so.

JIM:

I'm asking you, it would be good for Nancy to have some rest.

TERRY:
What about your child?

JIM:
We have help.

TERRY:
Well, let's see what happens. Maybe if she needs an orthopedist.

JIM:
I certainly appreciate. By the way, how's the contract coming?

TERRY:
It's pretty much done. A few tweaks, then Peter McCabe and I have to sign.

JIM:
Great.

TERRY:
The market is so tight. You don't know how much I appreciate your help, Mr. Franklin.

JIM:
(TOUCHING HER) You know, I thought I asked you to call me Jim. It's about time.

TERRY:
I don't know, sir. I was taught to respect my elders.

JIM:
Ouch. Am I that much older than you? (PAUSE) Look, It would mean a lot to me. (PAUSE) Consider that an order. (PAUSE) Go ahead, try.

TERRY:
OK,... Jim.

JIM:
There you go. You know, Nancy hates being alone. I think I'm gonna go check on her.

TERRY:
I'm sure she'll be back any second.

JIM:

--Come on, I know what can go wrong in a hospital. To be honest, that nurse gives me the creeps. That earring! (SHUTTERS)

TERRY:

Well, really, it's not--

(JIM EXITS QUICKLY. SHE GOES TO FOLLOW HIM, REALIZES IT'S FUTILE, WRITES A FEW NOTES IN THE CHART.

.....
(A FEW BEATS LATER, PAT ENTERS.)

TERRY:

Got the results?

PAT:

No fracture.

TERRY:

That's good. But she could have torn something--won't show up on xray. Got the old record?

PAT:

It's missing.

TERRY:

Huh. I guess I don't need it.

PAT:

I checked the computer. It says abdominal pain.

TERRY:

Well, he says she doesn't drink, but maybe she does.

PAT:

You're going in the wrong direction, baby. It says abdominal pain after a fall.

TERRY:

Yeah, so they denied any falls.

PAT:

Remember Doc Roberts? He treated her. Disappeared right after that visit. I wonder if this guy had something to do with it.

TERRY:

Mr. Franklin? No way. Unless there was some quality issue.

PAT:

Not with Roberts--The best doc I ever worked with. After you, of course. (PAUSE) But he was no kiss-ass either.

TERRY:

Oh, what does that mean?

PAT:

I can see--you sucking up. I thought you didn't like politics.

TERRY:

I don't. I respect him.

PAT:

(NOT FOOLED) Oh yeah?

TERRY:

OK, so he's helping me get a job here. What's wrong with that?

PAT:

Nothing. But I don't like him. Trying to put that "I play golf with Pete McCabe" stuff over on me. I bet he beats her.

TERRY:

If anything, she beats him! What a bitch. (SHE LAUGHS)

PAT:

I'm serious. Have you noticed his hyper-vigilance? (How he won't let her out of his sight for a minute?)

TERRY:

Mr. Franklin!? You're nuts.

PAT:

He and his watch give me the creeps.

TERRY:

Everyone respects him.

PAT:

Everyone has their private life. You can be fooled.

TERRY:

Not me.

PAT:

I think the world of you, Terry, but you're still just a doctor.

TERRY:

Now what is that supposed to mean?

PAT:

Sometimes you're oblivious. Did you notice--the mark on her face?

TERRY:

(DEFENSIVE, INDICATING CLIP BOARD NOTES) It's right here.

PAT:

It's on the opposite side from the shoulder.

TERRY:

So? She could have done it on the stairs.

PAT:

What is she, a pinball? (HE DEMONSTRATES, WITH SOUND AND GESTURE)

TERRY:

Stop it. I'm not oblivious. Especially when it comes to abuse.

PAT:

How's that?

TERRY:

Never mind.

PAT:

Oh? Are you keeping a secret from me?

TERRY:

No.

PAT:

Yes you are. I know you, girl.

(NO REPLY)

TERRY:

PAT:
And I thought we trusted each other.

TERRY:
We do.

PAT:
So? (PAUSE) What's the big secret? Come on. Did someone on the subway show you his dick?

TERRY:
Yeah--your boyfriend.

PAT:
What! Is he doing that again!

TERRY:
(PAUSE) Hey-- I'm trying to tell you something.

PAT:
What's the big secret?

TERRY:
My Dad was a drunk. He beat up my Mom.

PAT:
Whoa!

TERRY:
Yeah, you'd never know it, would you? I was my Daddy's little girl-- till he broke my mother's face.

