

Patient 23

by

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Cast of characters:

Dr. Bill Kroft - Man in his early 40's.

Wendy Mitchell - Woman in her late twenties, early 30's.

Settings:

A doctor's office.

A hospital room.

A clearing in a forest.

The play is set in the present day.

To Barbara,
Who made me believe.

SCENE 1

(DR. KROFT stands in a spotlight. He addresses the audience.)

DR. KROFT

I am a doctor. She was my patient. It was a unique case. A lot of people ask me about her. I'll tell you what I know, but in the end, it all comes down to what you believe.

SCENE 2

A doctor's office. There is a desk, two chairs, and an examining table. Many, many diplomas hang on the walls. WENDY sits in a chair, waiting. The door opens and DR. KROFT ENTERS carrying a clipboard.

DR. KROFT

I'm sorry, it's very busy around here.

WENDY

Oh, it's no problem.

DR. KROFT

(Consulting the clipboard.)

Very, very busy.

WENDY

It's all right.

DR. KROFT

Good, good.

(The PHONE RINGS.)

DR. KROFT

One moment

(Answering the phone.)

Yes? No. No. Well of course they're swelling, that's what she paid for. Then tell her to come in on Thursday. Fine.

(Hangs up.)

I'm sorry.

WENDY

It's OK.

DR. KROFT

Busy, busy.

WENDY

I understand.

DR. KROFT

So, Miss...

WENDY

Mitchell, Wendy Mitchell.

DR. KROFT

Miss Mitchell, what can we do for you today?

WENDY

Well, Dr. Kroft, I read your brochure.

DR. KROFT
Did you?

WENDY
Yes. Cover to cover.

DR. KROFT
Really?

WENDY
I like to read. I'm a librarian.

DR. KROFT
Are you? Good. Excellent. Did you see something you like?

WENDY
Well, I'm looking for something special. Something a little unique. I don't know how to-

DR. KROFT
I see.

WENDY
Something for me.

DR. KROFT
This is a very personal decision and I understand that completely. What works for one person may not be right for someone else.

WENDY
Yes.

DR. KROFT
What I strive for is the patient's complete happiness.

WENDY
Really?

DR. KROFT
We can do anything a patient might request.

WENDY
Anything?

DR. KROFT
I am very good.

WENDY
So something that's not in the brochure-

DR. KROFT
Highly do-able. Yes.

WENDY

Good.

DR. KROFT

(Looking at his watch.)
Let's- If I may?

WENDY

Ok.

DR. KROFT

Wonderful. Let's start by talking size. Do you know how big you would like to be?

WENDY

How big?

DR. KROFT

Yes. C cup? D cup?

WENDY

I don't think-

DR. KROFT

I'm just looking for a ballpark figure.

WENDY

Well, I'm not sure-

DR. KROFT

(Looks at his watch. Standing and going over to WENDY.)
Let's see what we're working with. Could you stand up?

WENDY

Excuse me?

DR. KROFT

Just stand please.
(WENDY stands up.)
Thank you.

WENDY

Doctor Kroft, I-

DR. KROFT

(Inspecting her chest.)
You know, Miss, uh Miss...

WENDY

Mitchell.

DR. KROFT

Miss Mitchell-

WENDY

Wendy.

DR. KROFT

OK, Wendy, I see a lot of possibilities here. We could go a lot of different ways with this.

WENDY

But-

DR. KROFT

(Looking at his watch again.)
Are you familiar with the procedures?

WENDY

Not really, but-

DR. KROFT

Then let's go over that first.

(DR. KROFT goes to the wall and pulls down a large drawing of a female torso. From his pocket he produces and opens a collapsible pointing device. He points at the drawing.)

DR. KROFT

(Pointing.)
Just to get our bearings: Arm, head, arm, legs, left and right breast, OK?

WENDY

OK, But-

DR. KROFT

Good. Now, there are two ways we can go in, just under the nipple, here, or at the armpit, here, which, though more expensive, minimizes scarring considerably.

WENDY

Actually, I'm not-

DR. KROFT

You keep interrupting.

WENDY

I'm sorry but I-

DR. KROFT

What is it?

WENDY

Well-

DR. KROFT

Yes?

WENDY

I'm not looking for- I don't want- It's not my breasts I want you to work on.

DR. KROFT

No?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

You're sure?

WENDY

Yes!

DR. KROFT

(Looking her up and down.)

Oh. Oh.

(He flips through the papers on the clipboard, then looks up at her. Growing excited)

Oh oh oh! OK! I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.

WENDY

It's all right.

DR. KROFT

No, it's just so busy. I don't know how I could have... No, not your breasts. Of course.

WENDY

Yes.

DR. KROFT

All right. Let's talk noses. First we'll get rid of that nasty bump.

WENDY

It's not my nose either.

DR. KROFT

No?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

Eyes?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

Lips?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT
Thighs?

WENDY
No!

DR. KROFT
Well what then!

WENDY
(Getting up.)
Never mind! You can't help me.

DR. KROFT
No! No! I can! I can! Just tell me!

WENDY
(Putting on her coat.)
They told me you were good. You won't understand.

DR. KROFT
I'm very good. Please. Please, this can be very stressful, facing our inner demons. Let's start over, OK? I can do anything. Anything you want. Please, have a seat.

WENDY
Anything?

DR. KROFT
Anything at all. I have a degree.

WENDY
(Sitting.)
All right.

DR. KROFT
OK. Now, Miss Mitchell, Wendy...

WENDY
Yes?

DR. KROFT
What is it you're looking for?

WENDY
I'm looking for... something in a... I don't know how to-

DR. KROFT
Just say it.

WENDY
I want a horn.

DR. KROFT
Excuse me?

WENDY

(Pointing at the center of her forehead.)
A horn. Right here. On my forehead.

DR. KROFT

A horn.

WENDY

Yes. Right in the middle, here. Can you do that?

(Pause as DR. KROFT stares at her in amazement.)

