

Woman Monologue 1: page 50

IRENE. There were five of us. In the beginning. My father had a little store when I was real young, but then that went out of business,so ... We stayed with relatives for a bit but we wore out our welcome pretty quick- We had nothing. I remember I stole a pair of shoes. We were staying near a lake and this girl and her family had gone swimming-and I just ... took her shoes. Ran out-snatched 'em off the ground, and ran off without looking back. Like I was some kind of animal living in the woods. I get back to the car and I'm crying and I'm holding these shoes in my hands like I've killed someone,you know? They didn't even fit. They were too big. My father was so angry-I made up this lie that I just found them in the forest but he knew-he had to have known ... and ... there were a moment when I was sure he was going to beat me and make me take them back-humiliate me-but he didn't. He just said okay. That's when I knew ... He'd given up. I was maybe nine years old. And he uh ... he hung himself a few months later...

It is what it is. After he was gone, things got a little better. But I still think about those shoes. I still feel awful about stealing them. First thing I did when I got my own checking account was buy myself a pair. You know there's something holy about having your own money-not having to ask, not having to beg, to be able to walk into a store with money in a pocket from a job you worked at, and get what you need. For yourself. It's like every day I'm filled with brilliant white light and that light is called dignity.

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BARBARA. *(To the audience:)* When you had a man at war you were afraid of everything. The phone ringing. The mailbox. A strange car pulling up outside your house. A man with a look of purpose and regret walking towards you to tell you your world was ending. All day, every day, you were holding your breath. Just let me get through today. Let me hear nothing today. And then at work . . .you could tell-there'd be a new sorrow on a woman's face near you. She'd gotten a letter. She'd gotten a call. And maybe for a second you'd feel lucky that it wasn't you this time. But it was always there. Until you got news.

(She opens a letter,)

"We regret to inform you ... that your husband ... John Andrew Prentiss ... was captured by the Italian government during a military action on March the fourth. Further details cannot be related at this time."

(BARBARA sets down the letter. She takes a minute.)
And then it's you with the new sorrow.

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JOHN. Dear Babs-

Working girl, huh? With a helmet and overalls and everything? Ain't that something? I bet you make that outfit look like a millionbucks. I can't tell you exactly where we are right now, but it's boring. I guess that's better than exciting. So far war is a lot of sitting around waiting to do nothing. The food is terrible, weather is terrible, even the nurses here are mean. Remember when I told you I wanted to go to Italy for our honeymoon? Forget it.

I got you and Julie's picture in a locket around my neck and I look at it all the time. Some of the guys make fun of me, but I like to remember what I'm fighting for. You keep me going. Even before the war, you kept me going. I'm real proud of you and I love you like crazy. John.

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TIMOTHY. You know, I'm the kinda person who's never had a lot of courage. Not just about going to war, but about ... everything in life. I guess I'm just used to people pitying me-it's a pretty awful feeling when you notice strangers looking at you like you're a broken little puppy-but, I just wanted to say it's nice not to be pitied. By you.

Yeah you never looked at me like I was something pitiful, you looked at me like I was a full person. That's kinda rare. So I guess I thought maybe ... I could be a full person to you.