PAT:
Sorry. Sorry to hear it.

TERRY:
That's how I ended up working in the ER.

PAT:
So that's why you have this man thing.

TERRY:

What man thing?

PAT:

You know. A fine thing like you without a "love puppy".

TERRY:

(PAUSE) Anyway! What I was saying, is I know these guys.

PAT:

This guy is different. He doesn't need alcohol. He needs power.

TERRY:

Yeah, but I'm not going to accuse the Chairman of the Board.
Especially when I don't believe it.

PAT:

Anyway, even if it was true, she wouldn't want your help. She's not going to give up her lifestyle.

TERRY:

(RECONSIDERING) ... You're right about her face, though.

PAT:

You know what, I changed my mind. You ask any questions, you may end up like Roberts.

TERRY:

Well, you're giving him some real attitude. Big time.

PAT:

I just love this nursing shortage, baby! Talk about Power! So what are you gonna do?

TERRY:

I'm going to do my job.

PAT:

What does that mean?

TERRY:

I don't know--stop pestering me. Just go get them.

(PAT EXITS. TERRY LOOKS PUZZLED.)

.....

(A BEAT OR TWO LATER, PAT LEADS IN THE FRANKLINS. NANCY'S COAT IS ON HER LAP)

PAT:

Here we go!

(PAT EXITS.)

JIM:

So, Terry, what do the x-rays show?

TERRY:

Before we / make a--

NANCY:

--Is the / arm broken or not?

TERRY:

No it's not.

NANCY:

That's a relief.

TERRY:

Yes, but you still could have torn your rotator cuff.

JIM:

How do you evaluate that?

TERRY:

Well, we start with a physical. You still may need an orthopedist.

NANCY:

Oh man, how long is this going to take?

TERRY:

Depending on what I find, it may take a few hours.

NANCY:

I got to get home.

JIM:

Don't you think she needs to stay for a day or two, doctor?

TERRY:

If you have a complete tear, you'll need surgery.

NANCY:

I'm not staying! I'm not going for surgery! I'm going to my Grand Opening tomorrow, no matter what!

(TERRY'S PAGER GOES OFF. SHE LOOKS AT IT.)

TERRY:

Oh, I was waiting for this call. Be back in just a minute. Decide what you want me to do, OK?

(TERRY EXITS.)

(JIM AND NANCY ARE LEFT ALONE. HE LOOKS AT HER, TOUCHES HER, WHISPERS IN HER EAR. SHE WINCES OR WHIMPERS.)

(TERRY ENTERS.)

TERRY:

So? Are you staying?

JIM:

Yes. I convinced her.

TERRY:

Good. Mr. Franklin, if you'll excuse us...

JIM:

What?

TERRY:

Protocol. No family members present for the examination.

JIM:

Come on, Terry, that's ridiculous.

TERRY:

(PLAYING COY) You know, Mr. Franklin, it seems you're afraid us girls will talk about you...

JIM:

But I'll be lonely out there.

TERRY:

(TO NANCY) Let's get on the table. (TO JIM) I know--why don't you go get us some sodas. On me. OK...Jim?

JIM:

(PAUSE) You know what, Terry, I think I'll take you up on that offer.

(TERRY TAKES OUT HER WALLET, GIVES HIM A FEW BUCKS.)

TERRY:

Here. I'd like a Diet Coke. What do you want, Mrs. Franklin?

NANCY:

A Diet Coke sounds good.

(JIM GOES TO EXIT. WITH THE NEXT LINES, JIM IS MAKING A THREAT THAT ONLY NANCY CAN PERCEIVE.)

JIM:

You know, while I'm out there, Nanc, I think I'll check on Bobby...

NANCY:

Yes, Jimmy, you do that.

JIM:

Anything you want me to say?

NANCY:

Just, that, I love him.

JIM:

OK. I'll send him a kiss for you. (IMPLIES TO NANCY WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF SHE LOST CUSTODY)

(HE EXITS.)

(A LONG PAUSE. NANCY RELAXES.)

TERRY:

Here, let's get that blouse off.

NANCY:
I'm, uh cold. Could you just look at my shoulder--

TERRY:
--I know it's going to be uncomfortable to take off--

(TERRY BEGINS TO UNBUTTON NANCY'S
BLOUSE. NANCY PUSHES HER HANDS AWAY.)

