

Nifty Little Pills

Eliana Theologides Rodriguez

etr254@nyu.edu

The scene opens on married couple SUSAN and TOM sitting in their living room. SUSAN is knitting a scarf, while TOM sits on an armchair and stares absently into the audience.

SUSAN: Honey, I don't know what to do. I want to help, but you're not making any sense.

TOM: Nothing makes any sense.

[SUSAN rolls her eyes and puts down the scarf she's knitting.]

SUSAN: *[Sighs.]* And why is that?

TOM: Well, I can't exactly put a finger on it. It's just that...

SUSAN: ...Yes?

TOM: It's just that lately... I've been having all these thoughts in my head.

[Beat.]

SUSAN: Go on.

TOM: And they're telling me that we might be wrong about everything. That the world doesn't make any sense, and that the way we're looking at it makes even less sense.

[Beat.]

SUSAN: Tom, I'm going to be honest. This is sounding like another one of your episodes.

TOM: I don't have episodes!

SUSAN: Tom...

TOM: I mean, I suppose I do. But this isn't like that. It's like I've had an epiphany all of a sudden.

SUSAN: An epiphany.

TOM: Yes! Or maybe it's God, or some higher power or something, telling me that—

SUSAN: That everything is nonsense.

TOM: Well, yes. In a way. Mostly just that the way we *see* things is nonsense.

[Beat.]

SUSAN: Right. Okay well, whatever this is... This episode—

TOM: Epiphany.

SUSAN: Right. Epiphany. *[Puts down her knitting needles and begins to clear the coffee table.]* Well, whatever this epiphany is, try to snap out of it before the kids come home from school. I don't want them to see their father in the midst of another episode.

TOM: Epiphany.

SUSAN: Right, sorry. *[Continues to tidy the room, barely listening to TOM.]* And also don't forget that the Flynns are coming over for tea in a bit, so it would be absolutely lovely if you could at least *try* to snap out of it before then.

TOM: Of course, but—

SUSAN: You know, we still have those nifty little pills that Dr. Reinaldy prescribed last time this happened. Just take one of those.

TOM: *[Distracted.]* No, no. It's not like that. And besides, I don't trust that Dr. Reinaldy.

SUSAN: That's preposterous. Why not?

TOM: The man is a moron.

SUSAN: Don't be silly, Tom; the man is a doctor.

TOM: He's still a moron.

SUSAN: No, he's a *doctor*. All doctors are smart. That's why they're doctors.

TOM: He's not smart.

SUSAN: ...But he's a doctor.

TOM: A moronic one.

SUSAN: You're not making any sense.

TOM: *You're* not! This is what I'm talking about!

[The doorbell rings.]

SUSAN: That's the Flynns. I'll get the door. Take the pill, Tom. Don't disturb our guests with your talk of nonsense.

[SUSAN exits, and TOM remains on his chair. SUSAN reenters with HELEN and ED. They all sit down around the coffee table.]

SUSAN: I'll get the tea from the kitchen. *[Exits.] [Yells from offstage]* Did you take the pill, Tom?

HELEN: Oh, what pill?

[SUSAN reenters with a tray of tea.]

SUSAN: He has these episodes. He thinks the world doesn't make any sense. It's medical, we're fairly certain. Possibly genetic. But Dr. Reinaldy's prescribed him some pills for it.

HELEN: Ooh, we absolutely *adore* Dr. Reinaldy. Don't we, Ed?

ED: Yep. Smart man.

TOM: I don't think so.

ED: I used to think the same. Then I remembered that he's a doctor.

[Beat.]

HELEN: You know, Tom. Every time *I* feel like something doesn't make sense, I just remember God's plan.

TOM: *[Under his breath.]* Jesus Christ.

SUSAN: Oh, yes Helen! I do that too! Just this morning I was reading about that man who was shot—

ED: The one up in Quailton?

SUSAN: Yes! That's the one. He was just at the market, buying tomatoes, and he steps out into the street and BAM! He's shot in the head. They've yet to clean the blood from the pavement.

TOM: That's horrendous!

ED: Yes, I thought so as well. But we must remember that it's God's plan.

TOM: That doesn't make any sense.

SUSAN: Take the pill, Tom.

TOM: But why would—

SUSAN: Take the pill.

HELEN: Or what about the school in Wakerville that burned down? One hundred children perished.

SUSAN: Shame.

ED: Truly tragic.

TOM: Horrific!

HELEN: But it's God's plan.

[ED and SUSAN nod in agreement.]

TOM: But that doesn't make any sense. Why would God kill one hundred innocent children like that?

ED: Because it was His plan.

TOM: Why would that be His plan?

SUSAN: You're not making any sense, Tom.

TOM: *You're* not making any sense! None of this is making any sense!

SUSAN: [*Shouting.*] Just take the pills, and it will!

[*There's an awkward silence.*]

SUSAN: [*In an attempt to break the silence*] Well, in other news... did I mention there's a pedophile on the loose in the neighborhood?

HELEN: What?!

SUSAN: I know, it's terrible. I was just standing on the porch the other day, watching our little Emily walk to the bus stop as I always do. And there was a man on a bike coming the other way. As they passed each other, he said "Hi".

[*Beat.*]

TOM: Then what?

SUSAN: That's the end.

TOM: *That's* the end?

SUSAN: Yes.

TOM: Well how do you know he was a pedophile?

SUSAN: Don't be silly, Tom. He was a man, and he said "Hi" to our little Emily. What else could he have been?