DR. KROFT

What kind of horn?

WENDY

Nothing fancy. Just a plain horn.

DR. KROFT

A plain horn.

WENDY

Yes. White.

DR. KROFT

Sorry?

WENDY

It should be white.

DR. KROFT

Of course. So you want a white horn.

WENDY

Yes.

DR. KROFT

A plain white horn.

WENDY

Yes.

DR. KROFT

In the middle of your forehead.

WENDY

(Pointing.)
Right here. Can you do that?

DR. KROFT

(Looking at his watch again.)
You're serious? Because I don't have time for-

WENDY

I knew you wouldn't understand.

DR. KROFT
It's very unusual.

WENDY
I'm sorry to have wasted your time.

DR. KROFT
Ms. Mitchell-

WENDY
You said you could do anything.

DR. KROFT
I can, but...

WENDY
But what?

(There is a long pause as DR. KROFT
thinks this over.)

DR. KROFT
Well, it's not going to be cheap.

WENDY
I can pay.

DR. KROFT
It may cost more than you think.

WENDY
How much will it cost?

DR. KROFT
I wouldn't really know where to begin pricing
something like this.

WENDY
Well, what's your most expensive procedure?

DR. KROFT
That would have to be the full-body rejuvenation
package. But that's face, breasts, stomach, legs,
skin peel-

WENDY
And how much is that?

DR. KROFT
That's a lot of money.

WENDY
How much?

(DR. KROFT writes a number on a piece
of paper and shows WENDY.)

DR. KROFT
It's a substantial sum.

WENDY
Yes.

DR. KROFT
So-

WENDY
I will pay you twice that amount.

DR. KROFT
Twice?

WENDY
Yes, twice. Would that be enough?

DR. KROFT
That's a lot of money for a librarian.

WENDY
My aunt died.

DR. KROFT
I'm sorry to hear that.

WENDY
Yes, well, she was very wealthy. I inherited all her money.

(Pause)

DR. KROFT
(Taking notes.)
How big a horn are we talking about?

WENDY
(Holding her hands about eight inches apart.)
About this big.

DR. KROFT
Eight inches?

WENDY
About.

DR. KROFT
I will need an exact number.

WENDY
Eight inches.

DR. KROFT
(Writing it all down.)
And how wide?

WENDY
Wide?

DR. KROFT
How wide around?

WENDY
At the base or at the tip?

DR. KROFT
At the base.

WENDY
(Judging with her fingers)
Two inches.

DR. KROFT
And at the tip?

WENDY
Well, it should come to a point. That's how horns
look.

DR. KROFT
You're right. I am just trying to get an idea of
you want... your horn to look like.

WENDY
I understand.

DR. KROFT
So it is a white horn which starts off two inches in
diameter and tapers down to a point.

WENDY
Not a sharp point. It should be kind of rounded.

DR. KROFT
(Crossses out what he's written and writes in:)
A blunt point.

WENDY
Yes.

DR. KROFT
Made of?

WENDY
Well, bone I should think. Ideally.

DR. KROFT
Bone.

WENDY
Well, it should look like bone anyway. Maybe some
sort of plastic. But solid, not hollow.

DR. KROFT
Perhaps some sort of composite plastic?

WENDY
Perhaps, yes.

DR. KROFT
All right. And you want this plastic horn attached
in the middle of your forehead.

WENDY
Yes.

DR. KROFT
Surgically?

WENDY
Yes.

DR. KROFT
May I ask, why?

WENDY
Why what?

DR. KROFT
Why a horn?

WENDY
Do you ask other people why they want big breasts or
new noses?

DR. KROFT
Well, those people- I know what they would say.

WENDY
What would they say?

DR. KROFT
Well, they would say a number of things. They're
looking to improve themselves. They want a better
self image. They want to be pretty.

WENDY
That's it.

DR. KROFT
What's it?

WENDY
I want to be pretty.

DR. KROFT
And you think this will help?

WENDY
I'd like to do it as soon as possible.

DR. KROFT

This may take some time.

WENDY

As soon as possible.

DR. KROFT

I would hate to do a rush job on something so sensitive.

WENDY

How long would it take?

DR. KROFT

I would have to consult with some colleagues.

WENDY

A week?

DR. KROFT

I don't think a week would-

WENDY

Two?

DR. KROFT

Maybe two, but please. Miss Mitchell, what's the hurry?

WENDY

Would you want to walk around like this any longer than absolutely necessary?

DR. KROFT

I'll tell you what. Why don't you call me back in about a month. And you can take that time to think this over some more maybe, hmmm?

WENDY

I see. Thank you for seeing me.

DR. KROFT

All right. You have a nice day.

WENDY

I can see I have wasted your time.

DR. KROFT

Think nothing of it. Good day.

WENDY

I should have realized that this was outside the scope of your abilities.

DR. KROFT

I'm sorry?

WENDY

Nothing, it's just... I should have known this would be a little beyond your reach.

DR. KROFT

Nothing is beyond my reach.

WENDY

Of course not.

DR. KROFT

Yes.

WENDY

Perhaps just your grasp then.

DR. KROFT

My reach and my grasp extend much further than you could know, Miss... Miss...

WENDY

Mitchell.

DR. KROFT

I have more than just skill. More than just technique. I have talent. Pure talent. I am a surgeon.

WENDY

Yes but... Well, there are surgeons and then there are surgeons, right? I'm sorry. Goodbye.

DR. KROFT

I will have you know Miss... Mitchell. I will have you know that I can do anything. Anything. I spend every day dealing with the slighted, the deformed, the grotesque, cleaning up God's messes. I could even do this cockamamie thing, this horn. I could do it. If you want it, and I mean really want it. I could do it. I'd find a way. But I don't think you want it enough.

WENDY

How much do I need to want it, Dr. Kroft?

(DR. KROFT gives her one last long, hard look.)

DR. KROFT

(To himself as he punches numbers on a desktop calculator.)
Eight inch prosthetic horn?

