

DECK THE HALLS 3

Ep. 2 "Stu and Katie"

Ding-dong montage: mix of Stu's van rattling/accelerating/braking and Stu ringing door bells.

Stu sings enthusiastically, approximating the melody of "Up on the Housetop".

STU

Up on the Housetop/ reindeer claws.
Tater tots/ and vichyssoise/
Trays of fruit cocktail on the
floor. Hope they don't slide out
the door!

WE HEAR: Stu slam on the brakes. A bunch of trays fall over.

Transition to STU KNOCKING.

STU (CONT'D)

(knocking)
Oh ho ho!

WE HEAR: the first door open.

DOOR 1

Where's my dinner roll?

WE HEAR: another doorbell, door open.

STU

Oh ho ho!

DOOR 2

(distant)
Drop the tray and go!

STU

Back to the Van and / click clack
clue!
Off to the Condos with/ Good Saint
Stu!

WE HEAR: Muffled TVs (laughter/applause/gunfire) and doorbells and Stu works his way down the hall.

STU (CONT'D)

(scatting)
Bleep blorp bla doop bloop bee dee
blah!

WE HEAR: Stu open a door belonging to GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN. And a REALLY LOUD COURT SHOW.

Note: the run of dialogue between Judge Judy and the Plaintiff will run under Stu and Gunter's lines.

--

PLAINTIFF

I shouldn't have to pay for half of his dry cleaning if he wasn't gonna pay the phone bill.

JUDGE JUDY

Ma'am, you damaged his property! The phone bill is unrelated!

PLAINTIFF

I don't see why--

JUDGE JUDY

Don't interrupt me! Judgement for the defendant, \$48 dollars,

--

Over the Loud Court Show, Stu continues his song.

STU

(singing)

Here is a court show on channel 2.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN

(over the show)

Mustard?

STU

(half singing)

I'd be happy to get that for you.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN

(loud)

Don't talk over the judge when she's ruling! I can barely hear!

STU

(half singing/half talking)

Let me fix the battery in your Miracle Ear.

WE HEAR: a small noise to indicate changing a battery in a hearing aid. Maybe "click click" and then a hum/buzz like a computer warming up.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
TV's too loud!

WE HEAR: Gunter's door shut. Van doors shut.

We're back in the car.

WE HEAR: door bells and dogs barking and horns honking arranged around Stu's singing.

STU
(singing)
Oh ho ho/ there's gravy on the
steaks.
Oh ho ho!/ Vanilla Nutrishakes!

WE HEAR: Stu's phone ring. Stu fumble to answer it.

STU (CONT'D)
(singing, as if Hello)
Up on the House Top--

WE HEAR: Bernie's voice on the other end, "Stuart, is that you?"

STU (CONT'D)
WUH!

WE HEAR: Stu drop the phone, jam on the brakes.

WE STILL HEAR: Bernie saying, "Hello? STUART."

STU (CONT'D)
Wrong number!

WE HEAR: Stu mash on the buttons until the call hangs up.

WE HEAR: the van idling.

STU (CONT'D)
That's fine. That's probably fine.
Haha, Bernie's in town. Whoo...
okay. Sweaty. Easy there, buddy.

WE HEAR: Stu cut the engine, take out the keys.

WE HEAR: the final doorbell. We hear it along with Stu's voice.

STU (CONT'D)
Ding dong. Ding dong ding dong
ding...
(speaking)
Mrs. Peterman?

WE HEAR: Stu knock. Light TV noise can be heard inside.

STU (CONT'D)
 Mrs. Peterman!
 (mock opera)
 Mrs. Petermaaaaaaaaaaan. Meals on
 Wheels Mrs. Petermaaaaaaaaaaan. Last
 delivery of the day pleaaase answer
 your dooooooor.

WE HEAR: the door bell one more time. Stu checks the door.
 Locked.

STU (CONT'D)
 I'm going to leave your tray on the
 glass frog table by the garage
 door. Okay?

WE HEAR: Stu knock on the door, a window and then turn the
 mailbox flag up and down.

STU (CONT'D)
 (to self)
 Okay.

WE HEAR: Stu open the gate, drop a tray on a glass table.

STU (CONT'D)
 (under breath)
 Oh ho ho, worried you won't answer.
 Oh ho ho, gotta spare key in the
 planter. Up on the Chimney--

WE HEAR: Stu pick up a flower pot, find a key hidden
 underneath.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (very distant, weak)
 Hey! Stop singing, bugging bugger
 bogey.

Stu stops abruptly and listens.

STU
 Mrs. Peterman?

MRS. PETERMAN
 (still distant/weak)
 Back here.

WE HEAR: Stu open the gate again, push aside some bushes.

STU
(hushed)
Mrs. Peterman?

MRS. PETERMAN
(louder, still distant,
strain)
BACK. HERE.

WE HEAR: Stu let go of the bushes and gate and run to the back yard.

WE HEAR: the TV come in clearer. (soap opera)

SOAP OPERA 1
How can you be so cruel?

SOAP OPERA 2
My love!