NANCY:
--No. Please, I don't want / to take--

TERRY:
--Look, / I have to / examine--

NANCY:
--Stop/. (NANCY IS HOLDING HER HANDS)

TERRY:
(PAUSE) You don't want to take off your blouse?

NANCY:
Please. I'm cold.

TERRY:
Look, Mrs. Franklin, I'm not going to hurt you. I want to help you.

NANCY:
Sorry if I was snappy before.

TERRY:
That's OK. Are you feeling better?

NANCY:
Yes. Please call me Nancy.

TERRY:
OK, Nancy. You know, this is a lovely broach.

NANCY:
Really? You think so?

TERRY:
Yes. Where'd you find it?

NANCY:

We'll be selling them at our botique. Me and my sister.

TERRY:

What botique?

NANCY:

I've been dreaming about it for years, and now that Bobby's in school... Ann's doing all the business. She's amazing, Real take charge. Letting me do all the design. We found this perfect little house on the main strip--each room has a different theme. You should see the crafts--wonderful artists. It's... it's... (CRIES)

TERRY:

(BEING SUPPORTIVE) It sounds wonderful. I never had a sister.

NANCY:

I'm just overwhelmed... Can't we make this quick?

TERRY:

Sure. Now let's take a look at that shoulder.

(NANCY AGAIN HOLD THE LEFT SIDE
CLOSED.)

TERRY:

We need to take it off your left arm first.

NANCY:

(PULLING THE SHIRT FURTHER BACK) I said I'm cold.

TERRY:

I can't examine you this way.

NANCY:

I really don't want to--

TERRY:

--Would you feel better if Mr. Franklin was here?

NANCY:

No--you don't understand.

TERRY:

I'm here to help you. I need you to trust me.

(NO REPLY)

NANCY:

TERRY:
Is there something else going on here, Nancy? You have to trust me.

(NANCY LETS TERRY TAKE HER SHIRT OFF
HER LEFT ARM. WE SEE A LARGE BRUISE ON
HER LEFT CHEST.)

TERRY:
(IN SHOCK, SHE GASPS. PAUSE, SHE LOOKS CLOSER. SHE SIGHS.)

NANCY:
(TRYING TO COVER IN VAIN) Happened during the fall.

TERRY:
This bruise is old.

NANCY:
I fall a lot.

TERRY:
Do you. Do you have other bruises, Nancy?

NANCY:
I don't know.

TERRY:
What, do I have to examine your whole body?

NANCY:
Just look at my arm, doctor.

(TERRY IS HOLDING BACK TEARS)

TERRY:
Well, we'll... (TERRY IS HOLDING BACK HER TEARS.)

NANCY:
(SOFTER, STRONGER) Listen, Doctor, you never saw this.

(NANCY PUTS SHIRT BACK ON OVER THE LEFT
SIDE, KEEPING RIGHT SHOULDER EXPOSED.)

TERRY:

(TO HERSELF) And I trusted him. Again. What's wrong with me?

NANCY:

You- you don't know what kind of danger you're in.

TERRY:

What about you?

NANCY:

Don't worry about me. Just do your job. (TOUGH) Come on, Doctor, you have a busy E.R. [out there].

TERRY:

(CLEARS) I'm, I'm not going to... (CLEARS THROAT), some of my exam may hurt.

NANCY:

That's OK.

TERRY:

First I'll take a quick look at your neck.

NANCY:

Sure.

(TERRY MOVES NANCY'S HEAD IN ALL DIRECTIONS AS THEY TALK:)

TERRY:

How old is Bobby?

NANCY:

He's 8.

TERRY:

He must be pretty independent / by now--

NANCY:

--Come on, / Doctor, let's get on with this. I have to wake up early.

TERRY:

OK, neck looks good. Let me check your reflexes.

(TERRY TAKES A REFLEX HAMMER FROM HER POCKET, HITS A FEW TENDONS, CHECKING THE REACTION. AS SHE DOES THIS:)

TERRY:

You know, there's help available.

NANCY:

Yeah yeah, I know.

TERRY:

Reflexes look good. No numbness in your fingers?

NANCY:

No.

TERRY:

Good.

(DOOR SUDDENLY OPENS, IN RUSHES JIM)

JIM:

Here's your soda, Nancy.

TERRY:

I'm trying to examine your wife.

JIM:

I'm just bringing her her soda.

TERRY:

Come on, we need a little privacy. Please let me finish.

JIM:

Your patient has a dry mouth, Doctor. Everything OK, Nanc?

NANCY:

Yes, Jimmy.