(DR. KROFT fills out an estimate form, fervently writing numbers in various columns then totalling them at the bottom. He then turns it to face her.)

Wendy looks at the number and is briefly startled by it's magnitude. She then regains her composure and stares directly into his eyes.)

WENDY

Will you take a personal check?

SCENE 3

Two weeks later. Again at the doctor's office. WENDY again sits, waiting for DR. KROFT, who ENTERS carrying a large box.

DR. KROFT

I'm sorry.

WENDY

It's all right.

DR. KROFT

Busy busy busy.

WENDY

So we're all set?

DR. KROFT

Just putting the finishing touches on.

WENDY

(Grabbing at the box excitedly.)
Really? It that it?

DR. KROFT

(Keeping the box from her.)
Wait, wait. Now, I know you are excited-

WENDY

I've waited so long-

DR. KROFT

I know. I know you're excited, but just hang on, all right? There are some things we need to discuss.

WENDY

The check cleared, didn't it? I'm so new at all this banking.

DR. KROFT

Yes, yes, the money's fine. Thank you. No, we need to discuss the procedure a little.

WENDY

Can I just see it?

DR. KROFT

In a minute. First let's talk about the procedure. Now, my team and I have spent the past week going over your request, and I must admit it posed many challenges, even to a man of my experience and skill. And though I thought it an odd request at first, I was soon fascinated by the particular dilemmas both in creating the prosthetic and the subsequent attaching of it. Are you listening?

WENDY

(Trying to get a peek into the box.)

Oh yes.

DR. KROFT

We went through several stages and prototypes. Last Tuesday we came up with this.

(He pulls a papier-mache cone out of the box. It looks like a kindergarten art project.)

WENDY

(Disappointed.)

Oh.

DR. KROFT

Yes, well, that was Tuesday. We spent most of Wednesday and Thursday trying to solve the structural problems of the prosthetic and the attachment issues. By Thursday night we had come up with this.

(He pulls a fairly attractive wooden horn.)

WENDY

(Finding it better than the last one.)

Oh.

DR. KROFT

Yes, but it would be attached with this.

(He pulls out a six-inch steel bolt which clunks onto the desk.)

WENDY

(Frightened.)

Oh!

DR. KROFT

You'd never get through a metal detector with that.

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

Right, so we hit the drawing boards again, drew up some new schemes, and I must tell you, it began to look bleak. We could figure out how to make a good horn. We had several good ways to attach a horn, but we could never bring the two together. Very challenging. By the end of business on Friday, after much work, we finally came up with this.

(He removes an exquisite horn from the box.)

WENDY
(Breathless, enraptured.)

Oh!

DR. KROFT

Yes.

WENDY

Oh!

DR. KROFT

It's a solid cast composite plastic resin. These knobs on the bottom would dovetail into your skull.

WENDY
(Holding it, admiring it.)
It's wonderful.

DR. KROFT

It is quite a piece of work.

WENDY

I love it.

DR. KROFT

Yes, but it too has it's problems.

WENDY

No, no. It's a good horn.

DR. KROFT

Yes, but you would have to be very careful with it. It would not be able, say, to support any weight. You could never hang anything from it. And any good blow to it would most likely dislodge it which would leave a large hole in your skull.

WENDY

I could be careful.

DR. KROFT

Yes, but I wasn't fully satisfied. Too many risks. So I continued to work. All through Saturday, all through Sunday. I pored through my journals, my books. I consulted with my colleagues. And then, late Sunday night, it came to me. An article I read, many years ago, about a man who claimed to have found a living unicorn. The animal was a goat-like creature with a horn growing in the center of it's forehead. It was a fraud, of course, but in the article, a veterinarian said that he thought the man had grafted a horn onto the animal to fool people. Do you see where I am going with this?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

Well, it suddenly struck me that if a man could graft a horn onto a goat, I might be able to graft one onto you. So what I'm saying, Wendy, and this has me very excited, is that you could lead a careful life with that solid cast composite plastic resin horn, or you could have this.

(He removes from the box a glass jar filled with a murky liquid. Suspended in the liquid is a rough disc-shaped object of about a half an inch in diameter. He places the jar on the desk.)

WENDY

(A bit repulsed.)
What's that?

DR. KROFT

It's the nub of a horn from an Chilean mountain goat.

WENDY

A what?

DR. KROFT

A horn nub.

WENDY

From a goat?

DR. KROFT

I know, it doesn't look like much. But think of it, Wendy. We can go through our attachment surgery with that horn, drilling several holes in your skull, cutting an appropriate sized hole for the horn in your forehead, and leaving considerable scars I might add, or... Or. Or I could cut a small incision, maybe half an inch, and implant this nub in one very slight depression made in the very front of your skull and within a year, you will have grown your own horn.

WENDY

My own horn?

DR. KROFT

Your very own horn. Attached permanently, and grown as naturally as if the good Lord put it there himself.

WENDY

Really?

DR. KROFT

Really.

WENDY

What would it look like?

DR. KROFT

Well, it would look like the horn from an Chilean mountain goat, and let me tell you why I choose that particular horn. According to my research, their horns tend to be about six to eight inches long, about two and a half inches wide at the base, they are, for the most part straight, with a very slight curve, fairly blunt and- and this is why I thought you'd like this one- they are a most brilliant white. I have a picture.

(He hands her a picture of the goat from the box.)

WENDY

(mesmerized)

Oh.

DR. KROFT

Yours will be completely unique to you.

WENDY

It would look like this?

DR. KROFT

The whole thing is rather new, but we have every confidence it would look as good on you as it does on the goat.

WENDY

I don't know. A goat horn? It seems kind of...

DR. KROFT

Brilliant?

WENDY

That too, yes... But-

DR. KROFT

Brilliant in it's simplicity. Completely outpatient. You could go home that night. Why, we won't even need to put you under, you would be awake throughout the entire procedure.

WENDY

Awake?