SOAP OPERA 1
I saw you on the veranda! Was that a trick of the light? A mirage? A hologram?

SOAP OPERA 2
I was helping Betty Jo look for her contact.

SOAP OPERA 1
Don't touch me!

Mrs. Peterman and Stu talk over the TV.

STU
Mrs. Peterman!

WE HEAR: Stu rush to Mrs. Peterman's side. (She is lying on the ground.)

MRS. PETERMAN
Thank god. I've been hollering all day, no one can hear me over that damn TV. My mouth feels like the inside of a spaghetti squash. Turn that thing off.

WE HEAR: Stu find the remote, turn the TV off, and drop the remote.

STU
Did you fall? Did you faint? Was it a heart attack?

MRS. PETERMAN
I fell--

STU
(distant)
Hang on. Hang on.

MRS. PETERMAN
(raising voice)
I *fell*.
(sotto)
Crying for mercy, make me shout if
from the rooftop, why don't you?

WE HEAR: Stu fill a glass of water from the sink and come
back outside and put the glass down.

WE HEAR: Stu dialing 911.

STU
Couch cushions. Don't you have
couch cushions?

MRS. PETERMAN
There's cushions on the dining room
chairs. Don't call 911!

STU
(distant)
Hello. I need an ambulance at...
1847 Churchill.

MRS. PETERMAN
(groans)

STU
(distant)
An elderly woman fell on her patio.

MRS. PETERMAN
I'm not elderly!

WE HEAR: Stu return.

STU
No. No. Hang on.
(to Mrs. Peterman)
Can you move?

MRS. PETERMAN
I'm not paralyzed. It's my hip, you
blind sausage.

STU
 (to phone)
 Yeah. Pretty conscious.
 (to Mrs. Peterman)
 Are you in pain?

MRS. PETERMAN
 GET OFF THE DAD GAMMED PHONE.

STU
 (low, to phone)
 Some. Agitated. Okay, I gotta go,
 I'll call you back

WE HEAR: Stu hang up.

STU (CONT'D)
 Ambulance is on the way.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Why not call an airlift? Or a
 golden chariot. Don't you know how
 expensive ambulances are?

STU
 Sure. Wait. You mean to buy them or
 to ride in them?

MRS. PETERMAN
 (sigh)
 Never mind.

STU
 Is it just the hip? What else
 hurts? What can you move?

MRS. PETERMAN
 I can still roll my arms and my
 head around, which I guess means my
 neck and shoulders and all that. My
 head hurts. My eyes hurt. And my...
 my bottom hurts where I fell.

STU
 Let's sit up a tiny bit and drink.

MRS. PETERMAN
 No.

STU
 Just a tiny, tiny bit. You need
 some water.

WE HEAR: Stu try to move Mrs. Peterman.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (panic)
 You'll break it!

STU
 What what what?

MRS. PETERMAN
 My... me.
 (gather)
 Leave me alone. Just let me lie
 here. Perfectly still. Don't make
 me move. I can't turn my leg over.
 My left leg. I can feel... I tried
 to get up and it *shifted*--

STU
 You're okay. You're okay. You're
 okay. We're not going to move your
 hip at all. I'm just going to lift
 your shoulders a teeny tiny bit so
 you can drink. Okay?

MRS. PETERMAN
 I don't want any water.

STU
 We're going to be very gentle.
 Look. I'm going to thread my arms
 under your arms.
 (slight effort)
 And we're going to lift up just a
 tiny bit. Like four inches. Maybe
 six.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Okay. Okay.

STU
 Okay, I'm going to pick up the
 water.

WE HEAR: Stu pick up the water glass.

STU (CONT'D)
 I'll hold the glass, you guide it.

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman take a sip. Then a gulp.

STU (CONT'D)
 Good good. Can you drink more?

MRS. PETERMAN
I just needed to wet my whistle.
I'm fine.

STU
Drink three more big gulps.

WE HEAR: Three gulps.

MRS. PETERMAN
Put me down.

STU
Two more sips.

MRS. PETERMAN
I don't need any more.

STU
Little sips.

WE HEAR: Two sips.

STU (CONT'D)
One more swallow.

MRS. PETERMAN
Down.

STU
There's hardly anything left in the
glass.

MRS. PETERMAN
Down!

WE HEAR: Stu shift on the ground, easing Mrs. Peterman down.

STU
There we go. Annnnd cushion for
your head. Now. What happened?

MRS. PETERMAN
I fell.

STU
From where?

MRS. PETERMAN
(sarcastic)
The roof.

STU
Mrs. Peterman!

MRS. PETERMAN

Oh yeah. Just changing out a few shingles. I was throwing sandbags over the new roofing tiles, but then a big gust of wind came along and my house coat got caught in the updraft.

STU

No!

MRS. PETERMAN

I grabbed onto the chimney, but then there was a big crack of lightning and a nest of robins came boiling out of the flue right in my face. I hooked my ankle on the gutter coming down and went smack into the pavement.

STU

Oh!

MRS. PETERMAN

And then a band of merry raccoons, dressed up in red jerseys, came ambling out of those bushes and stole the diamond tiara I always wear!

