

I SEE YOU

A comedy/drama in one act

by

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by Bradley Hayward

SYNOPSIS

I See You is a humorous and touching play that captures the unexpected intimacy of a hospital's Intensive Care Unit. It's a story about the beauty of the temporary, proving that a single moment of being truly seen can leave a mark that lasts a lifetime. Through a series of fast paced and poignant vignettes, a cast of mismatched characters – from an observant teenage “Emperor” and a grieving widower, to a little girl riding a tricycle and a nurse with a heart of gold – collide in a place where the stakes are life and death, but the currency is kindness.

RUNNING TIME

30-35 minutes

CHARACTERS

(19 speaking roles, any gender, doubling possible)

- BRETT:** (17) An observant teenager admitted to the ICU.
- SHARON:** (50s-60s) A veteran ICU nurse.
- DR FLEURY:** (30s-50s) The clinical anchor of the ICU.
- FRANKLIN:** (50s-60s) A philosophical janitor.
- MRS MUNN:** (70s) A spunky permanent fixture of the hospital.
- HANNAH:** (16) A gentle soul admitted to the ICU.
- LEONARD:** (80s) A grieving widower.
- ADDIE:** (5) A cheerful burst of chaotic energy.
- TANYA:** (30s) Brett's exhausted mother. **
- JEFF:** (30s) Brett's estranged father. **
- SARA:** (20s) A nervous young nurse. **
- DANNY:** (20s) A quiet orderly. **
- MACK:** (20s-40s) A genial delivery driver. **
- KENDRA:** (17) Brett's loyal best friend. **
- GREG:** (17) Brett's silliest friend. **
- DEBBIE:** (50s-60s) A career lunch lady who laughs at everything. **
- SHELLEY:** (50s-60s) Debbie's inseparable partner in crime. **
- ERIC:** (20s-30s) A high octane paramedic. **
- BECKY:** (20s-30s) A steady paramedic. **

CASTING NOTES

Many of the roles may be doubled, for a smaller cast. The starred roles above (**) are the easiest to combine, but any combination is acceptable.

All of the roles are gender non-specific and may be played by actors of any gender identity. Simply change the pronouns, as necessary. Below is a list of alternate character names, if changing the genders suggested in the script:

Brett/BRETT, Sharon/SHERMAN, Dr Fleury/DR FLEURY, Franklin/FRANKIE, Mrs Munn/MR MUNN, Hannah/HUDSON, Leonard/LENORE, Addie/ANDY, Tanya/TREVOR, Jeff/JILL, Sara/SIMON, Danny/DAISY, Mack/MEG, Kendra/KEN, Greg/GRACE, Debbie/DENNIS, Shelley/STANLEY, Eric/ERICA, Becky/BENNY

SETTING

The stage is divided into three distinct areas that exist simultaneously. The lighting shifts focus between them, but the presence of the other areas remains a constant reminder of the hospital's ecosystem. The settings may be as elaborate as possible, or simply suggested by a few simple set pieces.

DOWNSTAGE RIGHT: Room 702

BRETT's private kingdom. There's a standard hospital bed with white linens, IV pole, and rolling meal tray. On the meal tray is SPIKE, a potted plastic succulent.

CENTER STAGE: The Nurses' Station

The high traffic heart of the unit. There's a desk out front, with a computer monitor, stacks of clipboards, and a telephone. Directly behind the station is a wall with three doors.

Stage Right Door: Marked "702."

Center Door: Marked "704."

Stage Left Door: Marked "706."

DOWNSTAGE LEFT: The Waiting Room

A purgatory of fluorescent light. There's a row of chairs that have seen better days and a rickety old vending machine.

The clock ceases to matter in the ICU, blurring days and nights into a seamless loop. It's never clear if people have been there a day, a week, or a month. So unless specifically noted in the stage directions, the scenes can take place at any time of day.

SCENE 1

Room 702. It's the middle of the night and the only light comes from the full moon outside the window. BRETT, a 17 year old boy, lies awake in bed. He's connected to an IV pole and wears a gown that's three sizes too big. He speaks to a SPIKE, potted plastic succulent that sits on his rolling meal tray.

BRETT: Look, I'm not saying you're a bad listener, Spike. You're just very stationary. Which, honestly, I respect. In this building, if you move too fast, someone tries to stick a tube in you or hand you a cherry flavoured liquid that tastes like existential dread.

(He readjusts his IV line, wincing slightly.)

I saw the new nurse crying in the hallway. She thought the door was heavy enough to hide it. I wanted to go out there and tell her it's okay, that being the sick kid is actually a great way to get out of AP Calculus. I mean, X equals whatever I want it to be if I'm on enough morphine, right? But I just stayed here. I didn't want to ruin her moment. Everyone here is so busy being brave for me that they forget I'm the one with the best view of the helipad.