DR. KROFT

There will be extensive local anesthetic. You won't feel a thing. It's a standard precaution nowadays.

WENDY

Oh.

DR. KROFT

It makes you nervous?

WENDY

No. Maybe a little.

DR. KROFT

Well, that's only natural. Believe me, once you see your glorious new horn in place, you'll be happy you did it. Now, we shall we put you on the schedule?

WENDY

You know, I don't think so.

DR. KROFT

No? Why not?

WENDY

A goat horn?

DR. KROFT

The deposit is non-refundable.

WENDY

I know that.

DR. KROFT

OK, but beyond that, I have gone to a lot of trouble. We have had a team of surgeons working around the clock here to accommodate you. I have done 22 test-operations.

WENDY

Test operations?

DR. KROFT

Sure, what did you think? I'd do this for the first time on you?

WENDY

I guess I didn't think about it.

DR. KROFT

I have been grafting all week! Just yesterday I put three horns on a retriever. We have had great success. So if you're worried about safety-

WENDY

That's not really it.

DR. KROFT

What is it then?

WENDY

I don't know. It seems kind of unnatural.

DR. KROFT

Miss Mitchell. Wendy. When you walked into this office just two short weeks ago and said you wanted me to put a horn on your head, I must admit, I thought you were a few sandwiches shy of a picnic. But there was something about your request that intrigued me.

WENDY

The money.

DR. KROFT

Yes, the money, of course, but something else too. Your sincerity. Your forthrightness. Your honest desire to have a horn on your head. You would not believe the people I see in here, day in, day out. People who are having elective surgery out of such petty reasonings as boredom, fear, and desperation. I have turned many a woman from a fatted calf into a thoroughbred, from a toucan to a parakeet, from a blushing maid to a saline colossus. But you. You presented me, for the first time in many, many years, with a true challenge. And I have met that challenge. Look. Look at the ground you are standing on, Wendy. Do you see it? Do you?

WENDY

See what?

DR. KROFT

The edge. The cutting edge of beauty. We are here, you and I, at the apex of aesthetics and medical technology. On the cusp between the ridiculous and the sublime. And together we will strain against the boundaries of science, we will feel the bit of conformity pulled tight in our teeth, and we will plow a new and fertile row in the garden of paradise.

WENDY

We will?

DR. KROFT

We will. You and I. You and I and your magnificent new horn. We will climb to the mountaintop and show God himself a beauty he never imagined could exist. Are you with me Wendy?

WENDY

Yes.

DR. KROFT

Are you with me!

WENDY

Yes!

A horn of your own! DR. KROFT

A horn of my own! WENDY

How about Friday at three? DR. KROFT

A horn of my own! WENDY

SCENE 4

The operating room, Friday at three. It is dark on stage. We hear operating room sounds. The wheeze of a respirator. The steady blip of the heart monitor. In the darkness we hear DR. KROFT's voice.

DR. KROFT

Wendy? Can you hear me?

(LIGHTS COME UP. DR. KROFT is standing in a small pool of light. He is in surgical clothes and is bent over his subject. WENDY herself is not on stage, so he mimes the operation)

DR. KROFT

Don't try to speak. Just raise your finger if you can hear me. Excellent. I'm going to make the first incision now. You may feel a little pressure, but this shouldn't hurt at all. There. Does that hurt? See, I told you. Everything's going to be just fine.

(Time passes.)

DR. KROFT

Can you clamp that? Thank you. OK, Wendy? I'm going to make a small indentation in the bone now to receive the graft. Again, you may feel some pressure, but this shouldn't hurt at all. OK?

(A sharp ping, like a chisel being driven into granite, is heard.)

There. Wendy?

(He holds up two fingers.)

How many fingers am I holding up? Just tap. Excellent.

(Time passes.)

DR. KROFT

All right Wendy, we're almost done. Can you retract that a little further back so I can get a good angle on this? Thank you. Wendy, I'm attaching the last blood vessel to the horn. We're almost done. The future begins... now.

(We hear the heart monitor go berserk, then stop altogether. Chaos breaks out in the operating room.)

DR. KROFT

Wendy? Wendy? Can you hear me? What the hell is this? Get the cart over here! Wendy? What's going on with the machines? Have we got a rhythm yet?

(DR. KROFT struggles at the operating table. Behind him, we see WENDY bathed in a dark green light.)

WENDY

Then a sound. A pounding on the ground. Distant, growing louder. Something splashing through a brook, wading through a river, something powerful. A steady rhythm as it breaks from the water and hits the bank running. Beats travelling like tremors through the ground. Something is coming.

DR. KROFT

She's still out. More suction. Clamp. Clamp it. Clear!

(The respirator takes a huge breath in, then lets it slowly out, and the heart monitor begins it's original steady rhythm.)

DR. KROFT

Wendy, can you hear me? Are you OK? Good.

(Lights fade out on wendy.)

DR. KROFT

All right. We're done. I'm... I'm just going to close it up now. It's gone very well. Very well indeed. Everything is going to be just fine. All right.

(Lights fade down.)

SCENE 5

The doctor's office, a few days later. DR. KROFT is sitting behind his desk and across from him is WENDY, with a very small, but noticeable, horn in the middle of her forehead. She looks like death warmed over.

WENDY

It hurts.

DR. KROFT

Well, I told you there may be some discomfort.

WENDY

No. It hurts. It aches. It... It throbs.

DR. KROFT

Let me take a look at it.

(He examines her horn.)

WENDY

It wakes me up at night.

DR. KROFT

(Still looking.)

Mmm Hmmm.

WENDY

And I think it's infected. Ow!

DR. KROFT

Sorry.

WENDY

Don't poke it.

DR. KROFT

It looks like it's healing nicely.

WENDY

I've lost my appetite. I have these euphoric moments, but... I'm always hot. I have these hot... flashes. I don't know what's going on.

DR. KROFT

(Feeling her forehead.)

Well you feel fine. Open your mouth please. Say "Ah". No, no swelling or anything. Everything seems to be coming along just fine.