STU

You should *not* be going up on the roof alone. Especially not when it's gusty. And in your costume jewelry.

MRS. PETERMAN

Who do you think I am, Mary Poppins? I *fell down*. I was standing on my feet and I fell over like a g-d bowling pin.

(low)

Wasn't even windy.

(to Stu)

Your hair looks different.

STU

It's upside down.

MRS. PETERMAN

From down here it looks longer.

Beat. Mrs. Peterman swallows a whimper.

STU
Are you in pain?

MRS. PETERMAN
Don't ask me that.
(another wincing breath)
Talk about something else so I'm
not just lying here staring up your
nose. Who else did you see on your
route today? Anybody I know?

STU
I don't know. Herbert Donaldson?

MRS. PETERMAN
Nope.

STU
Pritcher sisters. Tish Wong.
Everett Cass.

MRS. PETERMAN
Does he still have that alligator
dog?

STU
(wince)
Yes. It got me right above the knee
two weeks ago.

MRS. PETERMAN
Good lord!

WE HEAR: Stu roll up his pant leg, then back down.

STU
It's fine, see? Just bruised. But
he knew exactly what he was doing,
grabbed me right by the thigh and
threw me down.

MRS. PETERMAN
Did you break anything?

STU
A clock.

MRS. PETERMAN
I meant... never mind.

STU
I pass him his meals through the
window now.

MRS. PETERMAN
Who else?

STU
Mr. Duckeggs.

MRS. PETERMAN
What?

STU
Duckeggs? Duckeggs. Dookeggs?
Gunter.

MRS. PETERMAN
Dunkheiggen!

STU
Yes!

MRS. PETERMAN
Well.
(suddenly coy)
And how was he today?

STU
Okay. He keeps letting his hearing
aid go. I changed the battery.

MRS. PETERMAN
I wonder when the neighbors are
going to call the police on him.
Last week, he was watching Law and
Order so loud, you thought someone
was being murdered in the Randalls
parking lot.

STU
Do they murder people on Law and
Order or just find the bodies?

MRS. PETERMAN
Oh, whatever. It was one of those.
Shoot 'em up detectives. Good thing
for Roto-Rooter commercials or
Gunter would be in prison today on
suspicion.

(sly)
Which lunch did you take him?

STU
Beef stroganoff. Smells pretty good
too. Sometimes I don't know about
putting noodles in the lunches, but
it made the trip okay.

MRS. PETERMAN
Only one serving?

STU
Well, he also got the chicken-tuna
casserole for dinner, but yeah,
he... why?

MRS. PETERMAN
Chicken and tuna, where on Earth do
those go together?

STU
There's a carrot-squash puree over
everything, it kinda tastes like
corned beef hash if you fry it.
Why?

MRS. PETERMAN
I'd heard he moved into Margery
Christiansen's condo.

STU
I don't think so. I've been
delivering to the same door for,
like, five months.

MRS. PETERMAN
Hm. I don't suppose Margery puts in
for a charity meal anyway.

STU
She should. Her sons do her grocery
shopping and it's Lean Cuisine
city.

MRS. PETERMAN
Airplane food.

STU
They don't know the virtues of a
chicken-tuna-squash-carrot
casserole.
(beat)
I didn't know you knew Mr.
Duckeggs.

MRS. PETERMAN
Oh, Gunter and me go way back. Not
in any way that matters. He was a
boy my sister knew at the
university. He was good at drawing.
Used to send me dirty cartoons with
his letters.

STU

Aww/ewww. That's... so romantic.

MRS. PETERMAN

I'd never seen man's treasure chest at that age and at first I took his doodles at face value. You can't imagine how hard I laughed the first time I got his trousers off.

STU

I... ah...

(strained laugh)

That's a funny story--

MRS. PETERMAN

Little Gunter the Dirigible Captain.

STU

I'm going to call and check on that ambulance. Get another glass of water--

MRS. PETERMAN

Oh, lighten up Goody Proctor. You see worse on the news. The Dirigible Captain, I can't believe I hung onto that. You get to my age, your mind just swallows up whole months of time, like you slept through entire calendar years... then one good word like a tow line, suddenly I'm a walking history book. "Incoming!" That was always the punch line. "INCOMING!" Bubble letters. I could draw 'em.

STU

(chuckles)

Gross.

MRS. PETERMAN

(settle)

How's that for a life story? It's not my sister or my cousins, my nephews, or either of my husbands keeping me company in these last years of life. It's the boy who drew cartoon willies on his Navy stationery. How's THAT for you?

STU

He keeps you company?

MRS. PETERMAN

He plays that damn TV so loud, it's keeping all of Travis county company.

STU

Travis county and Margery Christiansen.

MRS. PETERMAN

Old goat has arthritis anyway. And glaucoma. Can't snap his fingers. Have you got a girlfriend?

STU

What? Me?

MRS. PETERMAN

How did you meet? How'd you win her over? Tell me all the worst bits.

STU

I don't have a girlfriend.

MRS. PETERMAN

What good are you, then? Why?

