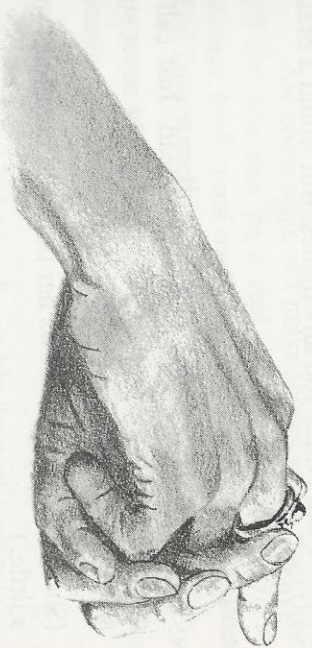




WANTED: A RAY OF SUNSHINE



Characters: Sharon
A Man

Scene: the lobby of the public library. Sharon is sitting on a chair in a corner. She is very upset and is crying. A well-dressed man about 40 years old looks at her, hesitates, then walks toward her.

MAN: It there anything wrong? Can I help you?

SHARON: (looking up, surprised) No, I'm all right.
(She turns away and continues crying.)

MAN: Are you sure? I don't want to be a pest, but is there anything I can do?

SHARON: No, not really.

(She searches in her pocketbook for tissues but can't seem to find any. The man, guessing what she is looking for, takes a handkerchief out of his pocket.)

MAN: I can't offer you any tissues. But would a brand new handkerchief do?

SHARON: Oh, I really couldn't—

MAN: (*putting it in her hand*) Go ahead. Just call it my contribution for a very good cause. I could never stand to see a young lady cry. Go ahead, use it.

(She hesitates, then blows her nose and continues sobbing a little.)

SHARON: Thanks. I hate to use your new handkerchief. I'll get you another one if you let me know—

MAN: Forget it. You're making a mountain out of a piece of cloth.

(He laughs. Then she smiles.)

SHARON: (*wiping her eyes*) I guess I did look kind of silly sitting here crying my eyes out.

MAN: Not really. Sometimes a good cry is just what the doctor ordered. And you don't get a bill at the end of the month for that kind of cure.

SHARON: Thank you. (*She smiles.*) You've been very kind.

MAN: (*seeing her smile*) Well, I'm glad something's happened to make you smile.

SHARON: I was thinking. It's funny how I can just meet a person and feel perfectly at ease—even though Mom has

warned me a hundred times—"Never speak to strange men!" (*laughing*) I wonder what she would say now if she knew!

MAN: You know, you remind me a lot of someone I once knew—even the way you cry.

SHARON: Oh no, there could never be another miserable personality like me.

MAN: Aw come on, don't make things worse than they are. I'll bet you can be a real ray of sunshine. (*He sees a strange look come over her face and stops momentarily.*) Did I say something wrong? I didn't mean to.

SHARON: No, it was just . . . you said something that reminded me of my father.

MAN: Oh?

SHARON: He used to call me his "ray of sunshine"—when I wasn't crying, of course.

MAN: Well, you look better now. He'd be happy to see you like this.

SHARON: He's not living. My father died a year ago.

MAN: I'm sorry.

SHARON: That's partly what made me so upset today. I just couldn't stop thinking about him. He was the best person who ever lived. (*She stops.*) Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to go on and on.

MAN: No, that's O.K. Talking is the next best cure to crying.

SHARON: But it isn't just that. It's Mom, too. She's part of the problem.

MAN: A problem?

SHARON: Oh, she's not really a problem. She's great. She

and Dad were the best two parents in the world.

MAN: Well, then, what's the trouble?

SHARON: I still feel funny talking to an almost-stranger about myself.

MAN: If it'll make you feel any better, just call me Frank—short for Frankenstein.

SHARON: (*smiles and continues*) Well, you see, my mother—she met this man about four months ago and . . .

MAN: And?

SHARON: And I think she likes him a lot.

MAN: Well, what's wrong with that?

SHARON: But I think it might be getting serious. She's probably thinking about marrying him.

MAN: Why not? She's old enough to know her own mind!

SHARON: How could you say that! I felt you would understand.

MAN: I am trying to understand. But you haven't given me much to work with yet.

SHARON: My father was the greatest man in the world. How could she ever think of living with another man—after Dad? If she really loved Dad, she wouldn't even think about getting married again. Don't you think so? I mean, it would be like she never really loved my father in the first place.

MAN: I'm not sure I agree with you. There's a difference.

SHARON: How?

MAN: Haven't you ever loved more than one thing at a time?

SHARON: Oh yes. But not like this.

MAN: You've got to be a little more open, Sunshine. You've closed your mind to everything. There is a difference!

SHARON: You sound just like my mother now.

MAN: Maybe I can explain it this way. Did you ever own a dog?

SHARON: No.

MAN: Well I did, when I was growing up. His name was Spots—and I loved that dog.

SHARON: But I'm not crying over a dog.

MAN: Sunshine, just listen to me a little more. You'll see what I'm getting at.

SHARON: O.K.

MAN: Spots was run over by a car one day. I cried and cried. I thought the world was coming to an end. The next day my parents brought home another dog. At first, I wouldn't even look at it. It could never replace Spots. But Sunshine, I learned to love that new dog. I loved it very much. But I never forgot Spots—even to this day.

SHARON: But you're talking about *animals*. You can learn to love another dog. It's different with people.

MAN: Is it? (*pause*) Tell me. What don't you like about the man your mother's seeing?

SHARON: Well—

MAN: What's he like?

SHARON: I've never seen him. Every time he comes over to the house I either go to my room or leave the house. Mother's having him over tonight for dinner so I can meet him. That's why I came here instead. (*pause*) He's not my father!

MAN: Do you think you're being fair to your mother?

SHARON: (*excitedly*) Do you think *she's* being fair to my father—and to me?

MAN: I think you owe it to yourself to at least meet him. At least give him a chance.

SHARON: He could be the nicest person in the world, but he'll never take my father's place. That's what my mother doesn't seem to understand.

MAN: I'm sure *he* knows that. He doesn't want to take your father's place. Can't you be open-minded enough to meet him—if not for your sake, then for your mother's?

SHARON: I just know I couldn't go through with it. I couldn't face him sitting at the table where Dad used to be. I wouldn't know what to say or how to act. Would I call him "Mr. Billings" or "Tom" or what?

MAN: I don't think what you call a person is the most important thing, Sharon.

SHARON: Well, it... (*She stops suddenly and looks closely at him.*) You called me *Sharon*. You called me by my name.

MAN: I know I did. My name is Tom Billings.

SHARON: (*showing surprise, then anger*) Oh no! You aren't!

MAN: I just had to talk with you. Your mother told me you'd be here. Her description of you was good. I hope you're not angry with her—or me.

SHARON: That was a lousy trick. You set me up for this to try to get me to like you. You lied.

MAN: No, Sharon. I just wanted to give you a chance to know me first.

SHARON: (*very angry*) You lied! One thing—my father was always honest with me. He'd never play dirty with me like you did. You're rotten.

MAN: Sharon. Look at me. (*Sharon turns away.*) Look at me. Please.

(Sharon turns slowly toward him, still showing much anger in her look.)

MAN: Sharon, don't you think we can go to your house now. Your mother said she'd keep the dinner warm. There's so much the three of us have to talk about. Come on, Sharon, let's go home.

(He reaches out his hand. She looks directly at him.)

SHARON: _____