JIM:

So what's the verdict, Terry, does she need to stay?

TERRY:

(AGGRESSIVE) I said, I'm still examining her. (SOFTER) The jury's still out... Jim.

JIM:

OK OK. I have some calls to make. Be back in five, OK?

(HE EXITS. TERRY LOCKS THE DOOR.
NANCY, FLUSTERED, STRUGGLES TO OPEN THE
CAN.)

TERRY:

I'm locking the door. He'll bring the change back next. (PAUSE)
Here, let me...

(TERRY OPENS THE CAN FOR HER.)

NANCY:

Thanks.

(THEY DRINK TOGETHER.)

TERRY:

Now where was I?

NANCY:

You were checking my nerves.

TERRY:

Oh yeah.

(TERRY BRUSHES HER SHOULDER AREAS AND
HANDS WITH HER FINGER.)

TERRY:

Does this feel normal?

NANCY:

Yes.

TERRY:

Good. So all your nerves are intact. Now let's see your motion. Do
this.

(TERRY OPENS AND CLOSES HER HAND.
NANCY FOLLOWS.)

TERRY:

Good. Now this.

(TERRY BRINGS HER LEFT ARM TO THE SIDE, PALM UP, ALL THE WAY ABOVE HER HEAD. NANCY TRIES TO DO THE SAME, BUT CAN'T GO MORE THAN 30 DEGREES. TERRY HELPS HER.)

Come on, get up all the way.

TERRY:

I can't.

NANCY:

Come on! Try!

TERRY:

It won't go!

NANCY:

(TERRY, DESPERATE, CRYING, TRIES TO GET NANCY'S ARM UP. NANCY CRIES OUT IN PAIN.)

(CRYING OUT IN PAIN) Ohh!

NANCY:

(HOLDING BACK TEARS) Damn it!

TERRY:

(SHE LEANS ON NANCY, TOUCHING HEADS)

What's the matter?

NANCY:

He's--you've torn your rotator cuff. You've been hurt.

TERRY:

Does that mean I have to stay?

NANCY:

Yes. You need surgery.

TERRY:

(CRYING) Please, I have to get home. I have to--

NANCY:

(TERRY CRIES TOO) --You need an orthopedist.

TERRY:

Can't we delay it?

But Mr. Franklin / will--

--You / have to convince him.

Me?

Yes. Please. I'm asking you, please.

I don't know.

Here, let's get dressed.

(AS TERRY HELPS NANCY GET HER SHIRT
BACK ON.)

(LOOKING AGAIN AT THE BROACH) You know, I've never seen anything like
this. Who's the artist?

I am.

Wow, you're very talented.

Here. Take it.

(NANCY UNPINS IT.)

No, I couldn't.

Please--I insist. Please.

NANCY:

TERRY:

NANCY:

TERRY:

NANCY:

TERRY:

TERRY:

Comment [COMMENT1]: .NANCY:
I need a tissue.

.TERRY:
So do I.

(TERRY GETS SOME FROM THE
COUNTER. THEY BLOW
TOGETHER.)

TERRY:

NANCY:

TERRY:

NANCY:

TERRY:

NANCY:

TERRY:
OK, then. Thank you. (PAUSE, ADMIRES IT) I love it.

(THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. THEY
STARTLE.)

NANCY:
Oh no! -- How's my makeup?

(ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR.)

TERRY:
One second!

(TERRY FIXES ONE SMUDGE UNDER NANCY'S
EYE.)

TERRY:
There.

(TERRY OPENS THE DOOR. IN WALKS PAT.)

TERRY:
Oh, it's only you.

(TERRY LOCKS THE DOOR AGAIN.)

PAT:
Only me?! You have a waiting area full of people out there.

TERRY:
Pat, you were right.

(TERRY GOES TO THE DESK AND TAKES OUT A
SMALL CARD AS THEY TALK)

PAT:
Always am. (SLIGHT PAUSE) About what?

TERRY:
She has other bruises. (NANCY REACTS) Don't worry, Nancy, he's OK.

NANCY:
I really don't want you to / make this into--

TERRY:

Here, take this card, it has numbers / you can call--

NANCY:

(LAUGHS) / Keep your card, doctor. He goes through everything.

TERRY:

Can't you escape?

NANCY:

I tried once. He had me found in a matter of hours. He told me if I ever try anything again, he'd take Bobby away from me.

TERRY:

But you're his mother.