STU

It hasn't... worked out yet. The timing.

MRS. PETERMAN

She's got someone else?

STU

There's not "someone."

MRS. PETERMAN

Bosh.

STU

I'm serious. It just hasn't worked out yet. There are girls, er, women who are... well, they like me. And then the ones *I* like, and it doesn't... it hasn't... I can't seem to get--

MRS. PETERMAN

Both feet in the car?

STU

Sure.

MRS. PETERMAN

Eh. Young men your age, they're all like that. None of the flowers smell quite pretty enough, but one day you'll be ready to settle down and suddenly, OH! This rose! It's so fragrant--

STU

No, no, no, it's not that.

MRS. PETERMAN

Aha! I knew you had someone.

Stu huffs.

MRS. PETERMAN (CONT'D)

Go on, then.

STU

I don't want to talk about it.

MRS. PETERMAN

Older or younger?

STU

I'm going to go check on the ambulance.

WE HEAR: Stu get up and walk to the house.

MRS. PETERMAN

(calling after him)

Dark hair or light? Brash or shy?
Married or single?

WE HEAR: Stu stop.

STU

How--

MRS. PETERMAN

A-HA. Hahahahahaha--
(laughing turns to
spluttering cough)

WE HEAR: Stu come back and ease Mrs. Peterman up.

STU

Easy. You're going to choke. Take a sip of water.

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman struggle to take a sip of water. Her coughing eases.

MRS. PETERMAN
(still choking a little)
I knew it.

STU
You did not.

MRS. PETERMAN
So she loves you.

STU
No.

MRS. PETERMAN
Loved you enough to go monkeying
around on her marriage vows.

STU
No.

MRS. PETERMAN
(dreamy)
I never had an affair.

STU
It was *not* an affair. It was one
kiss and one shouty conversation...
well, two shouty conversations and
then it was over.
(turn)
So, see? I don't have someone. It
doesn't matter. Sometimes things
don't work out.

MRS. PETERMAN
(getting her breath back)
You're such a nice boy, though.
You'll meet other girls.

STU
It's been seventy years since you
met Mr. Duckeggs and his rigid
airship. How many other nice boys
did you meet in between?

MRS. PETERMAN
Don't get smart. What's your
Missus' name?

STU
She's not a Missus.

MRS. PETERMAN
Madam. Frau.

STU

Doctor.

MRS. PETERMAN

Really? A bewitching doctor. A
bewitching married doctor.

STU

I don't know if-- I don't think
she's still married.

MRS. PETERMAN

(tsk)

That.

STU

We haven't talked since...
actually, I didn't even talk to her
then. I haven't seen her since
Christmas.

MRS. PETERMAN

No word, nothing?

STU

I texted twice. Four times.

MRS. PETERMAN

Which one is that? On the computer?

STU

On the phone.

MRS. PETERMAN

Hm. Read it to me.

WE HEAR: Stu shuffle around.

STU

I didn't write much.

WE HEAR: Stu's phone unlock.

STU (CONT'D)

Hi. Happy New Year. A picture of a
funny sandwich. And... hi.

MRS. PETERMAN

Well.
It's brief.

STU

Well. She never wrote back, so.

WE HEAR: Stu put his phone away.

MRS. PETERMAN
And if she had? Hi. Hi.

STU
Hi, nothing. I don't know. Did you see the snow this morning before it melted? Did you see the new Star Wars? Are you... I don't know. I don't have anything to say. I just... I mean, you can't say everything at once.

MRS. PETERMAN
You did write "hi" twice.

STU
Separated by four months.

MRS. PETERMAN
(sotto)
The rigid airship captain had adventures. And a talking porpoise.

STU
I didn't want to be intrusive.

MRS. PETERMAN
You didn't want it to be over.
Really over.

STU
Maybe one day when we're old and retired--

MRS. PETERMAN
Aw, don't get on with that!

STU
--She'll live down the street from me and we'll... what did you and Mr. Duckeggs do when you got together?

MRS. PETERMAN
We walk around the block and count the ugly people we see.

STU
You do not.

MRS. PETERMAN

We get under the sheets and tickle everything that dangles.

STU

Oh my god.

MRS. PETERMAN

We watch TV. What do you want from me? A lute?

(turn)

Don't leave it for fifty years. Settle things now, while everything is still in the right place.

STU

You mean while our feelings are fresh?

MRS. PETERMAN

No, I mean while your skin is still tight and your joints work. God! You're a sap.

WE HEAR: the sirens approaching.

MRS. PETERMAN (CONT'D)

Oh lord, here they come. Look at me, pink flannel what was I thinking? I look like I fell rinsing out the garbage cans. Run inside and get my brush. And get my rings.

STU

It doesn't matter what you look like--

MRS. PETERMAN

You mind your own business. HAIRBRUSH. GO.

WE HEAR: Stu get up and run to the house/sirens swell and then fade out.

INT. HOSPITAL -- LATER

WE HEAR: light hospital noise.

WE HEAR: the beep of a heart monitor.

Mrs. Peterman's voice fades in through the mix.