(He leans in closer to the plant.)

Do you think the machines get tired of me? The beep beep of the heart monitor, it's got a rhythm. It's like a hip hop beat for people who need a reminder they're alive.

(A beat. His voice softens, losing the edge of humour.)

Mom stayed until ten tonight. She kept stroking my hand. Not like a normal person, but like she was trying to rub a magic lamp and make a healthier version of me pop out. I had to pretend to be asleep so she'd go home and eat something that wasn't from a vending machine. It's weird, Spike. You spend your whole life trying to be seen, you know? You want the followers, the likes, the girl in third period to notice your new shoes. Then you get here, and you're the most seen person on the planet. Doctors, residents, specialists. They know my white blood cell count better than I know my own middle name. But none of them see me. They see a biological puzzle with a bad attitude.

(He touches a leaf of the plant.)

But hey. The sun's coming up. Which means the nurse will come back in, I'll crack a joke about the hospital Jell-O being a sentient life form, and we'll do it all over again. Because that's the deal, right? You just keep beeping until you don't.

(He smiles faintly.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 2

The Nurses' Station. The unit is quiet. FRANKLIN, a janitor with a gentle demeanour, mops the floor. DR FLEURY, a surgical resident, sits on the ledge of the desk. She looks at a chart, with a surgical cap dangling from one ear.

FRANKLIN: (Without looking up) The trick is the friction. You go too fast, you just move the dirt around. You gotta let the floor feel the weight of the mop.

DR FLEURY: (Looks up, startled) Sorry. Am I in your way?

FRANKLIN: You're in your own way, Doc. I've been buffing this same six foot stretch for ten minutes. You haven't blinked once.

DR FLEURY: It's been a long night. 702. The kid in there. Brett. He's –

FRANKLIN: Witty. Spoke to him Tuesday. Told me my mop looked like his grandmother's hair.

DR FLEURY: He's crashing. Not beep beep crashing, just fading. Like a battery that won't hold a charge. I've read his charts three times. I've looked at the labs. There is a logic to the body. A plus B should equal C. But with him, the math just stops mathing.

FRANKLIN: (Stops scrubbing and sits back on his heels) You ever wonder why they make these floors so shiny?

DR FLEURY: To keep them sterile.

FRANKLIN: Nah. It's so when people are walking down these halls, looking at their feet because they're too scared to look up, they see a bit of light reflecting back at 'em.

(He gestures to Room 702.)

You're looking for a glitch in the machine. But maybe he's not a machine. Maybe he's just a kid who's finished his book and waiting for someone to help him close the cover.

DR FLEURY: I'm a doctor. I don't close covers. I add chapters. I'm supposed to be the one with the pen.

FRANKLIN: Sometimes the pen runs out of ink, Doc. That ain't a failure of the writer.

(He hands DR FLEURY a small, unopened peppermint from his pocket.)

Go in there. Don't look at the monitors. Don't look at the IV bag. Just look at the kid. He's awake. He's probably got a joke ready about your hair.

DR FLEURY: (Opens the wrapper on the peppermint) What if I don't have anything to say back?

FRANKLIN: Then just listen. The floor's already clean. You don't need to scrub any harder.

(He picks up his bucket and moves slowly down the hall. DR FLEURY stands, straightens her cap, and pops the peppermint in her mouth.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 3

The Waiting Room. TANYA, BRETT's worried mother, stands before the massive vending machine. She looks like she hasn't slept for weeks.

TANYA: (To the vending machine) I see you. Don't think I don't see you vibrating. You're smug for a box of overpriced sodium.

(She feeds the machine some change. It whirs and groans, then spits the change back out.)

Oh, come on. It's legal tender. It's been in the bottom of my sticky purse for weeks, but it's still worth something. We're both a little worn out, okay? Just take it.

(She tries again, putting the change back into the machine. The machine just spits it back out. TANYA stamps her foot.)

I have a son in Room 702 who thinks he can survive on sarcasm and Jell-O. I'm trying to buy a bag of BBQ Baked Lay's so that I have enough energy to go back in there and pretend I'm not imagining his funeral. So please, for the love of everything mechanical, take my money!

(She sticks more money into the machine. This time, the machine accepts it. Success. She presses D-4.)

D-4. Battleship. Hit.

(Through the glass, she watches the back of chips wiggle, but it does not fall.)

You've got to be kidding me.

(She leans her forehead against the glass. She doesn't scream. She doesn't cry. She just tries to calmly reason with the bag of chips in order to coax it out.)

I've done everything right. I signed the consent forms. I thanked the surgeon who looked like she was twelve. I even smiled at the lady in the gift shop who tried to sell me a Get Well Soon balloon with a cat on it. A cat! Brett's allergic to cats. It would literally kill him faster.

(She taps the glass gently.)

