

## HYPNEUROSIS

*Janis, late twenties, has decided to go to see a hypnotist to get help with a problem. She is a bit suspicious of the process, though she believes it can work. Edson, thirties, the hypnotist whom Janis has chosen, has just greeted her and ushered her into his office.*

### CHARACTERS

Janis: late 20s

Edson: 30s, hypnotist

### SETTING

Edson's hypnosis office

### TIME

The present

EDSON: Please, have a seat, Miss Colburn.

JANIS: *(Sitting.)* Janis. Call me Janis.

EDSON: OK, Janis.

*(Sitting. She looks suspiciously around the room.)*

EDSON: Is something wrong?

JANIS: Just checking. You don't record these sessions, do you?

EDSON: Ohhh. Oh, no. What happens in this room is completely confidential. You have nothing to worry about.

JANIS: That's what I'm worried about.

EDSON: Excuse me?

JANIS: I want other people to know what happens in this room.

I don't mean the whole world, but perhaps a friend or two.

EDSON: *(Not quite sure what to make of this.)* Why don't we back up to what has brought you here today, Janis? Start at the beginning.

JANIS: You're not just trying to change the subject?

EDSON: Absolutely not. I'll even make a note. *(Writing.)*

Recording sessions, friends, not the whole world. There.

Now what is it, exactly, that has brought you here to see me?

JANIS: Well, I've read that many people have had success losing weight or quitting smoking or curing insomnia through hypnosis.

EDSON: Yes, we do have a high success rate in helping people overcome the problems they have been struggling with or their fears.

JANIS: Good.

EDSON: What exactly are you looking for help with?

JANIS: My life.

EDSON: (*Beat.*) OK. Could you be a little more specific?

JANIS: Well, I would like some help losing weight.

EDSON: Good. I don't mean that it's good that you're having problems. I mean, good, we're clarifying things. Well, the way I usually work with clients with this type of problem is to —

JANIS: I'm not finished.

EDSON: Oh. Excuse me. I didn't mean to cut you off there. Go on.

JANIS: With your hypnosis you can make my mind believe that I really want to lose weight, right?

EDSON: Well . . . You do want to lose weight, don't you?

JANIS: Yes, but wanting hasn't quite done the job by itself now, has it?

EDSON: Well, think of it this way. I can help you to lessen your cravings for fatty foods and —

JANIS: Great! That's what I was hoping.

EDSON: Well, good.

JANIS: You see, I was thinking . . . if you can help me lessen my cravings for fatty foods, then you could also do some other helpful things while you're at it.

EDSON: Other helpful things?

JANIS: Yes! I'd like you to hypnotize me into thinking that I hate chocolate with a passion. And all other candy and sweets. And that my favorite food in the world is

veggies — especially dark green veggies. And my second favorite food is fruit. All kinds. Oh, yes, and that I despise anything doughy, like bagels or bread or muffins or cake. And ice cream. Oh, yeah, ice cream has got to go. And that I dislike fried foods almost as much as chocolate, but not quite as much. And I was thinking that my third favorite food should probably have some protein, but not fatty protein. I think it should be beans and things that vegetarians eat that keep them alive without wilting.

EDSON: Uh, Miss Colburn —

JANIS: Janis. Now, Doctor . . . (*Looking around his office, sees his first name on his desk plaque.*) Edson Polanski. Oh, Edson. What an unusual name. I like it. So Edson, are you writing this down?

EDSON: No, Janis, I'm positive I won't forget, but you see —

JANIS: Silly me! You're a hypnotist. You've probably already stored it all somewhere in your incredible mind. So, moving on. Now, this is very important, Edson. One cannot stay thin by food alone. So, I want you to use your powers to make me believe that my favorite thing in the whole world to do is to work out.

EDSON: Well, I typically — I —

JANIS: Any type of exercise will do. Actually, it might be a good idea if you gave me a love of sports, since I've always been terrified of getting hit by balls in softball and volleyball and anything-ball really. I think that goes back to those horrid days in kindergarten, being forced to play dodgeball and being waled with those red, bouncy playground balls for no good reason at all. (*She is starting to get upset at the memory of it.*) Does it help you hypnotize me faster if you know the reason I'm screwed up?

EDSON: No, no. No. That would be therapy. Which isn't such a bad idea, Janice. You see, I can't help you to like something you don't really like or to do something you don't really want to do.