MRS. PETERMAN

I'm sure it's only dislocated. I take very good care of my health, lots of calcium and potassium and whatever else they make bones out of, you can ask my GP. Besides, I didn't hear a crunch, when I broke my wrist it sounded like someone was chewing through a mouthful of popcorn.

(calling after nurse)

Thank you doctor! I'll be right here where you left me!

WE HEAR: the curtain shut.

STU

That wasn't a doctor.

Mrs. Peterson drops the chipper act with Stu around.

MRS. PETERMAN

I call everyone doc around here. No one minds a wrong guess if it adds two zeroes to their salary. What have you done to my hair? I feel like I've got a hornet stuck in my scalp.

STU

It's a French twist.

MRS. PETERMAN

Can't you do something softer? I look like a bitter old schoolmarm.

STU

If you'd just let me braid it--

MRS. PETERMAN

It'll snarl.

STU

I can do a half ponytail with a little beehive bump.

MRS. PETERMAN

Didn't you bring the hot rollers?

WE HEAR: Stu shuffling through items as if a box is on his lap.

STU
I've got your robe, your makeup
bag, your round brush, your boar
bristle brush--

MRS. PETERMAN
Augh, I should have had you grab my
blood pressure medication.

STU
Blood pressure medication?

WE HEAR: the curtain pulled back.

KATIE
Mrs. Peterman, I'm OH.

WE HEAR: Katie drop her charts.

STU
AH.

WE HEAR: Katie grabbing her clipboard and binder and charts.

KATIE
Ah! Aha. Sorry. That.. Spot was
wet. Excuse me one moment.

WE HEAR: the curtain snapped shut.

WE HEAR: Katie's footsteps scuttle away down the hall.

In the beat that follows:

MRS. PETERMAN
Oh ho?

STU
I'm going to... Why don't I go...
get... a... Soda.

MRS. PETERMAN
(continuing her chuckle)
Hoo hoo hoo haha haha ahh I never
once went to Vegas. I never played
the lottery.

WE HEAR: Stu fishing around for his wallet, car keys and gum
wrappers. He shifts the box around on his lap, stands, and
drops the box in the chair he was sitting in.

STU
I'll get you an orange soda. Gah,
where's my wallet?

MRS. PETERMAN
 (still laughing)
 Turns out TODAY. TODAY is my lucky
 day!

WE HEAR: Stu scoop up his coat and spill quarters.

STU
 I'll just let you talk to the
 doctor.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Oh is SHE a doctor? I didn't
 notice!

STU
 She... don't--

WE HEAR: the curtain snaps open.

KATIE
 Mrs. Peterman. Sorry for the wait.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Not at all, dear.

STU
 I'm just gonna--

KATIE
 Oh, sir, of course, let me--

STU
 Sorry, excuse me--

KATIE
 --get out of your way.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (faux sweetness)
 No! Stuart. Don't leave me. You
 promised you'd stay with me.

STU
 I'll be right down the hall.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (comical wail)
 I'm *frightened*.

KATIE
 It'll only take a minute.

STU
 (stuck)
 All right.

WE HEAR: Stu walk back to the bedside, shift the box, and sit down.

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman pat Stu's hand.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Dear boy. Isn't he handsome?

KATIE
 Yes, very-- nice.

STU
 (clear throat)

KATIE
 (clear throat)
 Mrs. Peterman. I'm Dr.
 Collingswood. Dr. Ames is your
 attending, but I'll be taking care
 of you while we get you stabilized
 and scanned. How's your pain?

MRS. PETERMAN
 Not so bad as when I first came in.
 Dr. Collin... Calder... oh I'll
 never be able to remember all that.

KATIE
 Dr. Katie is fine. Can you make a
 fist for me? Good. Now the other?

MRS. PETERMAN
 Dr. Katie. Oh, my, that is a pretty
 name. Isn't that a pretty name,
 Stuart?

STU
 Very pretty.

KATIE
 Thank you. Can you flex your toes?
 Now the left.

WE HEAR: Katie click her pen and write something on a chart.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 I'm just going to check your
 abdomen, very gently.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Stuart was just happening by and
 found me sprawled out on the patio
 like last July's watermelon.

KATIE
 (cautious)
 Really? Are you neighbors?

STU
 No. I was, uh, just dropping off
 lunch.

KATIE
 Food delivery?

MRS. PETERMAN
 Meals on Wheels. He's a volunteer.

KATIE
 Oh! That's... really nice.
 (remember job)
 Breathe in?

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman breathe in and out.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 One more.

MRS. PETERMAN
 Are you married, dear?

WE HEAR: Stu stand quickly.

STU
 Hah!

MRS. PETERMAN
 Stuart was just telling me a good
 story about a married friend of
 his.

STU
 I'm going to go get a soda. She can
 have ginger ale right? Or some kind
 of juice?

MRS. PETERMAN
 I don't need the sugar.

KATIE
 That's all right. We're almost
 done.

MRS. PETERMAN
Stuart.

STU
I'll be right back.

MRS. PETERMAN
(dropping the act)
You're leaving a helpless, poor old
woman!

