

This Hurts

START →

MAN. In the head.

WOMAN. In the head!?! Oh, (*Going to him.*) come here!, Are you okay?

MAN. Is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

WOMAN. Well, I'm gonna go get you some ice.

MAN. No. I can't feel things like that.

WOMAN. Like what?

MAN. Like when I get smashed in the head with an ironing board. I don't get hurt.

WOMAN. What?

MAN. I can't feel pain.

WOMAN. Oh, Jeezum Crow,⁵ what the hell have I done to you? >

MAN. Nothin'.

WOMAN. You're talkin' loopy!, Listen to you, goin' on about not being able to feel pain!, That's delusional!, I've knocked the sense right outta ya!

MAN. No, I'm okay.

WOMAN. Shh! Listen: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You're hurt. You just took a good shot right to the head, and that's serious.

MAN. No, it's not serious. I don't think an ironing board could really hurt your head, 'cause, see, ironing boards aren't on my list of things that can hurt you.

The man forces his book labeled THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU on the woman.

WOMAN. (*Dealing with his book.*) What?, // What's [this]—?

MAN. Plus, there's no blood or discoloration from where I got hit, // so [I'm okay]...

⁵ Pronounced, "JEE-zum CROW." Jeezum Crow is a euphemistic curse word.

WOMAN. Well, you can be hurt and not be // bleeding or bruised.

MAN. And, plus, my list is pretty reliable, 'cause my brother Rob is helping me make it, and I can prove it to you: See, I bet if I took this ironing board,

The man gets the ironing board.

like this, and hit you with it, that it wouldn't hurt you.

The man smashes the woman in the head with the flat face of the ironing board.

See?, // That didn't hurt.

WOMAN. (*Scrambling to get away from him.*) OW!!

MAN. Oh!

WOMAN. Ow! What the hell was that?! // Why did you do that?

MAN. Oh! I'm sorry! // Did that hurt?

WOMAN. God!

MAN. Oh, it did, didn't it?

WOMAN. Ow!

MAN. Oh, I didn't think it would, 'cause, see, ironing boards are not on my list of things that can hurt you, but, gosh, maybe they should be on my list, becau//se—

WOMAN. What are you talkin' about?

MAN. I have a list of things that can hurt you—my brother Rob is helping me make it—and ironing boards aren't on it.

WOMAN. Well, that ironing board hurt me.

MAN. Yeah.

WOMAN. So you should add it to your list.

MAN. Yeah.

Beat.

The man adds "ironing boards" to his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book, and then he thinks.

And then picks up a book labeled THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF.

Should I be *afraid* of ironing boards?

WOMAN. Well, if someone swings it at your head and wallops you with it, yes.

MAN. Well, it's not [on this list]—... I have a list of things to be afraid of, too, and ironing boards are not on this list either.

WOMAN. Well they shouldn't be, really.

MAN. No?

WOMAN. No, you shouldn't be *afraid* of ironing boards.

MAN. No?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. But they can *hurt* you.

WOMAN. Yeah.

MAN. So I should be *afraid* of them.

WOMAN. No.

MAN. So I *shouldn't* be afraid of them?

WOMAN. Right.

MAN. But they can *hurt* me.

WOMAN. Well, if they're used the way you used it, yeah.

MAN. Oh-oh-oh! So, they're kind of like the opposite of God!

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Well, ironing boards can *hurt* me, but I shouldn't be *afraid* of them, but God, my brother Rob says, God *won't* hurt me, but I should *fear* him.

WOMAN. Um...I guess.

MAN. Boy, this is getting very complicated.

WOMAN. What is?

MAN. This business of learning what hurts, what doesn't hurt, what to be afraid of, what not to be afraid of.

WOMAN. Listen, you're goin' on and on about some nutty stuff: Are you sure you're okay?

MAN. Yeah. I don't feel pain, I told you.

WOMAN. Yeah, you did. But—what do mean?—what do you have?

MAN. (*Not comprehending the question.*) What do I have?