That bag is the only thing in this building that I have any control over. If I press the button, the bag falls. That's the law. That's the physics of the universe. Gravity is not supposed to be optional in a hospital.

(She begins to shake the machine.)

Fall. Just. Fall. I can't fix the fact that he's seventeen and knows his own blood pressure by heart. But I can buy these chips. Drop them! NOW!

(She punches the glass, hard. The chips don't move. She turns her back to the machine

and slides down the front of it until she's sitting on the floor. She covers her face with her hands. After a moment, a loud clack echoes. The vibration of her sitting down has knocked the bag loose. She reaches into the bin, pulls out a bag of BBQ Baked Lay's and holds it up like a holy relic. She looks at the nutritional facts through blurry eyes.)

Zero trans fat.

(She lets out a shaky laugh.)

At least something in this place is heart healthy.

(She clutches the bag to her chest, not yet ready to go back inside.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 4

The Nurses' Station. SHARON, a no nonsense nurse who treats the station like her kingdom, sits behind the desk. She wears reading glasses on a beaded chain and a lanyard with her name on it. KENDRA and GREG, BRETT's best friends, stand at the desk. KENDRA clutches a giant helium UFO balloon and GREG carries a greasy pizza box.

SHARON: (Without looking up from her monitor) No.

KENDRA: We haven't even said who we're here to see.

SHARON: Doesn't matter. You're under eighteen, you're carrying a localized helium hazard, and that box smells like a pepperoni induced cardiac event. This is an Intensive Care Unit, not a food court.

GREG: It's for Brett. In 702. He hasn't had real food in, like, forever. The doctors said he needs sustenance.

SHARON: (Looks over her glasses) Sustenance is a saline drip and a nutrient shake that tastes like chalk. Sustenance is not a Meat Lover's Deep Dish with extra grease.

KENDRA: Please, Sharon. It says Sharon on your badge, right? My name's Kendra. I'm Brett's person.

SHARON: His person? Is that a medical designation? Because I have a list of "Immediate Family Only" and Person isn't a category. I have Mother, Father, and Legal Guardian. I don't see Girlfriend with a UFO Balloon.

GREG: Look, we just want to show him the pizza. We don't even have to let him eat it. We just want him to remember what the outside world smells like. It's depressing in there. It smells like bleach.

SHARON: (Softens for a nanosecond, then snaps back) I know what it smells like. I've lived here since "Murder, She Wrote" was in the Top 10.

KENDRA: (Leans in, desperate) He's missing the Calculus final. He studied for three months for it. If he doesn't see someone who isn't wearing scrubs, he's going to think he's already moved on to the next dimension.

SHARON: Rule 4: No outside food. Rule 11: No visitors under eighteen without an adult. Rule 22: No Mylar balloons near the equipment. They mess with the sensors.

GREG: (Deflated) So that's it?

(SHARON looks at the pizza box, then at the two of them.)

SHARON: If that balloon touches a ventilator, I'll personally see to it that you spend your

summer volunteering in the laundry room folding fitted sheets. You ever tried to fold a fitted ICU sheet? It's a circle of hell Dante forgot to mention.

KENDRA: (Eyes widening) Wait, does that mean...?

SHARON: (Points a stapler at GREG) The pizza stays at this desk. I'm confiscating it for safety testing. If the kid is stable in twenty minutes, I might "accidentally" leave the door cracked and "forget" where I set down a slice.

GREG: You're a legend, Sharon.

SHARON: I'm a bitter woman with a low tolerance for teenagers. Move. Before I change my mind.

(As they scramble toward the heavy double doors, SHARON calls out.)

And tell 702 if he doesn't put on some deodorant, I'm eating the pepperoni.

(She watches them disappear into Room 702, then opens the pizza box. She takes a deep breath of the steam.)

Mmmm, I love a Meat Lover's.

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 5

Room 702. BRETT sits up in bed, his meal tray swung over his lap. The UFO balloon is tied to the foot of the bed. MRS MUNN, an elderly woman with the vitality of a teenager, is perched in a chair that she's pulled right up to the edge of the bed. She wears a bright floral dress and is attached to an oxygen tank on wheels. She's working on a crossword puzzle book.

MRS MUNN: Fourteen down. Seven letters. “A state of perfect happiness.”

BRETT: (Chews on a cold pizza crust) Netflix.

MRS MUNN: (Cackles) Not even close. And Nirvana doesn't fit because the second letter has to be an L.

BRETT: (Stares at the ceiling, thinking) Elation. E-L-A-T-I-O-N.

MRS MUNN: (Scribbles it in with a shaky hand) There. You're smarter than you look. It's the hair. It makes you look like you spend all your time on a skateboard.

BRETT: I used to, before my body decided to take a sabbatical.

(He looks at her, then back at the crossword puzzle book.)

How long have you been doing these, Mrs. Munn? The puzzles.