WENDY

I just don't feel right.

DR. KROFT

These are growing pains, Wendy. All within the normal healing process.

WENDY

My neck has been stiff for days.

DR. KROFT

It's adjusting to the new weight. Did you see my article made the cover of the New England Journal of Medicine? We're the talk of the profession.

WENDY

My arms are sore and my feet have swelled up like balloons.

DR. KROFT

I've had calls from several networks. And not just TV. The Times, Wendy. The Times. Now, as we discussed, in my article I called you only Patient 23 to protect your privacy. And I want to respect that privacy. But these are journalists. They want names. They want photos.

WENDY

My fingernails keep growing, I have to cut them every day. This isn't what I expected.

DR. KROFT

What did you expect?

WENDY

I don't know, something wonderful. Something magical. Not this.

DR. KROFT

Wendy, this is a tremendous opportunity. This is a chance to show the world how beautiful your new horn is. How special it has made you.

WENDY

I don't feel special.

DR. KROFT

Look at how rich and full your hair has become. How your eyes shine. How your horn sets off your cheekbones, your chin. It gives your face perfect proportions. Believe me, I know. When other women see this, they will be dying to be just like you. Now if you don't want to speak to the press, if you don't want your photograph on the cover of magazines, on the front page of the New York Times, I will respect that. But how long do you think that you can stay anonymous, Patient 23? The dogs are loose. They have the scent. And let's face it, you're pretty easy to spot.

WENDY

I have these dreams where I am running in the forest. Fast. Faster than I have ever run. My feet are heavy, but they move so quickly. It's like flying on the ground.

DR. KROFT

I don't think you're understanding me.

WENDY

My heart beats so fast. My breath is hot and thick. My hair whips against my neck. And the trees close in around me.

DR. KROFT

Wendy? Wendy.

WENDY

Yes?

DR. KROFT

Think of the opportunities. You could be a celebrity, like a supermodel. You could be known for the excellence you have achieved. You don't have to be Patient 23, you could be The Wendy Mitchell. And you can share her beauty with the world. I think the choice is clear. Wendy?

WENDY

Yes?

DR. KROFT

Would you be willing to speak with the press? To talk about the procedure?

WENDY

Dr. Kroft, this isn't what I expected. Not at all.

DR. KROFT

I understand, but-

WENDY

Could you undo it?

DR. KROFT

It is a permanent prosthetic.

WENDY

Permanent?

DR. KROFT

Yes. Meaning I could remove it, it's possible, but it would be a whole new procedure with it's own set of risks and side effects. The best course of action would be to leave it alone for a while.

WENDY

You don't understand.

DR. KROFT

Wendy, you really haven't given it a chance. The healing process-

WENDY

Dr. Kroft, I'm scared. I am afraid of what's happening to me.

DR. KROFT

There are limitless opportunities here.

WENDY

For who?

DR. KROFT

For you. For me. For both of us. Please, let's not rush into anything. Give it a little time. Remember, you asked me to do this for you, and I did it. Now I'm asking you to give me little more time. Could you do that? For me?

WENDY

For you?

DR. KROFT

Yes. What we have done... This procedure... It is incredible. This could be the pinnacle of my career. This is totally new ground, the kind of thing that propels men into the pantheon of medicine. Flemming and penicillin. Salk and polio. Jarvik and the artificial heart. Men they name prizes after, grants after, schools after. We have come this far together, and you have trusted me. You know I would never put you at risk. But to end it now would be such a great, great disappointment. Please, Wendy. For me. I promise, at the first sign of trouble, I will take it right off. But you are in no danger I assure you. For me, Wendy?

WENDY

For you, yes.

DR. KROFT

Thank you. And the um... press?

WENDY

Sure.

DR. KROFT

Wonderful. Don't worry, I will arrange everything. Thank you so much.

(WENDY lets out a soft moan and holds her head like she is experiencing a bad headache. DR. KROFT goes to her.)

WENDY

No, no. It's fine. It comes and goes.

DR. KROFT

(Writing swiftly.)

I'll give you a prescription. This is all just a period of adjustment. Really. Here.

WENDY

(Putting on her coat.)

Thank you.

DR. KROFT

Does that happen a lot?

WENDY

What's a lot?

DR. KROFT

More than a couple of times a day?

WENDY

(Cautiously)

No.

DR. KROFT

Will you call me if it gets any worse?

WENDY

All right.

DR. KROFT

Any time of the day or night?

WENDY

Fine.

(WENDY goes to the door.)

DR. KROFT

And I will call you. About the interviews.

WENDY

Fine.

(She goes to the door and pauses. She turns to him.)

In my dreams, the trees close in around me. What does it mean?

DR. KROFT

I don't know. I can refer you to a good therapist if you'd like.

WENDY

I don't think so, thanks. Bye.

DR. KROFT

No. Thank you.

(Wendy exits.)

SCENE 6

The doctor's office, a week later. WENDY sits on the examining table in a lotus position. She looks radiant. Her horn is several inches longer. DR. KROFT ENTERS carrying a clipboard. He looks like death warmed over.

DR. KROFT

Oh, it's you.

WENDY

(Coming out of her trance with a warm smile.)
Mmmmm. Hello. How are you?

DR. KROFT

How do I look?

WENDY

You look grumpy. You look like the king of the grumps.

DR. KROFT

Did we have an appointment today?

WENDY

No.

DR. KROFT

Well, what do you want then?

WENDY

I wanted to see you. I wanted you to see how well it's growing.

DR. KROFT

I have a very busy schedule.

WENDY

Did it happen again?

(DR. KROFT pinches the bridge of his nose like he has an extreme migraine headache.)

WENDY

It's very strange. That's five, isn't it?

DR. KROFT

Are you keeping score?

WENDY

Sorry.

DR. KROFT

I don't go to your office and make fun of you.

WENDY

I quit my job. I have plenty of money from the TV people. Funny people.

