

I HATE LOVE

A ONE-ACT PLAY

by
Maia Akiva



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(Lights on)

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

(JO, a woman in her early thirties, sits at a desk in a dark room. JO gazes intently at a razor that lies on the desk. SHE picks it up and looks at it, unsure what to do next. SHE puts the razor to her wrist and keeps on staring. SHE hesitates.)

(Lights off)

(Lights on)

INT. ANOTHER ROOM - SAME TIME

(The room is set up for a party. Festive music is playing. A long table displays an array of sodas and snacks. Standing on one side of the room are three men. PAIN is short and annoying. DEPRESSION is strong, loud, and dressed all in black. LONELINESS, a quiet man, stands in gloomy silence. Three women stand on the other side of the room, talking. LOVE, sexy and powerful, wears colorful clothing. HAPPINESS is a chubby, cheerful woman. FAITH, quiet yet powerful, is dressed simply.)

LOVE: *(nodding toward PAIN)* I can't believe he's here.

HAPPINESS: I'm sorry, sweetie. You knew we would all be here tonight.

LOVE: You never know with him. He can be such a jerk sometimes.

HAPPINESS: Sometimes?

LOVE: I don't mind seeing him, but why tonight?

HAPPINESS: Do you want to leave?

LOVE: No. We're here. And besides, that's exactly what he would want me to do. Maybe that's even the reason he's here. We're here for Jo.

HAPPINESS: I thought you two were over?

LOVE: We're never over. That's the problem. He has this power over me.

HAPPINESS: Maybe you give him that power?

LOVE: You wouldn't understand.

HAPPINESS: Why?

LOVE: Because you've never been with him.

(On the other side of the room --)

PAIN: Man, what is she doing here?

DEPRESSION: What do you care?

PAIN: You don't know her.

DEPRESSION: I thought you two were done.

PAIN: We weren't done last week when she came over to return a book.

DEPRESSION: You are something.

PAIN: You never continued seeing her after you two broke up? *(nodding toward FAITH)*

DEPRESSION: Yeah, right.

(Back to the women --)

FAITH: I have to tell you, I don't know how you do it.

LOVE: What?

FAITH: Keep seeing him.

LOVE: I can't help myself.

FAITH: You know it's never going to work.

LOVE: I know.

FAITH: You should learn from me. Make a clean cut. Look at him. *(nodding toward DEPRESSION)* He probably won't even talk to me tonight.

LOVE: You know I'm not as strong as you.

FAITH: You are! You just have to believe you are.

LOVE: *(to HAPPINESS)* I think they brought a guy for you tonight.

(HAPPINESS and the other two WOMEN look over at LONELINESS.)

I think he's a friend of theirs.

HAPPINESS: I don't think we'll have time for that tonight.

(JO walks in from the other room, wearing the same clothing. SHE puts a bottle of soda on the table. The three WOMEN walk over to her.)

Hey, how are you doing? Fun party.

JO: Thanks for coming.

LOVE: Thanks for inviting us.

FAITH: Yeah. We really wanted to come.

JO: You girls are great friends. I'm really glad you're here, you know, even though they're here. *(nodding toward the MEN)*

FAITH: We do it just for you, trust me.

HAPPINESS: Are you okay? I know you've been talking about this party for a while. We were a little surprised to have such short notice.

LOVE: Yeah, last year we got the invitation months before.

JO: It was a last-minute decision.

HAPPINESS: Did something happen?

JO: No. Everything is the same. Which I guess is why we're all here tonight.

FAITH: You know we always support you.

JO: I know you do. I just haven't seen any of you in a while. I was actually a little surprised to see you here tonight. *(to LOVE)* Especially you.

(LOVE pats JO on the back silently.)

I've been hanging out with the guys a lot.

FAITH: You really shouldn't.

JO: They keep calling and inviting me places. They seem to care about me.

HAPPINESS: They really don't. Trust me. We know them.

JO: They came early to hang out. I'm going to go say hi to them.

(JO walks over to the MEN.)

(very comfortable) Hey, guys.

GUYS: Jo. How are you? What's up?

JO: Thanks for coming again tonight and last night. Aren't you sick of hanging out with me all weekend?