MRS MUNN: Since my husband died. The third one. He used to say a day without a crossword is the day your brain goes to sleep. When he died, I found a half finished one on his nightstand. I finished it for him, and I've been finishing them for people ever since.

BRETT: Is that why you're here every day? To finish things?

(MRS MUNN stops her pen and looks at him. Her eyes are very bright.)

MRS MUNN: I'm here because people in this building forget how to be bored. They're so busy being stable that they forget how to sit still.

(She taps the crossword.)

A puzzle is a small problem. You solve it, you feel good, you move on. The big problems? The ones that put you in that bed? Those don't always have a seven letter answer. But Elation does.

BRETT: (Quietly) I thought I'd be scared in here. But mostly I just feel like I'm stuck on a Tuesday and Friday is never coming.

MRS MUNN: (Reaches out and pats his hand) Friday always comes, honey. Sometimes it just looks a little different than you planned.

(BRETT smiles and takes the crossword puzzle book, leaning his back against the pillows.)

BRETT: Twenty across. Five letters. “A source of light.”

MRS MUNN: Torch?

BRETT: No. Starts with S.

MRS MUNN: Smile?

BRETT: (Laughs) That’s corny, even for you. It’s Spark. S-P-A-R-K.

(He hands MRS MUNN the crossword puzzle book.)

MRS MUNN: Spark. I like that better.

(They sit in silence for a moment as she writes the word in the book, the only sound being the scratching of the pen. It’s a small, peaceful island in the middle of a very loud hospital.)

BRETT: Hey, Mrs. Munn?

MRS MUNN: Yes, Emperor?

BRETT: Thanks for the L in Elation. I was stuck.

MRS MUNN: We’re all stuck, honey. We just have to help each other find the letters.

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 6

The Nurses' Station. The atmosphere is different than before. It's sombre. DANNY, a young orderly with a gentle disposition, pushes a trolley draped in a crisp white linen cloth. On top sits a silver coffee urn, a stack of ceramic mugs, a box of donuts, and a single white rose in a bud vase. FRANKLIN is also there, leaning against his mop, and watches the "White Rose Trolley" approach.

FRANKLIN: The 704 shift change?

DANNY: (Nods) Yeah. Dr. Fleury called it. Husband's on the elevator now.

(DANNY parks the trolley outside Room 704. He adjusts the white rose so it faces forward, a silent signal to the rest of the staff to lower their voices.)

FRANKLIN: Donuts look fresh today.

DANNY: Maple glaze and old fashioned. I went to the bakery three blocks over on my break. The hospital ones, they taste like they were fried in a lab. If you're about to have the worst day of your life, the least I can do is make sure the sugar is real.

FRANKLIN: Very sweet of you.

DANNY: (Gestures toward the trolley) It's a strange bit of theatre, isn't it? A glazed donut to balance out a soul leaving the building.

FRANKLIN: It's not for the soul, Danny. It's for the ones left behind. You ever notice how people act when they walk off that elevator? They're vibrating. Like they're made of glass and someone just hit a high note. They get to this trolley, and they have to stop. They have to pour the coffee. Stir the sugar. Clink, clink, clink. It's a ritual. It gives their hands something to do so they don't have to use them to scream.

(DANNY meticulously arranges the napkins in a perfect fan shape.)

DANNY: I've seen it. They stand here and stare at that rose like it's a ticking clock.

FRANKLIN: It's a placeholder. It says, "We know." It says we aren't just checking vitals and sanitizing floors. It says we know a whole world is ending in this room.

(The elevator dings offstage and DANNY looks toward it.)

DANNY: (Voice drops to a whisper) Here we go.

FRANKLIN: You got enough mugs?

DANNY: I always bring extra. Someone always drops one.

(LEONARD, an old man in a heavy wool coat, enters. He walks slowly toward the White Rose trolley with a leaden shuffle. DANNY steps back, tucking his hands behind

his back, assuming a posture of quiet, invisible service. FRANKLIN takes off his hat.)
You know, I asked a priest once why the rose had to be white. He said white is the colour of a blank page.

FRANKLIN: There will be lot of blank pages in here today.

DANNY: Yeah. But at least they've got coffee for the writing.

(LEONARD arrives at the trolley. His hand trembles as she reaches for a mug.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 7

The Waiting Room. MRS MUNN sits with her crossword puzzle book and oxygen tank. SARA, a young nurse on her first day, enters. She wears scrubs so crisp they still have the fold lines. She sits next to MRS MUNN and frantically scrubs her hands with sanitizer as she hyperventilates, just a little.

MRS MUNN: Slow down, honey. If you scrub any harder, you're going to hit bone, and then we'll have to admit you, too.

SARA: (Jumps) Oh! Sorry. I didn't see you. I was just, I'm just behind. I'm three minutes behind on my rounds, and Room 704 just, well, the White Rose trolley is out, and I've never, I've never heard about it before.