DR. KROFT

So you come here?

WENDY

No, I go to the park. I can go in among the trees, and people don't bother me. I just came here because I wanted to see how you are.

DR. KROFT

Well have you seen?

WENDY

I'm sorry, really I am. I know you had high hopes.

DR. KROFT

High hopes? I have one hundred fifty four of these operations scheduled between now and the end of the year. I'm already behind by fifteen. And every time you do another magazine, I get hit with forty new appointments. I got sixty three alone when you did that TV show.

WENDY

That woman was so nice.

DR. KROFT

And I was going to expand. Offer different kinds of horns. Gazelle, bull, we were even looking into deer, the whole antler market. The possibilities were endless. Endless.

WENDY

It's too bad.

DR. KROFT

You're sure you're OK?

WENDY

I'm fine.

DR. KROFT

No fevers, aches, pains?

WENDY

Absolute perfection.

DR. KROFT

Swelling, tenderness, nausea? Dizzy spells?

WENDY

Don't I look OK?

DR. KROFT

It could be a temporary remission.

WENDY

I feel glorious. Spectacular. Wondrous. Magical.

DR. KROFT

Great.

WENDY

Bill, I've undergone a complete transformation. Body, mind and spirit. I'm a different being. A whole new creature. I am rare and exotic. I am strong and sleek. I am healthy and vigorous, and utterly, utterly pure. Do you understand what I am saying?

DR. KROFT

You feel good?

WENDY

Yes. Good. Beyond good. And it's all because of you, your genius. Because of you, I am alive. I am whole. I am special.

DR. KROFT

Special?

WENDY

Yes, special. Don't you think?

DR. KROFT

That's one word for it.

WENDY

You're upset.

DR. KROFT

Me, no.

WENDY

Because it's not working?

DR. KROFT

I don't think you fully understand the implications of the situation.

WENDY

Tell me.

DR. KROFT

Well, put it to you this way. You've got this horn on head.

WENDY

Yes, I do.

DR. KROFT

Yes, well, I put it there.

WENDY

Yes, you did.

DR. KROFT

And people love it. Everybody wants one. I've got people lined up around the block who will pay ten times what you did for one. Only, it's not working, as you so delicately put it.

WENDY

I'm sorry.

DR. KROFT

No, no. It's the truth. Five times I've tried. On five different women. And I couldn't put a horn on any of them. Not one. Same horn, same procedure. But as soon as I begin to connect the blood vessels, everything goes haywire. Their hearts race, their blood pressure skyrockets, they have seizures, they bleed. The woman today, her arms started flailing. I swear to God, I think she was trying to rip it out with her bare hands. I'm at a complete loss. Me. Can you believe it? Me.

WENDY

I feel very bad for you Bill.

DR. KROFT

Oh, don't feel bad for me. If anything, I'd start worrying about you.

WENDY

Me?

DR. KROFT

I hate to be the one to say it, but we have to face the facts here.

WENDY

What facts?

DR. KROFT

Well, your horn.

WENDY

What are you talking about? I'm fine. I'm wonderful!

DR. KROFT

Sure, right now. But, I am beginning to question it's stability. And then there is the whole issue of public perception.

WENDY

I don't understand.

DR. KROFT

Wendy... Wendy, Wendy, Wendy. There's a very thin line between being the flavor of the month, and the freak of the week.

WENDY

Freak? You think I'm a freak?

DR. KROFT

I can fit you in tomorrow afternoon.

WENDY

For what?

DR. KROFT

Don't make this any harder than it has to be.

WENDY

What if there can't be more than one?

DR. KROFT

Well, I think that's what we're talking about.

WENDY

No. If there were a reason. A really good reason.

DR. KROFT

What kind of reason?

WENDY

Do you know what a unicorn is?

DR. KROFT

What, the horse with the...

WENDY

Yes.

DR. KROFT

With the...

WENDY

With the horn.

DR. KROFT

What about it?

WENDY

What if... What if I'm one.

DR. KROFT

One what? Unicorn? Oh, please. Wendy.

WENDY

You don't believe in them?

DR. KROFT

They're not real. Nobody believes in them.

WENDY

I believe in them.

DR. KROFT

Great. Just great. This is good. This is very good. This is going to help a lot.

WENDY

You put this wonderful horn on my head.

DR. KROFT

If I had put big ears and buck teeth on you would you be the Easter Bunny?

WENDY

You're not listening.

DR. KROFT

My practice, my reputation, everything I've worked for is going down the tubes. And you're telling me that you're some mythical beast? I think that thing has started affecting your brain.

WENDY

There are texts-

DR. KROFT

Great, now she's got texts.

WENDY

There are texts in which-

DR. KROFT

Wendy, I really don't have time for your-

WENDY

(Suddenly very angry)

LISTEN TO ME! There are texts dating back not hundreds but thousands, thousands of years. Back to pre-biblical times there are reports, descriptions, and accounts of a fantastic one-horned animal. It was tall, and powerful, and fierce beyond measure. The Romans believed in it. The Greeks believed in it. The Hebrews called it "Re'em" and spoke of it with an almost unequaled awe and reverence. The old testament, Bill. Adam's first sacrifice to his God was a bull with one horn. There are stories and legends from every country, every civilization, every continent. From the beginning of time to this moment, there has always been one. Only one. One at a time. Do you understand?

DR. KROFT

You believe this?

WENDY

I do. This is what I wanted. All along, this is what I wanted. Didn't you figure that out? I never thought it could happen. I just wanted to get close. This is my chance to be special, Bill.

DR. KROFT

This is insane.

WENDY

Look at me! Don't I look different? I know, Bill, that this is not an easy thing for you to grasp. I know you're a man of science, of facts, but there are things beyond. Things outside of science. Things that defy explanation. These are the things that make our lives worth living at all.

DR. KROFT

The world doesn't work that way.

WENDY

What way? Do you know? Just believe! Believe in me.