DEPRESSION: No. You're great. Better than any of them. *(nodding toward the three WOMEN)*

PAIN: Way more fun.

LONELINESS: And cooler.

JO: Thanks. But they're my friends, too, so let's not get into all of that tonight, okay?

DEPRESSION: It's your party.

JO: I wish one day we would all be able to hang out together.

PAIN: I really don't see that happening, unless they go through a major personality change.

LONELINESS: To be more like us.

(The MEN high-five each other.)

JO: It was just a thought.

(HAPPINESS walks over to JO.)

HAPPINESS: Jo, it's getting late . . .

PAIN: What's your rush? It's only . . . *(PAIN takes out his cell phone and checks the time.)* . . . 11:47.

HAPPINESS: We're tired. Long day tomorrow.

DEPRESSION: So typical of you three. You haven't even been here for a whole hour.

(FAITH and LOVE hear the argument and walk over to the GROUP.)

HAPPINESS: We take care of ourselves. If we're tired, we go to sleep. Not like you three, who can't stand being alone, without each other. And besides, I'm sure Jo needs to go to bed, too.

JO: I'm probably not going to get any sleep tonight.

FAITH: Is there anything wrong?

DEPRESSION: What's your rush to leave?

FAITH: It's late.

DEPRESSION: Not for us.

FAITH: But for us.

DEPRESSION: Then leave!

FAITH: And leave you alone here with her, tonight? Not a chance.

DEPRESSION: You always have to ruin it for everyone.

LOVE: How is doing what we want to do ruining it?

PAIN: You're not the only one here.

LOVE: You only want to stay late to influence Jo. I know you.

PAIN: We have fun with Jo. Unlike you.

LOVE: We have fun together, right, Jo?

JO: Yeah, whenever we do hang out, it's awesome.

LOVE: You see?

PAIN: Yeah, whenever you do hang out -- what, like once a month, maybe? Not even.

FAITH: Oh, and you spend a lot of quality time with her?

DEPRESSION: At least we spend time with her.

HAPPINESS: And yet we were invited here tonight.

DEPRESSION: Yeah, why is that, Jo? We could have had so much fun, just the four of us.

JO: Because tonight is a special occasion, and I wanted all of you to be here.

FAITH: And we're glad you did, Jo. We all know how this night would have ended if it was just you and them.

DEPRESSION: Yeah, it would have ended a long time ago.

FAITH: Don't even say that.

DEPRESSION: Why do you think we're here tonight?

FAITH: I know why we're here tonight. To support Jo. Why are you here tonight?

DEPRESSION: I'm sorry to ruin your perfect little night, but what you can't even say may actually even happen here tonight. Get ready.

FAITH: Jo, what's going on with you? Please tell us. You're not really going to listen to those guys, are you?

JO: (*hurting*) I don't know. Maybe. I'm not sure. I'm just so confused.

FAITH: Jo, you are an amazing woman.

JO: No, I'm not.

FAITH: You can do anything you want.

JO: No, I can't.

FAITH: You have to believe me, Jo.

JO: I can't. Those are just words.

DEPRESSION: Jo, your life sucks.

JO: I know.

DEPRESSION: (*to FAITH*) Stop making her life sound like something it isn't.

(*PAIN walks over to JO and puts his hand on her shoulder.*)

PAIN: How do you really feel?

JO: I feel like I can't stand feeling like this anymore. I feel like I'm never going to stop feeling this way.

PAIN: That's why we're here. (*pointing to the other MEN*) For you.

LOVE: Jo, as long as the three of them are here, you are always going to feel like that. You have to ask them to leave.

JO: I don't know if I can.

LONELINESS: She's not going to do that, so give it a rest. Jo, the truth is that you have no one who really cares about you.

HAPPINESS: That's not true. Remember your last birthday party?

JO: Yes.

HAPPINESS: All your friends were there. They came to support you. Wasn't that great?

JO: Yeah. It was really fun. I couldn't believe that they all came.

FAITH: It was great. I remember. I was there.

JO: (*beat*) But then they all left.

LONELINESS: I had to take her home.

JO: I was so lonely. I cried all the way home.