MRS MUNN: First day jitters. They're a hoot, aren't they? My first day at the telephone exchange, I tripped and disconnected a three way call between the mayor and two other people who sounded very important and very angry. I thought the world was ending.

SARA: (Near tears) But this isn't telephones. It's people. What if I trip and disconnect a person?

MRS MUNN: Listen to me, honey. Death is a very old, very experienced gentleman. He doesn't need your help, and he certainly isn't waiting for you to make a mistake. Your job isn't to wrestle him. Your job is to make the waiting room a bit more comfortable.

SARA: I want to be perfect.

MRS MUNN: (Cackles softly) Perfect? In this building? Honey, look at me. I've outlived three husbands, two hip replacements, and a Siamese cat that tried to trip me on the stairs for a decade. I've seen the Great Exit more times than a Broadway usher. And do you know what the secret is?

SARA: (Leans in) What? Medicine? Genetics?

MRS MUNN: Laughter. And good moisturizer.

(She pats SARA's hand.)

You're terrified because you think you're the lead actress in a tragedy. You're not. You're the supporting cast in a comedy that just happens to have a few sad parts.

SARA: I don't feel very funny.

MRS MUNN: Then start small. Go into Room 702, that Brett boy. He's currently trying to see if he can balance a spoon on his nose while his heart rate stays steady. If you go in there looking like you're attending a funeral, you'll ruin his fun. Go in there and tell him his hair looks like a bird's nest.

SARA: I can't say that to a patient!

MRS MUNN: Why not? It's the truth. Being sick is boring. Being managed is exhausting. Being teased? That feels like being alive.

SARA: I don't know about that!

MRS MUNN: Now, take a breath. You smell like a distillery with all that sanitizer. Go tell Brett his spoon technique needs work. Everything works out in the end, honey. And if it hasn't worked out yet, it's just not the end.

SARA: Thank you, Mrs...?

MRS MUNN: Don't thank me. Just get me a ginger ale, please. And not that diet stuff. It's an insult to my ancestors.

(SARA nods and rushes over to the vending machine.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 8

The Nurses' Station. SHARON sits at the desk, eyes closed for a moment of peace. The atmosphere suddenly shifts from peace to chaos, like a high intensity medical drama. ERIC and BECKY, two paramedics, sprint into the room with a gurney on wheels. On the gurney is HANNAH, a 16 year old girl in a neck brace. Her face is obscured by an oxygen mask. DR FLEURY follows, running to catch the side of the moving gurney.

ERIC: (Shouts over the rattle of the gurney) Sixteen year old female, unrestrained driver, high velocity T-bone. Loss of consciousness at the scene for approximately four minutes. BP is dropping, ninety over sixty and sliding.

DR FLEURY: Breath sounds?

BECKY: Diminished on the left. We needle decompressed in the rig, got a rush of air, but she's tightening up again. She's fighting the tube, Doctor!

HANNAH: (Muffled, through the mask) Mom? Where's Mom?

DR FLEURY: My name is Dr. Fleury. You're in the hospital. I need you to keep your eyes on me. Stay with me! Sharon, clear 706!

SHARON: 706? This isn't the ER!

DR FLEURY: Emerge is full up, so we have to improvise. Get the portable X-ray up here, stat! And someone find out the status of the other driver.

ERIC: Driver was DOA.

DR FLEURY: On my count, we're pivoting into 706. One, two, THREE!

(They swing the gurney around violently. HANNAH'S hand flails out, catching DR FLEURY'S sleeve.)

HANNAH: (Terrified) Is it, am I...?

DR FLEURY: (Voice firm, cutting through the noise) You're breathing. That's the only job you have right now. Everything else is my problem.

ERIC: (Wipes sweat from his forehead) She's a fighter. She told me she liked my tattoos right before she tanked the first time. Keep her going.

DR FLEURY: (Snaps on a pair of gloves) Get the O neg blood! And someone turn that monitor volume up. I want to hear her heart pounding off the walls!

(The gurney and everyone associated with it all disappear into Room 706. SHARON exhales.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 9

Room 702. BRETT is propped up in bed, looking at his empty meal tray as if it were a barren wasteland. Suddenly, DEBBIE and SHELLEY, two exuberant ladies from the cafeteria, enter. They wear hairnets that look like lace doilies and aprons that have seen a thousand meatloaves. They push a stainless steel cart that rattles like a percussion section and laugh at everything they say.

DEBBIE: Make way for the Michelin stars, Brett! We've got a vintage red for you today. Very bold. Very bouncy.

(SHELLEY plops a plastic cup of red Jell-O on his tray.)

SHELLEY: It's Cherry Explosion. Although, between you and me, the only thing it's exploding is the myth that food should be solid.

BRETT: My favourite suppliers of translucent food. Is that the clear liquid special, or did the chef just give up today?