STU
You'll be fine!

WE HEAR: the curtain flap, Stu walk quickly down the hall
humming a panicky version of the Spiderman theme to himself.

Note: let the walk go on for several seconds. Put some
distance in.

STU (CONT'D)
(humming, low singing)
Vend-ing mach-ine vend-ing mach-
ine. Frito chips and vanilla
creams. Maybe they/ have a Twix.
Can I break/ a five in this?/
machiiiiine this is a vending
machiiiiiiine.
(switches to pained
humming, trying to calm
pulse)

WE HEAR: the vending machine dispense a soda.

WE HEAR: a curtain shut and Katie's footsteps walking down
the hall.

STU (CONT'D)
(gasp)

WE HEAR: Stu duck into the bathroom. Toilets flushing, sinks
running.

STU (CONT'D)
(very very quiet humming,
faster)

SOME GUY
Buddy, you're blocking the door.

STU
Oh! Sorry. Um.

WE HEAR: The door open. Katie's footsteps pass.

KATIE
 (distant)
 Can you check on the CT wait for
 room 409 and send these down to the
 labs.

WE HEAR: Katie hand over a sheaf of papers.

GEENA
 No problem, Dr. Collingswood.

KATIE
 Did you see a visitor pass by
 here... um, curly hair? Tall?

GEENA
 Not on this floor. You gotta name,
 I can page 'em.

KATIE
 That's all right.

WE HEAR: Katie's footsteps fade.

STU
 (exhale)

WE HEAR: Stu step out and leave the bathroom.

Transition: WE HEAR: Stu yank the curtain open.

STU (CONT'D)
 Very funny. If you were gonna rat
 me out, couldn't you at least give
 me a running start? That was a
 friendship conversation. It was a
 CONFidence and you, you, you can
 fix your own hair and read your own
 magazines and drink your own soda
 because... I...

WE HEAR: Stu put the can of soda down on the table with the
 line "Your own soda"

Stu falls quiet because of the Silence. (maybe heart monitor
 beeps?)

STU (CONT'D)
 Mrs. Peterman?
 (beat)
 Mrs. Peterman!

WE HEAR: Stu rush forward, we hear his jacket flapping and
 keys jingling.

STU (CONT'D)
 Hey. Are you okay? Mrs. Peterman?

MRS. PETERMAN
 (not moving lips,
 pretending to be asleep)
 Open the can.

STU
 (relief)
 Augh!

MRS. PETERMAN
 (still pretending)
 Open the can before you go.

STU
 You scared the crap out of me. Why
 are you pretending to be asleep?

MRS. PETERMAN
 (still pretending)
 Oooopen the caaan.

WE HEAR: Stu open the can.

STU
 (beat)
 Wake up.

WE HEAR: Katie step in.

KATIE
 She'll probably sleep for a while.

STU
 Augh!

MRS. PETERMAN
 (low, throaty chuckle)

STU
 (low, growl)
 Mrs. Peterman.

KATIE
 It's okay, we'll keep an eye on
 her.

STU
 (low)
Stop faking. Mrs. Peterman.

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman fake a snore.

KATIE

If I can borrow you for a minute...
I just need a few things on the
intake form, then we can get you
out of here.

STU

(hiss)
Old woman!

WE HEAR: Mrs. Peterman amplify the goofiness of her snoring.

WE HEAR: Stu make a noise of frustration and gather up his
jacket and keys again. He steps out, Katie shuts the curtain.

WE HEAR: Stu and Katie walk a few steps away.

WE HEAR: Katie flip the form open.

Stu and Katie audibly size each other up.

KATIE

If you could confirm the address.
And the time you found the patient?
That's the important one.

WE HEAR: Katie tap the pen to each section of the form, Stu
take the clipboard and scribble his initials on the blanks.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I know you don't know her too well,
but does she have any family?
Children?

STU

She said something about nephews.
And a sister.

KATIE

Do you know if she has a cell
phone?

STU

I didn't see one. I called one of
the neighbors before we left. He
might know more.

WE HEAR: Stu write down a phone number and name.

STU (CONT'D)

She's probably got an old school
address book. I should have grabbed
it when I was rounding up her
toilette.

WE HEAR: Katie rip the top paper off the carbon form and read it to herself.

KATIE

(mutter)

Egg 254-3523

(aloud)

This is helpful. Thank you.

STU

I'm glad. To help.

KATIE

Um.

STU

What will happen next?

KATIE

With--

(us?)

STU

Is she going to be able to walk again?

KATIE

Oh! Well. We can't say for sure until we get her scanned, but given her pain, the swelling, the displacement of the joint... it's a significant injury. Whether we're looking at a screw-and-pin repair or a full replacement, she'll be placed on the priority list for surgery. Recovery will be lengthy, 8-12 weeks, but we'll want her up on her feet and walking as quickly as possible. Very important in hip recovery, so make her get up and answer the door whenever you bring her meals.

STU

Maybe I'll get a tennis ball. Or a Frisbee.

(mock)

"Go long!"

Uncomfortable chuckles.

KATIE

Don't, really.

STU
I'm kidding.