WOMAN. Do you have some sort of a neurological condition or something?

MAN. I don't know.

WOMAN. What do you mean you don't know? Haven't you been diagnosed? >

MAN. Um—

WOMAN. I mean, what does your doctor say?

MAN. Oh, we can't afford doctors.

WOMAN. What? // Wait—

MAN. And my brother Rob says I just can't feel pain, and that's all we need to know, and we can manage just fine. >

WOMAN. But—

MAN. Oh! And if you don't believe me, you can hit me if you want to, to see [that I really don't feel pain]!

WOMAN. Oh, n//o—

MAN. Go ahead., It won't hurt., See?

*The man smacks his forehead head with the book labelled
THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU.*

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See?

The man smacks his head again.

WOMAN. Don't!

MAN. See?

The man smacks his head again.

WOMAN. Stop!

MAN. Go ahead.

*The man offers the woman his book labeled THINGS THAT
CAN HURT YOU so she can hit him with it.*

WOMAN. No!

MAN. Come on!

WOMAN. No!!

MAN. Come on!!

WOMAN. NO!!!

MAN. Okay. You don't have to. Most people don't. Hit me. Most

people just go away. You can go away, too, if you want to. That's what most people do when I tell them about myself. My brother Rob says I just shouldn't tell people about myself, because I scare them, so I've actually recently put "myself" on my list of things to be afraid of, see? (*Locating the entry for "myself" in his book labeled THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF.*) But [I'm not sure he knows I did that]—

Her curiosity getting the better of her, the woman has come up from behind the man and suddenly wallops him on the back of the head with the book labeled THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU.

WOMAN. Oh, my gosh! I'm sorry! // Oh, my gosh! I just clocked you! >

MAN. You hit me! Most people go away, but you hit me!

WOMAN. I had to see [if it really would hurt you]! But—are you okay?

MAN. Yeah, I don't feel // pain!

WOMAN. ...Don't feel pain, right! But—are you sure?

MAN. Well, is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

WOMAN. Well, buddy, you can be hurt and not even look like it.

MAN. But—

WOMAN. Trust me. There are things that hurt you that make you bruised and bloody, and there are things that hurt you that don't make you bruised and bloody and...they all hurt.

Beat.

The woman gives the man back the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book.

MAN. Thank you.

WOMAN. Sure.

The woman starts to head back to gather her laundry—but stops and takes in the man and his books.

She is fascinated by him.

So—I don't wanna—I'm the kinda person who minds my own business—but...well, I'm Marvalyn, I'm new here—

MAN. Yeah, we saw you and your husband move in.

MARVALYN. Huh? Oh—no, no, he's not my husband. He's just my boyfriend. Eric.

MAN. Oh.

MARVALYN. Yeah. We're just here [temporarily]—... Our roof collapsed from all the snow in November, and we're just here till we can get our feet back on the ground.

MAN. Oh. Well, that's good, 'cause that's what Ma Dudley says her boarding house is. A place where people can live until they get their feet back on the ground. My brother Rob says we've been trying to get our feet back on the ground our whole lives.

MARVALYN. Oh.

MAN. Yeah, he says it takes some people longer to do that than others.

MARVALYN. Yeah, I guess it does.

Little beat.

Anyway—like I said—wait—I'm sorry, what's your name?

MAN. Steve.

MARVALYN. Hi, Steve. // So, [like I said]—

STEVE. Hi.

MARVALYN. Hi—so, like I said—Steve—I mind my own business, but I was gonna be a nurse, and I think you might need to see a do//ctor—

STEVE. You guys are loud.

MARVALYN. Huh?

STEVE. You and Eric. You yell and bang.

MARVALYN. O//h—

STEVE. We're right below you.

MARVALYN. O//h—

STEVE. You're in room six on the third floor.

MARVALYN. Ye//ah—

STEVE. We're in room three on the second floor, right below you, and we can hear all the yelling and banging.

MARVALYN. Um...well, I'm sorry about that. We're goin' through a rough patch. Happens. Sorry.