DEBBIE: The chef is a machine named Unit 4 and he has no soul. But we have a little something extra for the Emperor.

SHELLEY: (Peeks out the door) Sharon is at the desk, distracted by an errant chin hair. Now's our chance.

(She reaches into the deep pocket of her apron and pulls out a small bundle wrapped in foil. She unfolds it to reveal a perfectly toasted grilled cheese sandwich.)

BRETT: (Eyes widen) Is that real cheddar? Or am I hallucinating from the morphine again?

DEBBIE: Real sharp white cheddar. Sourdough bread. I toasted it on the grill pan in the staff lounge while the nutritionist was busy lecturing a resident about sodium.

BRETT: (Laughs) You guys are going to get arrested at this rate.

SHELLEY: (Winks) Let them try. I've been working this kitchen since before half the nurses were born. I know where the security cameras have blind spots, and I know that a boy cannot live on cherry flavoured water alone.

(BRETT takes a reverent bite. His eyes close.)

BRETT: It tastes like a Saturday afternoon.

DEBBIE: (Whispers) We got a girl in 706. The one from the accident. She's stable, but she's scared. Shelley and I are thinking of "accidentally" dropping a chocolate milkshake off in there later.

BRETT: (Swallows) Tell her the grilled cheese is the secret to immortality. And tell her if she needs a lawyer to fight the Jell-O regime, I'm her guy.

SHELLEY: Eat fast, Emperor. We gotta move this cart before the nutrition police do their rounds.

DEBBIE: (Pats his leg through the blanket) You keep that colour in your cheeks, Brett. It matches the Jell-O.

(They rattle the cart out of the room, leaving BRETT with a smile.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 10

The Nurses' Station. SHARON stares at the computer screen as MACK, a genial delivery driver in a brown uniform, enters carrying a massive box.

MACK: (Reads the label) I got a delivery for a “Captain Brett, Galactic Emperor of Room 702”?

SHARON: (Without looking up) Galactic Emperor? He's been promoted.

(MACK set the box down on the floor with a heavy thud.)

MACK: Must be a heavy crown. This thing weighs more than my truck. Who sends a box this big to the ICU? Most people just send those edible fruit bouquets that look like flowers, but taste like feet.

SHARON: (Looks at the label) His grandmother. She lives in Halifax. She can't travel because she's got a heart that's about as reliable as a '98 Subaru.

MACK: (Pulls out his electric scanner) I need a signature.

SHARON: Give me that.

(She signs the screen with a flourish. MACK looks at the box, then at the door to Room 702.)

MACK: Is the Emperor having a good day?

SHARON: He's having a day. In here, that's a victory.

MACK: You know, I've been on this route for six months. I deliver to the law firm on 4th, the bakery on Prospect, and here. At the law firm, they scream if the package is five minutes late. At the bakery, they give me a cannoli and tell me I look thin. But here, I get real quiet. I find myself walking on tiptoes, like I'm gonna wake someone up who really needs the sleep.

SHARON: It's the air. It's thicker here. It's made of prayer and antiseptic.

(MACK reaches into his pocket and pulls out a slightly squashed sticker, the kind they give to kids, that says “Excellent.”)

MACK: I found this on the floor of my van this morning. I don't know why I kept it. Maybe you could, I dunno. Put it on the box?

SHARON: (Takes the sticker, looks at it) “Excellent”? A bit optimistic for a kid in the ICU, don't you think?

MACK: (Shrugs) I dunno. He's still here, isn't he? That seems pretty excellent to me.

SHARON: (Smiles) You're a good man, Mack. Now, go on. Get out of here before I make you help me change a bedpan.

MACK: (Backs away quickly) My union specifically forbids bedpans. Tell the Emperor the fleet is standing by.

(He exits. Sharon peels the “Excellent” sticker and places it carefully right next to the delivery address. She slides the box toward Room 702.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 11

The Waiting Room. LEONARD sits in a corner chair, still wearing his heavy wool coat. He remains perfectly still and looks like a statue. Suddenly ADDIE, a feisty 5 year old with endless energy, enters. She wears pyjamas with penguins on them and drags a stuffed rabbit by its ear. She walks right up to LEONARD.

ADDIE: Are you a statue?

(LEONARD doesn't move. He doesn't even seem to breathe.)

My dad says statues are just people who forgot how to wiggle.

(LEONARD slowly turns his head. His eyes are bloodshot and distant.)

LEONARD: I think your dad might be right. I'm stuck.

ADDIE: Did you lose your mommy, too? I went to get a drink of water and the hallway turned around. It went whoosh and now I don't know where the blue chair is.

LEONARD: The blue chair.

(He looks at the empty chair beside him. The one his wife sat in when they first arrived. He looks back at ADDIE.)

ADDIE: My mommy sits in the big blue chair so she can get better.