KATIE
You could walk her to the mailbox.
Or around the yard. If you really
wanted to. You don't have to, I
mean, it's not your responsibility,
but even a little encouragement can
make a big difference in recovery.

Ah, irony.

STU
That's good advice. Thank you.

KATIE
Do you... did you come in the
ambulance?

STU
Mm-hm.

KATIE
Do you need a ride back to your
car?

STU
Are you getting off?

KATIE
No, not for a while, but... I could
ask around. Maybe one of the nurses
going off shift--

STU
I can get the bus.

KATIE
Still driving the Odyssey?

STU
Yes. No! I got a new one.

KATIE
Oh!

STU
Still white, but I think I might
paint some lizards on it. You can
hide the back seats down under the
floor and there are cup holders
everywhere and a little TV. I just
wish it had a skylight.

(MORE)

STU (CONT'D)

Then I could take it camping. Well, I can still take it camping, I just couldn't look up at the sky at night. But turning your head to look out the window isn't so bad.

KATIE

I wondered. I used to hear the old van in the neighborhood sometimes.

STU

Oh yeah. I lost the muffler when they put those new speed bumps in. I still pass the old house sometimes.

KATIE

Yeah?

STU

My mom's new house is two streets away. The pink house on Sycamore?

KATIE

The brick one?

STU

Stucco.

KATIE

Oh, I like that one.

STU

It's smaller than our old apartment, but I'm fixing up the garage. We've never had a yard. I think I'm gonna get her a dog for Christmas. Which ones are the bug eyed spaniels?

KATIE

King Charles.

STU

Yup. I'm gonna get a King Charles spaniel. Or a beagle.

KATIE

I like beagles.

STU

Mm.

KATIE

Snoopy was a beagle.

STU

Are you going to--

KATIE

And what are you, are you working at the hotel or--

STU

--Oh. No. I helped Emma close out the storefront in February. Construction in the spring. Then the buyout money came through in June and... I don't know, I haven't figured it out yet. I've never had money before.

(thinking)

I went to Arizona. Twice. And I've been to the Cheesecake Factory.

KATIE

That's high living.

STU

I don't know how people can afford to eat there every week. There's burritos and pasta and burgers and spring rolls. We had six courses and I didn't even get to the back pages. A hundred and fifty seven dollars for lunch!

KATIE

You don't have to order from every section.

STU

Then how would I know what to order next time?

KATIE

Next time order cheesecake.

STU

I think about that hundred and fifty seven dollars once a week. Even though we could afford it and it was a treat, it keeps popping back into my head. But I don't think about the car or the house that much. Weird, right?

KATIE

I lost ten dollars in the wash at the laundromat six weeks ago and I still get upset thinking about it. Student loans and rent and water and electric and credit cards and my schedule. Ugh, I'm gonna give myself an ulcer.

STU

Isn't... um... was there... is there going to be a settlement? Or was the pre-nup... y'know.

KATIE

Eventually. It would have been quicker but we keep going back and forth over the jewelry appraisal. I wish I hadn't thrown it all so hard. Or used the lobster cracker on that nice watch. I just have to keep the water out of the boat until... March? April? Maybe May. Just have to keep things moving forward.

STU

Why didn't--

KATIE

Jackie's been real good, letting me sublet the house. She even split the rent, since they're paying her housing in Houston.

STU

Oh, no, she moved out of the hotel.

KATIE

Oh! She didn't tell me.

STU

She said she was getting sick of businessmen and the hotel staff knowing her comings and goings. She rented a house up on a golf course. Her neighbors are all old, but it's above the flood line.

KATIE

Have you been down to see her?

STU

Oh yeah. We get to sneak out on the 9th green and hit balls after it gets dark.

KATIE

That sounds fun.

STU

If you ever get a free weekend, you could go visit too. The only rules are "call when you're an hour out" and "bring groceries." Except last time they were running a special on Kellogg's and Emma and I bought eight boxes of cereal and Jackie says she'd rather die than eat one more bowl of Fruit Loops.

KATIE

I could bring potato chips. Or sardines and crackers.

STU

A feast is a feast.

Beat.

STU (CONT'D)

It's a little lopsided when it's just me and Jackie. Like we're missing some teeth.

KATIE

You said Emma goes too.

STU

You know what I meant.

Beat. WE HEAR: a gurney wheel past (or some other active blip in the background)

KATIE

I'm sorry I never wrote back. I tried.

STU

Tried to do what?

KATIE

It seemed too soon. Then it seemed like it was too long. And it was too much.

STU
You could have said "hi."

KATIE
It's not enough.

STU
Enough for what?

KATIE
You're a good guy.

STU
Okay. Don't.

KATIE
I'm trying to be fair.

STU
To who?

KATIE
You. You deserve to find someone who is free. Who can go with you to Arizona at a moment's notice or sleep in the van without worrying about where the bathrooms are or, you know, not have divorce lawyer still working through a retainer.

STU
Well, I didn't.

KATIE
You didn't try.

STU
(very low)
I thought you'd text back.

Stu waits a beat.