DR. KROFT

Wendy, it would be nice. And I mean that. But that is fantasy, pure fantasy. And this is reality. And as your real physician, I have to advise you that...

WENDY

Don't.

DR. KROFT

I think you are in a very tenuous medical position. And I think your implant poses some very real and very serious health risks.

WENDY

Bill.

DR. KROFT

I have to recommend it's removal.

WENDY

You said it was permanent. You said-

DR. KROFT

I'm sorry.

WENDY

I could kill you right now. Without another word.

DR. KROFT

Is that a threat?

WENDY
Look at me. What do you see?

DR. KROFT
Wendy-

WENDY
What do you see, Bill?

DR. KROFT
I see a a very troubled young woman.

WENDY
Look harder.

DR. KROFT
I don't have time to play these games-

WENDY
You tell me what I look like.

DR. KROFT
What am I supposed to see? You tell me. What? A unicorn?

WENDY
Yes!

DR. KROFT
Fine, I see a unicorn. OK? Happy?

WENDY
What does it look like?

DR. KROFT
Good lord.

WENDY
Make an effort, Bill. For once in your life try to see. What do I look like?

DR. KROFT
Like a horse?

WENDY
What else?

DR. KROFT
You have... hooves, I don't know.

WENDY
I have a mane. It is long and shiny. My shoulders are strong, my legs muscular. Every color in the universe reflects in my eyes. I am beauty beyond measure. Can you see it? Do you hear it, in my heartbeat?

(more)

WENDY (cont'd)

It's the sound of the world in motion, of the planet turning in space. It radiates from me. Let it overtake you. Let it wash over you. Listen. It is the sound of the rivers and the trees. The sound of the forest, rich and dark. It embraces us like the moon embraces the night, like the sun kisses the morning. Come. We will run.

(She runs to the door, but stumbles, weak.)

DR. KROFT

Run?

WENDY

Run. Run together through the forest, across the fields. Run together fast, let our feet pound the earth furiously in time to the rhythm of our hearts. Run, Bill. Run.

DR. KROFT

Wendy?

WENDY

(Fading fast.)

Run. Let me go. I must... go...

DR. KROFT

Wendy?

WENDY

I am... beautiful!

(WENDY collapses.)

DR. KROFT

Wendy? Wendy?

(An ambulance siren wails as the lights fade.)

SCENE 7

A hospital room, the next day. There is a door and a barred window. WENDY is in a bed. Both her hands are in restraints. She looks pale, wan, sickly. Her horn is considerably longer than when we last saw it and has begun to appear grotesque. The door opens and DR. KROFT ENTERS with a clipboard in one hand and a bundle of books in the other. WENDY ignores him entirely, staring straight ahead the whole time.

DR. KROFT

How are we doing, hmmm? Still not talking to me? All right. The tests have come back. Do you want to hear? I didn't think so. We can't put this off any longer. I think you know that, you're just being stubborn. Temporary remission, I told you, didn't I? The nurse will be in to prep you for surgery in about an hour, and she will sedate you if you give her a hard time. The whole thing should take about forty minutes. I'll save the horn for you if you'd like. Anyway, I wanted to tell you myself. The people at the library sent over some books for you. I'll just leave them here. How are you feeling? I had them move you in here so you could look out the window. See? You can see the park from here. I thought you'd like that.

(He goes to the window.)

You never realize how big the park is from the ground, but when you see it from up here, it's really... You know, last night, I couldn't sleep. Knowing you were here. Knowing you were probably scared. Knowing that I had a hand in doing this to you. What did I do to you? I don't know. Anyway, I'm sorry things worked out this way. So, I'll see you in about an hour.

(He walks to the door.)

Are you in any pain?

(WENDY turns and looks at him.)

What?

(She stares.)

What? What do you want from me? I'm trying to make you comfortable. I got the books, I got you a window. We've known each other a few months, but I don't know anything about you. I don't know what you like. I don't know what will make you feel better. I'm just trying to make it up to you. What more can I do? Tell me. Just talk to me. Tell me what I can do for you.

WENDY

Don't take my horn.

DR. KROFT

I can't do that.

WENDY

Then I am going to die.

DR. KROFT

No, no you're not. I'm not going to let that happen.

WENDY

You don't understand.

DR. KROFT

Wendy, I know you were very excited about having a live, growing horn, but maybe... Maybe we're just not there yet. It's just not time for that. I can still put that prosthetic horn on you. You liked that one. It would look nearly the same. We could do in a month or so-

WENDY

I can't believe you don't understand.

DR. KROFT

(Pulling out a set of X-rays.)

Look. These are the X-rays we took last night. This is your skull, and this is your horn. Do you see what's happening? Do you see? Look. As much as it has been growing outwards, it has also been growing inwards. You see this thing it's pressing against? That's your brain, Wendy.

WENDY

So?

DR. KROFT

So? It is squeezing it, crushing it. Do you understand? This explains everything. The dizziness, the headaches, the erratic behavior. If I could stop it from growing... But I can't. So we have to take it off. It's just plain logic Wendy. Science-

WENDY

Science? What does science know?

DR. KROFT

Science knows a lot of things.

WENDY

Forget science. I can tell you what science knows and doesn't know. Science is very good at objects in motion, and at velocities, and at formulas, but when comes to the practical, to the real, your science is at a complete loss. Baffled by the simplest of things. Light. Time. The mind. Love. The things we all understand without understanding.

DR. KROFT

I'm not going to argue about this with you.

WENDY

Everything is so simple with you. You don't like the nose? Get the knife. You don't like the eyes? Get the knife. You don't like the horn-

DR. KROFT

I like the horn.

WENDY

Me too.

DR. KROFT

It makes you look very beautiful. Really. But it's causing all these complications.

WENDY

Life is complicated.

DR. KROFT

You know what I mean.

WENDY

The transformation is not complete.

DR. KROFT

Wendy, it's over.