LEONARD: No, I didn't lose my mommy. I lost my best friend.

(ADDIE leans against LEONARD's knee, quite naturally.)

ADDIE: Was it a dog? My best friend is Pippin.

(She holds up the stuffed rabbit.)

He loses his stuffing sometimes. But my mommy just sews him back up. She has a magic needle. It's silver.

LEONARD: (With a ghost of a smile) My best friend had a magic needle, too. She could fix anything. Torn pockets, broken hearts.

ADDIE: She sounds like magic.

LEONARD: I'm supposed to go now. I know I should go. But if I walk through those doors, she's not coming with me. If I stay here, in this chair, she's still just down the hall.

ADDIE: (Frowns) But it's cold here. And that machine is loud. Pippin doesn't like it. He wants to go to the blue chair. My mommy has a warm blanket there.

(She reaches out and tugs on LEONARD's sleeve.)

Can you help me? I'm too small to see over the tall desks. You're a giant. You can see

everything.

(LEONARD looks at her small hand on his coat. For the first time in hours, his hands tremble.)

LEONARD: I don't know if I'm a giant. I feel quite small right now.

ADDIE: Giants aren't big because they're tall. They're big because they carry people. That's what my book says.

(LEONARD slowly stands up.)

LEONARD: Well. We can't have Pippin being scared of a vending machine, can we?

ADDIE: Nope. He's very brave, but not braver than a giant.

(LEONARD offers ADDIE his hand. She takes it.)

LEONARD: Let's go find that blue chair. I think I need to find the way out, too.

ADDIE: Is it pretty out?

LEONARD: (Nods) It's very bright out. It's very bright.

(They walk out together, hand in hand.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 12

The Nurses' Station. SHARON works on a mountain of paperwork, her reading glasses perched on the tip of her nose. The door to Room 706 opens and HANNAH emerges. She wears a stiff neck brace that keeps her chin tilted toward the ceiling and she's swaddled in a thin hospital blanket. She moves with the caution as she approaches SHARON.

HANNAH: Excuse me? Is this the North Pole?

SHARON: (Without looking up) Close. It's the ICU. Though the temperature is regulated by a man in the basement who hasn't felt a feeling since the late 90s.

HANNAH: I think my toes have actually turned into ice cubes. I heard one click against the other. Think we can turn the sun on? Or a radiator? Or start a controlled campfire in Room 706?

SHARON: (Looks up, her expression softening) Listen, you shouldn't be out of bed. Dr. Fleury would have a stroke, and I don't have a spare bed to put her in.

HANNAH: Every time I breathe, the air feels like I'm inhaling peppermints. Is this part of the treatment? Like, freeze the patient so the pain doesn't know where to go?

SHARON: It's the equipment. People are secondary to the cooling fans of a central server.

HANNAH: I feel like a Slurpee. A very broken, very confused grape Slurpee.

(SHARON sighs, stands up, and walks around the desk. She tucks a loose corner of the thin blanket around HANNAH's shoulder.)

SHARON: You're shivering because your body's been in a fight. The adrenaline left, and it took the heater with it.

HANNAH: The man in the other car. Is he cold, too?

(A heavy silence hangs for a second. SHARON doesn't lie.)

SHARON: He isn't feeling the draft. I'm sorry.

(She leads HANNAH toward a large, stainless steel cabinet beside the desk. She opens it, and a soft light spills out. It's the "Warm Blanket" warmer.)

This is the only holy thing in this hospital. Forget the chapel. This is where the miracles happen.

(She pulls out a thick cotton blanket. It's steaming slightly. She unwraps HANNAH's thin blanket and drapes the warm one over her shoulders. Her entire body seems to liquefy as she exhales.)

HANNAH: Oh, wow. I think I just felt Heaven.

SHARON: It's 105 degrees of "Shut Up and Sleep."

(HANNAH leans her head against SHARON's shoulder for a split second.)

HANNAH: Thank you, Sharon.

SHARON: Don't get mushy. It ruins my reputation. Now, back to 706. If I see you out here again, I'm charging you for the electricity to run that warmer.

HANNAH: I'm going, I'm going. But tell the basement man he's a meanie.

SHARON: I'll tell him, kiddo.

(HANNAH disappears into Room 706.)

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 13

The Waiting Room. TANYA paces back and forth, a cell phone in one hand and a bag of BBQ Baked Lay's in the other.

TANYA: (Into the phone) No, Jeff, I'm not overreacting. I'm currently in a room that smells like industrial pine and dirty boots. My hair hasn't seen a brush since Tuesday, and I just threatened a vending machine with physical assault.

(She crunches a chip, loudly.)

Yes, he's stable. Stable is hospital speak for "we don't have to panic for the next twenty minutes."

(Another loud crunch.)