JANIS: Well, then what good are you? Huh?



EDSON: Well, I — I help people who want to help themselves.

JANIS: So now you're God, are you? And choosing to refuse my cries for help? Is this because I'm Jewish, Doctor? It's not my fault my parents birthed me and never sent me to Hebrew school.

EDSON: Janis. Stop. *(He raises his hand and does a special finger movement. She freezes but speaks somewhat robotically.)*

Can you hear me?

JANIS: Yesss.

EDSON: Good. You are feeling calm. There is nothing to get worked up about. Everything is peaceful . . . serene. You feel happy and relaxed. *(He snaps and Janis comes out of the hypnosis.)*

JANIS: *(Looking around.)* This is a beautiful office, Edson. I — just realized that now. It is really quite lovely.

EDSON: Thank you.

JANIS: What was I saying? I'm sorry, I think I got distracted by that gorgeous painting on the wall.

EDSON: Oh, why thank you. You were talking about dodgeball.

JANIS: *(Her mood dropping.)* Ohhh.

EDSON: And I was mentioning therapy as a possible solution.

JANIS: *(Dropping more.)* Ohhhhhh.

EDSON: Have you ever tried therapy, Janis?

JANIS: Yes, once.

EDSON: Once? And what was that like?

JANIS: Hell. I talked, he nodded. I talked, he went, "Hmm." I talked, he took notes. And then I wrote him a very large check.

EDSON: Well, part of the process of therapy is to let the patient discover their own solutions.

JANIS: Well, I can do that at home with some chocolate and wine, and keep my very large check.

EDSON: Well . . .

JANIS: Anyway, why are we talking about therapy? I came here to get hypnotized. I did tell you that, right?

EDSON: Oh yes. It was just that you had so many things you wanted to change —

JANIS: Hey, look. I expected to write you a very large check to reprogram these things. But if it costs extra for you to reprogram extra things, I'm prepared to write you an extra large check.

EDSON: Well, that's very kind of you, Janis. However, as I was explaining before, I do not reprogram people's minds. Successful hypnosis depends on two key elements: a willingness to change, and a constant belief that a constructive goal will be reached.

JANIS: Well, I'm willing to have you change me, and I firmly believe if you do, the goal will be very constructive. *(Beat.)* How about two extra large checks?

EDSON: Janis —

JANIS: But I also want you to make me never want to pick my teeth, pluck my eyebrows, or pull out my eyelashes. Bad stuff. I read your pamphlet in the waiting room, Edson. It said hypnotized people experience changes in the way they think or behave in response to suggestions. So I'm merely giving you the suggestions that I want you to suggest to me. *(Edson sighs.)* OK, you win, five. Five extra large checks.

EDSON: Done!

JANIS: Done?

EDSON: Yes. Done. Finished. Fine. Finito. OK!

JANIS: Ohhh, I knew you had a kind soul!

EDSON: But one thing at a time. And I can't promise full and permanent results. You have to be willing and open.

JANIS: Yes, yes. I am open. I am so open that I think we could do more than one at once. Fix it all in one fell swoop. Oh, and speaking of open, I want to keep the door that way when we do your thing. And I'd like to videotape our session as well.

EDSON: *(Startled.)* Videotape?

JANIS: Yes. Remember the note you took?

EDSON: (*Reading.*) Recording sessions, friends, not the whole world.

JANIS: That's the one. You see, I would like to videotape the session with a friend present or just outside the door to make sure everything's safe.

EDSON: (*Panicking.*) But I don't allow videotaping. In fact, it, it makes me a bit nervous. I'm not really sure why. Look, I can assure you, Janis, my methods are completely harmless.

JANIS: Exactly. *You* can assure me. But how do *I* know, since I will be under your spell, Edson? How do I know you won't hypnotize me into stealing or killing people or watching soap operas? See my point?

EDSON: Well, if that were the case, Janis, I would have hypnotized you to do that already. I mean, why wait? I could have you out right now, killing people, stealing their money, and making it home in time for "One Life to Live"!

JANIS: (*Laughs.*) Oh my God. You're right. Silly me. (*Pinches herself.*) Oww! I'm still here. Just checking. OK, Edson, I've got about five minutes left before "Oprah." Let's do it!

EDSON: Now?! No, you see I normally schedule clients to come back after the initial consult —

JANIS: Normally, schmormally. I'm different. I'm giving you five extra large checks. Let's go.