TOM: ...Friendly?

HELEN: Well he couldn't have been a pedophile.

TOM: Exactly! He couldn't have been.

SUSAN: Why not?

HELEN: You said he was on a bike, didn't you?

SUSAN: Yes.

HELEN: Well then he wasn't a pedophile. He was a biker.

[*Beat.*]

SUSAN: That's true, I see your point. Perhaps he was a pedophile *pretending* to be a biker.

TOM: Or perhaps he was both? A person doesn't have to be just one thing.

SUSAN: Be quiet, Tom.

HELEN: Then again, he could have been a murderer. Murderers ride bikes.

SUSAN: Oh my, that's true. How do we know which?

HELEN: Hmm... Well, was he wearing a helmet?

SUSAN: I think he was, yes.

HELEN: Oh, well that's a relief. Pedophiles don't wear helmets. He was just a biker; Emily's safe.

ED: No, no, no. You women have it all wrong.

TOM: *Thank* you!

ED: The man was a *bicyclist*. Bicyclists are the ones that ride bikes and wear helmets, whereas bikers are the ones that ride *motorcycles*, don't wear helmets, are sometimes murderers, and *always* pedophiles.

TOM: That's ridiculous!

SUSAN: Tom!

TOM: I'm sorry, but this is what I mean! All of this used to make sense to me, but now it doesn't. Not all bikers are pedophiles and not all bicyclists wear helmets and a murderer can wear a helmet if he so pleases and a doctor can be a moron and the world isn't as black and white as we think it is!

HELEN: The world is as black and white as God planned it to be.

TOM: And that's the worst of it! We lump everyone and everything into categories to give us some sort of notion that it all makes sense. And anytime we can't make sense of something, we dismiss it as "God's Plan". Seriously, what the hell does that even mean?

SUSAN: TOM!

TOM: *[Explosively.]* No, really! Why would God "plan" to kill one hundred innocent children? Why would he do that, Helen? Hmm? The world as it exists doesn't make any sense, and the way that we talk about it makes even *less* sense! And I'm sorry, but I can't satisfy my ignorance by categorizing and stereotyping and dismissing it all as God's plan. I believe that God is good, but suddenly everything else just seems to be nonsense. And maybe you can't see it, but it's becoming clearer and clearer to me every day. And I can't stand it.

[Beat.] [Tom is disheveled and panting. HELEN and ED look awkwardly at each other. SUSAN is mortified.]

SUSAN: Tom. Take the pills.

ED: She's right, Tom. I think it would be best if you took the pills.

HELEN: It will all make sense again. You'll stop questioning things so ridiculously.

SUSAN: Yes, Tom. Take the pills.

[TOM is catatonic and taking slow, shaky breaths in. Without making eye contact, he nods slowly.]

[TOM exits.]

HELEN: *[After an awkward silence.]* This tea is truly wonderful, Susan.

SUSAN: *[Humiliated and frazzled.]* I'm so sorry about that.

ED: Yes, truly splendid.

SUSAN: I just don't know what's gotten into him nowadays.

HELEN: Is it English?

SUSAN: What?

HELEN: The tea.

ED: German, it seems.

HELEN: Either way, *truly* fabulous.

[HELEN and ED sip their tea simultaneously as SUSAN looks distracted and uneasy.]

SUSAN: I really should go check on Tom. *[She stands and begins to walk offstage.]*

HELEN: Susan?

SUSAN: *[She stops and turns.]* Yes?

HELEN: It's alright, you know.

SUSAN: Pardon?

HELEN: It's alright. We all question things every once in a while.

SUSAN: Oh.

HELEN: Honestly, it's only natural.

ED: Happens to the best of us.

HELEN: But we must remind ourselves that the world is simple, and so are we. We mustn't trouble our little minds with things so out of our control. God has a plan, and that is that. At the end of the day, there's nothing we can do.

SUSAN: *[Appears momentarily relieved. She nods, then exits.]*

ED: *[Turning to HELEN.]* You know darling, I wonder if the pills Tom is taking are the same ones Dr. Reinaldy prescribed you a few years ago.

HELEN: Hm. Perhaps they are.

ED: My, what a strange time that was. You were questioning things left and right before those pills set you straight.

HELEN: *[Laughs.]* Was I? I barely remember any of it now.

ED: I suppose that's a good thing.

HELEN: I suppose so as well.

[A scream is heard from offstage. ED and HELEN stand up and look concerned. SUSAN reenters with an empty prescription pill bottle in one hand and the cap in the other, looking shocked.]

SUSAN: T-...Tom... He... *[She takes a shuddering breath in.]* He took the entire bottle.

HELEN: Oh my!

ED: Goodness gracious! Shouldn't we call an ambulance or something?

[SUSAN is unresponsive.]

ED: Helen, call an ambulance. I'll pray with Tom in the bathroom until they get here.

[ED and HELEN exit quickly on opposite sides of the stage.]

SUSAN: *[Frazzled and mumbling to herself]* It... It just doesn't... It doesn't make any sense. He... He was a good father... loving husband... prominent businessman... man of faith... Fathers, husbands, businessmen, and men of faith don't just— They don't commit— No. It just doesn't make any sense. *[Long contemplative pause as she looks down at the pill bottle, and then finally looks back up.]* Then again, it must make sense. It's all part of God's plan. I suppose we should cancel the ambulance. After all, this happened under God's eye, didn't it? It's His plan. Some way, somehow, it *must* make sense.