Listen. I know you're in Victoria with what's her name? Crystal? Tiffani? Right, Amber. Like the traffic light. Well, tell Amber to pack her gluten free trail mix because I need you here. And no, I'm not being difficult. I'm being a person who's tired of holding the heavy end of the piano.

(She fishes another chip out of the bag with her teeth.)

Jeff, shut up for a second. Stop talking about property tax on the cottage. Just stop.

(Her voice drops.)

I saw a man leave today. He was seventy, maybe eighty. He looked like he'd been hollowed out with an ice cream scoop. And I realized I've spent ten years being mad at you for that thing with the paralegal. And honestly? I don't have the energy for it anymore. It's exhausting. Being this angry is a full time job and the benefits are terrible.

(She empties the entire bag of chips into her mouth, chewing aggressively.)

Bring Amber. She can bring her crystals or her essential oils or whatever it is she uses to align her chakras. If she can align Brett's too, I'll take us all out to brunch. I'm serious. An awkward brunch where we all pretend we don't remember the Ericthmas with no tree.

(A beat.)

Because life is too short, Jeff. Brett needs his dad. And I need someone who knows his medical history, and also why he hates the colour turquoise.

(She wipes salt from her cheek.)

Just get on a plane. I'll even share my chips. They taste like cardboard, but they're all I've got.

(She listens for a moment, then closes her eyes.)

Okay, good. And Jeff? If you bring a Get Well Soon balloon with a cat on it, I'm sending you back to BC.

(She hangs up, looks at the empty bag of chips, and sighs.)

Well, that was a lot of carbs for one phone call.

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 14

The Nurses' Station. It's quiet and empty. BRETT emerges from Room 702. He's perched precariously on a shiny, bright red Radio Flyer tricycle. His knees hit his chin as he pedals, and he trails his IV pole like a chrome sidecar. He rides the tricycle in circles around the desk, making a squeaky sound with the wheels. HANNAH pops her head out of Room 706, wondering what the noise is about. She's still in her neck brace.

HANNAH: (Whispers) Are you a ghost, or is the hospital finally pivoting to clown based therapy?

(BRETT stops the tricycle with his heels.)

BRETT: Neither. I'm an Emperor, and this is my royal carriage.

HANNAH: Where did you even get that? Did you steal it from the pediatric ward? That's low, even for a ghost clown.

BRETT: From my grandma. She lives in Nova Scotia and apparently thinks I stopped aging ten years ago. That was the year my parents got divorced. I think in her head, if she keeps sending me stuff for a toddler, the last decade won't have happened. I'm expecting a box of Pull-Ups on Friday.

HANNAH: At least your grandma remembers you exist. My parents have been spending all their time with the lawyers, arguing about whether a totalled car counts as an act of God or the act of a distracted teenager.

BRETT: You're the T-bone girl. 706.

HANNAH: And you're the kid who talks to plants. 702. News travels fast when the walls are made of paper.

BRETT: (Pats the handlebars) I was gonna try to make a break for the exit, but I think the tassels on the handlebars might give me away. Plus, I'm fairly certain my IV pole has a speed limit.

HANNAH: It's weird seeing something with wheels that isn't smashed.

BRETT: (Softens) Yeah. I heard about the car.

HANNAH: It was a Honda. Silver. My dad was teaching me to drive it next month. Now I'm not sure I even want to sit in a shopping cart. I keep thinking about the physics of it. How one minute you're arguing about what song to play on Spotify, and the next, you're part of the scenery.

BRETT: I used to think about my first car all the time. A Jeep with no doors. I wanted to feel the wind, you know? Now...

(He gestures to the tricycle.)

I'm seventeen and I've mastered the three wheeler. I wonder if I'll ever get to drive something that doesn't have a Fisher Price sticker.

HANNAH: Maybe this is just the practice round. You master the trike, I master the, whatever this plastic collar is.

BRETT: (Grins) It's a high fashion statement. Very post apocalyptic chic.

HANNAH: (Laughs, then winces) Ow. Don't make me laugh. My ribs are currently held together by duct tape.

(BRETT begins to pedal slowly back toward his room.)

BRETT: Tell you what. When we both get out of here, I'll pick you up. I'll be the guy in the red tricycle. You'll hear me coming from three miles away. Squeak squeak.

HANNAH: I'll bring the snacks. No Jell-O allowed.

BRETT: It's a date.

(As he reaches for his doorknob, she calls after him.)

HANNAH: Hey.

BRETT: (Turns around) Yeah?

HANNAH: The basement man is a meanie, but the blankets are warm. You should get one.

BRETT: (Nods) Okay. I will.

HANNAH: (Smiles) Night, Emperor.

BRETT: Night, 706.

(BRETT squeaks back into Room 702. HANNAH watches the empty hallway for a second, then retreats into Room 706.)

(The lights fade.)

END OF PREVIEW

For a complete script, or to apply for production rights, contact:

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