EDSON: But what about your friend and, and the (*Winces.*) videotape?

JANIS: I come prepared. Stephanie is outside the door with a camcorder and two mirrors. (*Calling off.*) Roll 'em, Steph!

EDSON: I — this is — videotapes make me nervous. I, I — OK. Relax. Relax.

JANIS: I'm relaxed.

EDSON: Not you, me.

JANIS: Oh, sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt your process. Go ahead.

EDSON: I, I, I want you to watch my fingers. (*He starts moving them as before, in a repetitive motion.*) Very closely. You

are feeling sloppy — er, sleepy. Relaxed and sleepy. When I clap my hands you will be in a state between sleeping and walking — er, waking. (*He claps. She looks controlled by him.*) Can you hear me, Janis?

JANIS: (*Robotically.*) Yesss.

EDSON: Good. Now, you are ready. You are feeling open to my suggestions. Um, uh . . . could we turn off the camera?

JANIS: Nooo.

EDSON: Please? I can't focus.

JANIS: Fiveee extraaa laaarge cheecks.

EDSON: Right. OK. Um, yes, Janis, uh, let me think here . . . You love to play dodgeball and get hit with veggies — especially dark green veggies. (*Nervous and fumbling.*) Uh, well, that's not um, OK you have a passion for, for, for deep-fried . . . chocolate!

JANIS: Mmmmm.

EDSON: (*Peeking at the offstage video camera.*) No. No. No. From now on you will not pluck your fruit. (*Correcting himself.*) No!

JANIS: Nooo plucking fruit.

EDSON: No, Janis, that's not. Oh Jeez, um, um, OK uh when you pull out your, your checkbook, you will crave softball. (*Not completely sure where that came from.*)

JANIS: Ahh.

EDSON: Oh my God, um, um wilting eyelashes keep vegetarians healthy? No. Eating doughy food relaxes your teeth. Aah!

JANIS: Doughyyy.

EDSON: Ice cream is what you . . . pick at?

JANIS: Yesss, pick ice cream.

EDSON: No, you despise, um, what did you . . . oh, yes, you despise working out.

JANIS: Yuckyyy.

EDSON: Oh dear, oh dear, oh — oh! Your third favorite food is eyebrows!

JANIS: Yummyyy.



EDSON: (*Disgusted.*) Ehh! OK? OK. When I snap my count, you will come on — turn off — wake up. (*He snaps his fingers. Her body loosens.*) Janis?

JANIS: Yes?

EDSON: Can you please have your friend turn off that video camera?!

JANIS: Oh. (*She laughs.*) I was just making that up in case you thought you'd try anything funny.

EDSON: Making it up?! Oh, yes, funny. Ha ha. Ha, ha, ha! (*Starting to cry.*) Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

JANIS: (*Smiling.*) Oh, I have a friend who does that too — cries when she laughs real hard. Ya know, I feel good. Really good. I think this was successful.

EDSON: But you — I — you can't — I, I, I —

JANIS: Don't worry. I'll keep my promise. You earned your five extra large checks. Let me just grab my checkbook and — (*Robotically.*) Softball!! I must play softball! (*Sounding natural again.*) You know I have an incredible urge to play softball? (*Realizing.*) You did it! You did it! I crave softball. Here keep the whole checkbook! You deserve it — I don't care! Cause I just wanna play softball! (*Starting to leave.*) Come by for dinner, Edson, we'll celebrate. Sautéed eyelashes and we'll pick at ice cream! Bye! (*Calling off.*) Hey, anyone want to play softball?

EDSON: (*Sinking.*) Oh, dear.

ST

Anton, forty-three years old, has short, dark hair for many years. He is a successful businessman, a smaller pricey success story. He is a serious, outrageous man. In the years the two have known each other's personal lives, he has made an impression. Not, however, in a result, Lois and Edson because he has a sense of humor. There is no time for a completely ludicrous

CHARACTERS

Anton: 43, hair colorist  
Lois: 49, his client

SETTING

the Hair-em salon

TIME

The present

LOIS: You can't leave!  
ANTON: I have a towel!  
LOIS: What time is it?  
ANTON: Two-thirty.  
LOIS: See? Piro's late!  
me if you could!  
ANTON: Oh I'd like to be finished, honey.  
LOIS: I am hardly late.  
sweet.  
ANTON: No, you're late for hair coloring!