HAPPINESS: Why?

JO: Because I have no one. No one special to take me home and to take care of me on my birthday. And give me that special present they kept until that night.

HAPPINESS: You have something better than that right now. You have all your friends who came to celebrate with you that night.

JO: Yeah, my friends -- who I only see on my birthday because they're too busy to see me any other day. Everyone calls me on my birthday, but no one calls me on a Tuesday. That's what real friends do. If I had someone who loved me, they would call me every night.

HAPPINESS: People don't need to call you every day to love you. That's what they -- (*pointing to the MEN*) Have been telling you.

LONELINESS: Because it's true.

LOVE: And besides, Jo, you will find love. Just because you don't have someone special in your life right now doesn't mean you never will.

JO: When? When will I? I'm thirty-one. It's about time. It's never going to happen.

LOVE: Have you ever been in love?

JO: Yes.

LOVE: And before that, did you ever think that you were never going to find love?

JO: (*beat*) Yes.

LOVE: You see?

JO: I guess you're right.

DEPRESSION: Jo, Jo, Jo. Don't listen to her. First of all, you may never find love again. No one knows that. Not even her! (*pointing to LOVE*) And second of all, they will always leave, so what's the point in even beginning? You know better than that.

HAPPINESS: You know, you're not really helping here.

DEPRESSION: I'm telling her the truth.

HAPPINESS: That is not the truth. She can be happy. She is happy. The problem is the three of you.

PAIN: No. The problem is the three of you filling her head with all those fantasies of love and happiness. We tell it like it is. Jo, you're lonely. You haven't been in a relationship in a year. Everyone you meet is either in a relationship or bores you to death.

LONELINESS: Yeah, you think you're lonely now? Wait until you're older and alone.

FAITH: Jo, don't listen to them.

HAPPINESS: You don't need to be in a relationship to be happy.

LOVE: And to feel loved.

JO: That's not true. I'm only happy when I'm in a relationship.

DEPRESSION: As you should be. And since you're not in a relationship, you're not happy. I think it's called logic.

FAITH: Jo, there is a full life out there that's just waiting for you, and you don't need to be in a relationship to live it. The only reason you think that is because . . . (*pointing to DEPRESSION*) . . . he's telling you that.

PAIN: Jo, do you know what people see when you walk into a room? They see you walk into a room all alone. With no one.

JO: I know.

HAPPINESS: Jo, you know who walks into that room? A woman who's smart and funny and interesting. Don't you agree?

JO: (*hesitating*) Yes. I know.

FAITH: And that's what people see. They don't need to see you with another person to see that.

LOVE: And that's why they all love you. For you.

JO: (*breaking down*) But it doesn't feel like love. I don't feel any love. Even if what you're saying is true. (*beat*) You want to know how I feel? I feel so lonely, even though I could pick up the phone and call ten people right now. I feel like no one's ever going to want to be in a relationship with me, even though I have been in relationships all my life. I feel like no one cares about me, even though I have fifteen messages on my cell phone. And even though I'm so busy every weekend, I feel like I have no one! No one.

(*Beat. EVERYONE looks at each other.*)

FAITH: We're so sorry, Jo.

PAIN: There is nothing more we can say.

DEPRESSION: We think you need to make a decision.

HAPPINESS: Otherwise we could go on like this all night.

JO: I know.

(*Beat. JO takes a deep breath. SHE starts to pace around the room. SHE's lost in herself. EVERYONE watches her. After a few moments, SHE stops.*)

My decision is . . .

(JO looks around at EVERYONE. SHE passes with her look each one of them until the last one.)

Yes . . . no. *(struggling)* I don't know! I don't know what to do!

FAITH: Jo, we're really sorry, but you need to make a decision. *(beat)* It can be no.

PAIN: Or yes!

JO: I really don't know. I really can't.

HAPPINESS: I think that if she can't make one, it's a no.

PAIN: I think that if she can't make one, it's a yes!

HAPPINESS: That doesn't make any sense.

PAIN: Oh, and everything you've said so far tonight has made a lot of sense?

HAPPINESS: Yes. You three should leave her alone!

PAIN: You three should leave her alone!