STU (CONT'D)
(low)
Okay.

WE HEAR: Stu turn and walk away.

KATIE
(distant)
I did try. Look. I did.

WE HEAR: Katie jog to catch up to Stu, light scrolling clicking noise from her phone.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I kept opening email drafts.

WE HEAR: A small click with every new email.

STU

November 17th. Stu, what is that song we made up about old jack-o-lanterns? The eyebrows are melting off the pumpkin I carved last month and I haven't had the heart to throw him away. November 2nd. Stu, I was thinking about mice.

(beat)

October 29th. Stu, Did you see the new candy mix they're selling? Dots, Bottle Caps, Wax Bottles, and Mary Janes.

KATIE

It's like the island of lost souls. But candy.

STU

I swear, I started the exact same email.

WE HEAR: Stu fumble around for his phone, unlock it.

STU (CONT'D)

October 30th.

KATIE

Oh my god!

They laugh.

WE HEAR: Katie scroll through Stu's phone.

KATIE (CONT'D)

October 18th. Oh, you started the Ken Burns Vietnam series?

STU

I couldn't finish it. October 27th. Blank. October 27th. Blank. October 26th. Hey Stu.

KATIE

September 29th. September 29th. September 29th. All your Grand Canyon pictures!

STU

September 20th. I found the picture you drew on the cabinet door. The alien with the squiddy fingers and big eye.

KATIE

I found another one in the back of the closet. September 27th. Katie, I made it to the canyon floor and one of the old hippies who had a jean vest that said Trail Bear in silver beads gave me two salt pills and said it would help me on the hike back-- oh no.

STU

I dropped my camera when the helicopter was lifting me out, but Trail Bear brought it back up. September 17th. Ooh, a playlist.

KATIE

It's all Counting Crows. September 17th. Katie, they put gravy on enchiladas in Roswell, New Mexico. Not sauce or cheese, just flour and water.

STU

I thought it would be funny to see the UFO museum.

KATIE

It wasn't?

STU

It was **not**. August 28th, August 27th, August 25th...

KATIE

Don't read those. I was working 24 hour shifts then.

STU

Wow. August 24th.

WE HEAR: Stu open the email anyway.

KATIE

It's too long.

STU

It just needs some indentation.

(reading low, mumbling)

Stu. 7:06 am missed my bus, gives me a minute... thinking... six months...

(murmurs stumble to halt)

(swallow)

(aloud, to Katie)

I would have read this.

KATIE

It's too long.

STU

I would have been happy to get it.

KATIE

Would have.

STU

July, May...

(scrolling scrolling)

February. January. *January. How...* there are two hundred and sixteen of these.

KATIE

Mostly blank. And a lot of repeats.

STU

Two hundred and sixteen. All you had to send was one.

KATIE

You can't really count any of the ones before March because it's really just the same email with alternative thesis statements--

WE HEAR: Stu cut her off with a kiss. Make it a good one.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Hi.

STU

Hi.

WE HEAR: the elevator ding, doors open.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
 (thick accent)
 Is this where they bring the
 emergency patients? I'm looking for
 Mrs. Anita Peterman.

STU
 Mr. Duckeggs!

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
 Meal Boy! I heard your message. Is
 she here?

STU
 Waiting on you.

WE HEAR: Stu yank the curtain back.

STU (CONT'D)
 (low)
 Hope you like poached eggs, Mrs.
 Peterman.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (low)
 What? You did not call him here!

STU
 (low)
 Don't mess with your hair. It looks
 good like that.

MRS. PETERMAN
 (low)
 Pig face! Traitor!

STU
 (low)
 Stop it!

WE HEAR: the curtain move a bit to indicate Gunter coming in.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
 Anita!

MRS. PETERMAN
 (radiant)
 Oh! Gunter.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
 Anita. Dear. How did this happen?

WE HEAR: Gunter kiss Mrs. Peterman's hands.

MRS. PETERMAN
We got old.

WE HEAR: another kiss, Mrs. Peterman's voice warms.

MRS. PETERMAN (CONT'D)
Go on now, sit down, you'll
embarrass the boy.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
(chuckle)

STU
Feel better, Anita. I'll check back
with you tomorrow.

MRS. PETERMAN
Knock first.

WE HEAR: Gunter start to murmur lovingly to Mrs. Peterman.

GUNTER DUKHEIGGEN
(very low)
You look like a queen reclining
here. When I broke my hip, my skin
went white and my eyes shrank back
in my skull. The nurses all said,
"That man is going to die." But
look at you. Resplendent. And I
just love your hair like this.

WE HEAR: Stu chuckle to himself and shut the curtain.

Stu and Katie have a beat with each other. A couple of little
shy laughs jerk out of them.

GEENA
(paging)
Dr. Collingswood to imaging. Paging
Dr. Collingswood to imaging

KATIE
That's me.

STU
Oh. Okay.

KATIE
Are you still taking the bus? I get
off in 45 minutes. And they make
smoothies in the cafeteria. I can
give you a ride if you wanted to--

STU

Yeah, sure.
 (beat)
I'll wait.

FIN