Marvalyn starts to gather her stuff so she can go.

But she can't quite leave this guy.

What's it like?

STEVE. What's what like?

MARVALYN. To not feel pain.

STEVE. I don't know. I don't know what it's like to hurt, so...I don't know.

MARVALYN. So—how did—...? Were you born this way?

STEVE. No, it's something I developed, my brother Rob says.

MARVALYN. When did you develop it?

STEVE. When I was little when my mom died.

MARVALYN. Oh.

STEVE. Yeah. And when she died, I stopped feeling pain and my development as a human being got stunted, my brother Rob says.

MARVALYN. Okay—your brother Rob needs to stop [being an armchair physician]—wait, what does he do? For a living?

STEVE. He plows snow and does odd jobs when there's no snow to plow.

MARVALYN. Okay, well, I really think your brother needs to take you to a doctor, you know? // I was gonna be a nurse [and]—

STEVE. No, we manage fine, my brother Rob says, and I'm lucky, because he's done a really good job with me—I don't know what I'd do without him, because he's been teaching me what hurts ever since I stopped being able to *tell* if I was hurt, so—

MARVALYN. Why?!?

STEVE. Well, so I won't ruin myself! See, I have to know what hurts, so I know when to be afraid. See, my mind can't tell me when to be afraid, 'cause my body stopped knowing what being hurt is a long time ago, so I've had to memorize what might hurt.

MARVALYN. Ok//ay...

STEVE. And I have to memorize what to be afraid of.

MARVALYN. Okay...

*Steve shows Marvalyn items in his book labeled THINGS
TO BE AFRAID OF.*

STEVE. Things like bears.

Steve flips to another page in the book.

And...guns and knives.

Steve flips to another page in the book.

And fire.

Steve flips to another page in the book.

And fear—I should fear fear itself.

Steve flips to another page in the book.

And pretty girls.

MARVALYN. Pretty girls?

Steve realizes that he thinks that Marvalyn is pretty.

STEVE. Yeah.

MARVALYN. Why should you be afraid of pretty girls?

STEVE. Well, 'cause my brother Rob says they can hurt you, 'cause they make you love them. >

MARVALYN. What?!?

STEVE. And that's something I'm supposed to be afraid of, too: love.

MARVALYN. Why?

STEVE. 'Cause it hurts you, my brother Rob says, >

MARVALYN. But—

STEVE. but Rob says that I'm really lucky, 'cause I'll probably never have to deal with love.

MARVALYN. Wait-wait-wait, what does he mean, you're never gonna have to deal with love?

STEVE. Well, first off, 'cause I won't be able to feel it.

MARVALYN. Why?

STEVE. Because it hurts you, and I can't feel pain.

MARVALYN. Well, love shouldn't hurt y//ou.

STEVE. And, second, because Rob says I'm really lucky, because no one's probably ever going to love me anyway, because I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities.

STOP → MARVALYN. You know what, a lot of people do.

And suddenly Marvalyn is kissing Steve.

A wisp of music or a gentle sound cue could help define this as the beginning of Magical Moment #3.

At first, it's just Marvalyn kissing Steve, but, eventually, Steve participates, and when he does, Marvalyn breaks away, because she realizes it was wrong of her to kiss him.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I did that. Are you all right? Are you okay?

Steve doesn't quite know how to reply at first.

But then, maybe feeling his lips, he resorts to his usual way of answering this question.

STEVE. Well...is there any blood?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Any discoloration?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Then I'm all right. [I think.]

MARVALYN. Yeah. You are.

Little beat.

I'm so sorry I did that. It's just—... You're just...very sweet, and I think you have to not let your brother de//cide all the [things he's decided about you]—

STEVE. *(Trying to make sense of what just happened.)* But—wait: You have a boyfriend.

Marvalyn begins gathering her stuff again—she needs to get out of there.

MARVALYN. Yes, I // do.

STEVE. Eric.

MARVALYN. Yes—