WENDY

All my life I've been incomplete. A part of me has always been just out of reach. Do you know what that feels like? To know that there is something you need, but can't get? Like food? Like love? Life becomes slow torture. Day after day of searching, hour after hour of waiting. Feeling more alone and desperate and scared with every breath. You're powerful, rich. You have a career. You can do anything. You said so yourself. You have no idea what life was like for me. Then you gave me this gift, this marvelous gift, and I was suddenly whole. I had access to all parts of me. To powers and senses I had known existed, but could never quite fully comprehend. Life took on new meaning, new purpose. Bill, we don't get to pick the things that make us whole. We're just lucky if we can find them at all. Everything I am flows through this horn. You know, you're right. You don't know me at all. I don't know you. And maybe you're not as complete as you appear to be. And maybe you do know what I'm talking about. I hope so. Because if you did know me, even a little bit, you'd know I'd rather die a unicorn's death than go back to Wendy Mitchell's life.

DR. KROFT

I can't let you do that.

WENDY

You'd be surprised what you could do.

DR. KROFT

I don't think so.

WENDY

For love? For me?

DR. KROFT

What do you want me to do?

WENDY

Let me out of here. Let me go down to the park, to the woods. Let me lie down in the grass and put my head in your lap. For a brief moment in time, we can ease each other's suffering. We started on this journey together. We can finish what we began. Then you can go back to your practice, your career.

DR. KROFT

My career is pretty much over.

WENDY

Then you have nothing to lose.

DR. KROFT

Like you?

WENDY

Bill, I have everything to lose.

DR. KROFT

I don't know.

WENDY

There comes a time when you have to stop solving the problems. When you have to just let them sit. Just let them be problems. That's reality. Please. For me. For me.

(DR. KROFT walks away, and is about to leave, but stops at the door. He makes a decision. He turns and goes to the bed. He unties her.)

DR. KROFT

Let's go.

(DR. KROFT goes to the door and opens it.)

DR. KROFT

Well?

(WENDY struggles in the bed, for a moment. She is very weak.)

WENDY

I... I...

(WENDY looks at him, she is near tears.
He understands. He goes to the bed.
He picks her up in his arms.)

DR. KROFT

It's OK.

(He carries her out of the room.)

SCENE 8

A clearing in a forest. The trees around the clearing are so thick that they block out nearly all sunlight, but the clearing itself is very sunny. The forest is fertile and verdant, primeval.

(DR. KROFT ENTERS with WENDY in his arms.)

DR. KROFT

Wendy?

(WENDY stirs.)

Wendy, we're here. Where do you want me to put you?

WENDY

In the middle.

DR. KROFT

Ok.

(DR. KROFT gently puts WENDY down in the middle of the clearing.)

DR. KROFT

Is this OK? Are you comfortable?

WENDY

This is fine.

(She lays on the ground. He walks around the edge of the clearing stretching out his arms.)

WENDY

This is a wonderful spot. So green and cool.

DR. KROFT

It is very pretty.

WENDY

It's my favorite place in the world.

DR. KROFT

You feel OK?

WENDY

I'm fine. Do you feel the power here?

DR. KROFT

Sure.

WENDY

You're lying.

DR. KROFT

No, I do. Power. Very powerful.

WENDY

It amazes me that you've made it as far as you have with the little you've got.

DR. KROFT

I guess I'm not as... whatever it is you are.

WENDY

You are, you are. Are you afraid of me?

DR. KROFT

No, why?

WENDY

You're standing way over there.

DR. KROFT

I'm just stretching.

WENDY

People fear what they don't understand. Death. Change.

DR. KROFT

I could get a blanket from the car.

WENDY

It makes you uncomfortable. You don't have to admit it. Do you see the trees? The way they form a perfect circle around the edge?

(She coughs.)

DR. KROFT

(Going to her.)

Are you all right?

WENDY

This is a very rare thing, a circle like this. First there is a central tree, which gives birth to all the trees we see today. They all spring from the roots-

(She coughs harder.)

From the roots-

DR. KROFT

Wendy?

WENDY

(Recovering her composure.)

I'm fine. Then the central, the parent tree dies. And it rots away, leaving it's children gathered around in a perfect circle. There is immense power in these places.

DR. KROFT

Can I get you something?

WENDY

You're very sweet, in your own way. Let the problems go.

DR. KROFT

Maybe we should go back.

WENDY

No, just, sit with me. Bill?

DR. KROFT

Yes?

WENDY

What's going to happen, and I know it's going to happen. You know too. When it happens, I don't want to be alone.

DR. KROFT

You won't be.

WENDY

Stay here with me.

DR. KROFT

I will.

WENDY

We came so far together, through the dark.

DR. KROFT

I'm here.

(DR. KROFT is seated. Her head is in his lap. He strokes her hair.)

WENDY

That's very nice. What's the matter?

DR. KROFT

I didn't mean to do this to you. I didn't mean to hurt anyone. I'm so sorry.

WENDY

I'm fine. Isn't this place enchanted?

DR. KROFT

I'm sorry. I was just trying to... to...

WENDY

Shhhh. Thank you. For this. For everything. I know you didn't have to. Look.

DR. KROFT

What?

WENDY

The trees... The trees are closing in around me.

(A surge of pain runs through her body.
She lets out a sharp cry.)

DR. KROFT

Oh Wendy, I don't know about this.

WENDY

You'll see. Oh!

DR. KROFT

Wendy?

WENDY

You'll see. I'll make a believer out of you yet.
You'll see.

(WENDY collapses in his arms. LIGHTS
FADE.)

SCENE 9

(LIGHTS UP on DR. KROFT who stands in a spotlight. He addresses the audience.)

DR. KROFT

I often think of her, what she did for me. She was a very unique woman, and it was a very unique- We shared a moment in the sun. A lot of people ask me about her. I'll tell you what I know, but in the end, it all comes down to what you believe.

(As the SPOTLIGHT FADES, we hear THE SOUND OF HOOFBEATS AND HORSES growing louder, and louder, and louder.)