NANCY:

When I first got pregnant, I got very depressed. I had to be hospitalized. He threatens me--that he'd get his lawyers to accuse me of being an unfit mother. [I can't go through that.]

TERRY:

I have to do something.

PAT:

What do you want us to do, Mrs. Franklin?

NANCY:

I don't want to stay.

PAT:

Well, it just so happens we have a shortage of beds tonight.

TERRY:

But Mr. Franklin will--

PAT:

--I'll take care of him.

NANCY:

The last person who tried to help got fired.

PAT:

Roberts!? (SLIGHT PAUSE, AS IT HITS HIM.) Ooooo, now I'm real mad.

NANCY:
You have to be very careful.

TERRY:
What if I testify for you?

NANCY:
We'd both pay.

TERRY:
There must be a way to escape.

NANCY:
(JOKING) Yeah, if he got sick.

TERRY:
But that counts on him getting pretty sick.

NANCY:
Yeah, that's the problem. Since I've been working with my sister he's very angry. It's been getting worse.

PAT:
Mrs. Franklin, what if it's your head next time?

TERRY:
We have to do something.

NANCY:
No. He can't think you know. He's very perceptive.

TERRY:
But isn't there something we could do to help. Anything?

NANCY:
Well... (VERY LONG PAUSE) There is one thing.

TERRY:
What?

PAT:
Anything. I owe this guy.

NANCY:
I'd like some sleeping pills.

PAT:
Whoa!

TERRY:
What for?

NANCY:
(PAUSE, LYING TRANSPARENTLY) I have trouble sleeping.
(TERRY AND PAT LOOK AT EACH OTHER.)

PAT:
(WARNING) Terry!...

TERRY:
It's too risky.

NANCY:
For you, or for me.

TERRY:
For everyone.

NANCY:
Not for me. Look, you offered to help.

TERRY:
I have an oath.

NANCY:
So do I. But just because we don't make oaths to our children--

PAT:
--What would you do for money? He could trace you.

NANCY:
I've worked that out with my sister.

TERRY:
Can't you just get yourself a good lawyer?

NANCY:

I'm not going to get into a custody battle with him. Bobby comes first, doesn't he? (PAUSE) Oh, you don't understand. You're not a mother--you've never felt...helpless.

(TERRY TAKES OUT HER PRESCRIPTION PAD AND STARTS WRITING.)

TERRY:

Here...

PAT:

Terry!

TERRY:

I do understand.

NANCY:

How many do I need?

TERRY:

About 20. I'll write a prescription for 30.

PAT:

Terry, you could lose your license. You wouldn't be able to practice anywhere. All your training down the drain.

TERRY:

Look, I'm just giving her a prescription for sleeping pills. (TERRY HANDS NANCY THE PRESCRIPTION)

PAT:

This is too dangerous for you.

NANCY:

(PAUSE, LOOKING AT IT) How do I...

TERRY:

If you open the capsule, the powder dissolves.

NANCY:

Oh.

PAT:

Terry...

TERRY:

I'm just helping her sleep. I can trust you, can't I, Pat.

PAT:

Me? (PLAYING DUMB) I'm just a dumb ol' ER nurse. What do I know?

(PAT GOES TO THE DOOR TO OPEN IT.)

PAT:

OK, it's show time!

(NANCY RIPS UP THE PRESCRIPTION AND HANDS THE PIECES BACK TO TERRY).

TERRY:

What are you doing?

NANCY:

It won't work.

PAT:

Oh, and I was beginning to root for you.

NANCY:

He could find this.

TERRY:

Maybe it would be better to wait / for a--

NANCY:

--It would be better if you called it in--the all-night pharmacy on the corner.

TERRY:

Oh.

PAT:

Great idea! You could claim someone impersonated you.

TERRY:

I don't know any more.

NANCY:

Just don't write it into the record. Jim might get a copy.

TERRY:
I've never done anything like this...

NANCY:
Well, are you going to or not?

TERRY:
I have to think--

(A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. PAT OPENS THE
DOOR. JIM ENTERS.)

JIM:
(TO TERRY) Pete McCabe sends his--... (HE LOOKS AROUND AT THE THREE
OF THEM.) What's going on in here?

TERRY:
Uh, Mr. Franklin, she might have torn her rotator cuff.

JIM:
That's awful. I'm so sorry, honey. What do we have to do?

TERRY:
Well, I want to admit her, but--

JIM:
What!? Shouldn't she stay here?