HAPPINESS: Do you have to repeat everything I say? You don't have anything original to say!

PAIN: Yes, I do. Jo, do it!

HAPPINESS: Stop saying that!

PAIN: I think I'm done talking!

(PAIN takes a step closer to HAPPINESS, trying to start a fight. HAPPINESS gets closer to him.)

HAPPINESS: I'm not scared of you like Jo is!

JO: Okay! Stop it, you two. What are you doing? You're just making this harder.

(PAIN stops and backs off.)

I can't listen to all of you any more. I need to make a decision, fast. That's why we're all here tonight.

(JO closes her eyes and tries to make up her mind.)

(with tears) Ah, I can't! I don't know what to do.

(EVERYONE keeps quiet.)

I can't make this decision by myself. You have to help me!

(JO looks at ALL of them for help.)

LOVE: We're here for you, Jo.

LONELINESS: Yeah, whatever you need.

(They ALL nod in support.)

JO: Okay. *(thinking)* I guess . . . we could . . . *(beat)* Take a vote? Yeah, then we'll be done. *(takes a deep breath)*
Here goes. All in favor of me doing it, raise your hands.

(DEPRESSION, PAIN, LONELINESS, and JO raise their hands.)

Okay. One, two, three, four. Okay, four. Now all in favor of me not doing it, raise your hands.

(LOVE, HAPPINESS, FAITH, and JO raise their hands.)

One, two, three, four. Okay, so we've got four against four. Great. That's a tie. So we can't decide like that. What are we going to do?

DEPRESSION: Jo, can I talk to you for a moment? Alone.

(DEPRESSION takes JO aside.)

Jo, I think you should do it, because no matter if what they say is true or not, it always makes you feel the same. You always feel depressed, so if you always feel that, it makes it true. Come on, Jo, what's the point? You're never going to feel better.

(FAITH barges in on the conversation.)

FAITH: Jo, don't listen to him! Everything we told you is true! You can't see it right now because of him, but as soon as he leaves, you'll see.

DEPRESSION: What, are you eavesdropping on private conversations now?

HAPPINESS: We don't need to hear you to know what you're saying to Jo. You are that predictable!

LOVE: Jo, you know he's just trying to convince you to do it. Don't listen to him. Remember everything we told you. Remember that you are happy and loved, and that you have a great life.

PAIN: Oh, excuse me, but that sounds like a lot of convincing to not do it to me. You're such a hypocrite.

LOVE: You know what your problem is? You can't see how pathetic you are. All you do is make everyone feel pain. How does that help anyone?

PAIN: Are you saying that I'm not as important as you are to everyone?

LOVE: Yes.

PAIN: I am just as important as you are! If I wasn't here tonight, you wouldn't be here, either. You need me to be you. Without me, she . . . *(pointing to HAPPINESS)* . . . couldn't make people happy. People need me to get to any of you three.

DEPRESSION: You all think you're so good and great. But you're only part of it. We are the other part, and there's nothing you can do about it.

FAITH: We can do whatever we can to keep you from being invited anymore.

LONELINESS: And yet there isn't one night we don't spend together.

PAIN: We need to be here just as much as you do. Sorry!

HAPPINESS: All you do is make everyone miserable.

DEPRESSION: No. You're the one who makes everyone so miserable. All they do all the time is complain and cry to us about all of you! "Oh, I can't find love," "Oh, I'm so unhappy."

PAIN: "Oh, I don't have any faith anymore." "Nothing good is ever going to happen to me."

LOVE: That's because they want us and need us. All you do is use what we've created. All you can do is put us down. There is nothing any of you have to give by yourselves. You don't bring anything.

FAITH: It's true! All people do is try to run away from you and believe in me.

DEPRESSION: Exactly. You shouldn't even be in this discussion. People have to have faith in you.

FAITH: Don't ever underestimate the power of faith!

LOVE: Everyone wants to feel love! So all three of you are here because of me!

PAIN: Oh, don't get me started. You know very well that you and I are inseparable. You can't get away from me even if you want to. Wherever you go, there will always be pain.

LOVE: That's because you won't leave me alone!

PAIN: No. That's because you keep calling me up and inviting me over!

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