TERRY:
We have a bed shortage tonight. I tried--

JIM:
--But I want her to.

TERRY:
Jim, you know this doesn't qualify as an acute admission.

JIM:
Well, as Chairman, I think we should make an exception--

PAT:
--Mr. Franklin, the chief of ortho isn't on-call tonight. (TAKES
BUSINESS CARD OUT OF DRAWER, GIVES NANCY THE CARD) I'll make sure he
sees you in his office tomorrow afternoon.

NANCY:

(PRETENDING ANNOYANCE) I guess we can do that.

JIM:

(TO TERRY) I'm not sure this is the best quality medicine, doctor.

TERRY:

I really have no choice, Jim.

PAT:

Maybe when she's an attending here she can look into this.

JIM:

(VERY NOT HAPPY) Good idea.

(SHE GOES TO A CABINET AND TAKES OUT A SLING. SHE PUTS IT ON NANCY.)

TERRY:

Now you should wear this sling until you see the orthopod. Oh, Pat, give her some samples of Vioxx to get her through the night. Take two when you get home.

NANCY:

OK.

(PAT TAKES TWO BOXES FROM THE DRAWER, MOVES TO HAND THEM TO NANCY.)

JIM:

I'll take those.

TERRY:

(FINISHING WITH THE SLING) There. That's all, you can go now.

PAT:

(HANDING JIM NANCY'S COAT) And be sure to fill out our customer satisfaction survey on the way out, Sir.

JIM:

(LAUGHS) Sure.

(JIM DRAPES NANCY'S COAT OVER HER)

NANCY:

Come on, honey, let's get going.

(THEY GO TO EXIT. JIM LETS NANCY AND PAT OUT BEFORE HIM, AND THEN TURNS BACK, CLOSES THE DOOR.)

JIM:

Uh, Terry, I just wanted to thank you for everything tonight.

TERRY:

You're more than welcome, Sir.

JIM:

Sir?

TERRY:

Jim. Jimmy?

JIM:

You know, I was just asking Pete McCabe about the status of your contract.

TERRY:

Oh?

JIM:

Lawyers! They found a few problems.

TERRY:

Oh?

(AS THEY TALK, HE MOVES TOO CLOSE TO HER, SLOWLY TOUCHES HER FACE WITH THE BACK OF HIS HAND, THEN PLAYS WITH THE BROACH.)

JIM:

I'm sure we'll be able to get things fixed, though. You're a good doc. You know how to deal with stress, don't you?

TERRY:

That's my job.

JIM:

You know, we should have you over for dinner some time.

I'd like that.

JIM:
You should see Nancy with Bobby. He's her whole life. And he's at such an age--he really needs his mommy. If she got sick [again], I don't know...

TERRY:
Well, I'm sure you'll keep close tabs on her. If there's anything--

(PAT ENTERS. JIM QUICKLY MOVES AWAY FROM TERRY. THERE IS A LONG BEAT WHERE THEY ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER.)

JIM:
Well, thanks, I guess... See you at the next QA meeting?

TERRY:
Sure.

(HE OFFERS HIS HAND. TERRY TAKES IT. HE GIVES HER A KISS ON THE CHEEK.)

(HE MOVES TO EXIT.)

PAT:
Oh, Mr. Franklin...

JIM:
Yes?

PAT:
Nighty nite.

JIM:
(CHUCKLES CONDESCENDINGLY) And a nighty nite to you too. Pat.

(HE EXITS.)

(TERRY SIGHS, GOES OVER TO PAT, HUGS HIM. WE SEE HIS FACE, TROUBLED AND UNDERSTANDING.)

PAT:
What's going on?

TERRY:
Problems with my contract.

PAT:
Damn!

TERRY:
Now what am I going to do?

PAT:
We're not going to let him do a Roberts to you.

TERRY:
So what do we do?

PAT:
Now we have to save the both of you.

TERRY:
How?

PAT:
Let's give him a distraction--put him away. If anyone asks, you never made this call.

(PAT GOES TO THE PHONE AND DIALS.
LISTENS, CHOSES A MENU OPTION AND
PRESSES ANOTHER NUMBER.)

PAT:
(INTO PHONE) Hello, is this the pharmacist? (PAUSE) Please hold for the doctor.

(HE HANDS HER THE PHONE. SHE
RELUCTANTLY TAKES IT).

TERRY:
Hi, this is Dr. Zanakos. I'd like to call in a prescription...
(RAPID FADE.)

(THE END.)

