

The Pact

A ten-minute play

By

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[EXCERPT]

AT RISE: A park bench. Leaves are scattered about. KATE, 33, enters. She looks around.

KATE

Hello?

(She continues looking around.)

Ummm... Hello?

(beat)

This is ridiculous. Why did I ever agree to this?

KATE

It's one year to the minute, Leah. You made me promise. So here I am. Where are you?

(beat)

Like you'd actually turn up.

(beat)

You know under any other circumstances, I would have never made a promise like this. But you had me at a disadvantage.

(beat)

You even made me believe, I swear to God, for just a second, that if anyone could pull it off, you could.

(beat)

All right, look, here's the deal. I'll stay a while, okay? Just to give this thing a fair chance. But then, I'm out of here.

(She takes off her jacket, settles down on the bench, and takes out a book. She begins to read. After a while, she starts humming softly. She realizes what she's humming:)

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh my God. You hear that? I can't believe that's what's going through my head. That's the first song I ever heard you sing... You remember? After five or six people had already had their turn at the guitar, after we'd gone back to filling the room with our nervous chatter, you, the stranger, Vera's godchild from out of town, you just picked up the guitar and began to sing and stopped everyone in mid-sentence. I had noticed you, you know, earlier, walking in wearing those ratty jeans and that revealing top. With all that cheap makeup, and those streaks in your hair. And I thought: Who the hell is she? I know, it sounds awful, but that's what I thought. Anyway...point is... all of that just flew out the window the minute you started to sing. Because, you see, suddenly, I was in love. "Coup de foudre," they call it in French. It doesn't just happen in sexual love. It happens in other ways too.

(Beat)

God. You know the thing I hated about you? It was also the thing I loved best. It was that you had access to magic.

Without a lesson in your life, without knowing how to read music, your fingers skipped across those frets, your voice entered our hearts like a revelation! It was all so effortless! Without forethought and without any question of birthright, you were, at 17, a miracle child, and I just wanted to be around you, to live, as close as I could get, to the magic, while I could.

(Suddenly, she bursts out in anger)

Damn it! Where are you?

(She looks around)

You said you'd be here! One year to the minute, you said! Well, I'm here, where the hell are you?

(There is a shift in lights as LEAH, 29, enters. She seems a little dazed.)

LEAH

I'm here.

(KATE does not appear to be aware of LEAH's presence.)

KATE

Don't you think this was hard for me? To suspend my disbelief like this? You know how I am. But still I hoped there might be something to it... For one year now, I've kept that tiny hope alive, avoiding the truth, the God's honest truth, that you're gone, you're gone forever.

(KATE stands there, in frustration and in tears.)

LEAH

(coming out of her daze)

Boy. Have you got that one wrong!

(She strides up to KATE who still doesn't see her.)

Hi, sweetie, sorry I'm late. You can't imagine how difficult it is to zero in on one eensy-bitty moment in time and space. I had to get all sorts of instruction and, well, you know what kind of student I am! But I'm here now, right? It was a mind-expanding experience getting here, let me tell you!

(Notices KATE isn't reacting. Waves a hand in front of her eyes.)

Hello! Hello! ...Damn.

(KATE angrily wipes the tears away and heads to the bench to pack up her things.)

LEAH

Wait! Don't go, I just got here! ...Well, I can't say I wasn't warned.

They told me it depends more on the receiver than the sender, but hell, I never did trust authority and I told them I could do it. I could send such a powerful communique that Kate would hear me, whether she believed or not! Besides, I told them, we got this bond, you see, we got this bond!

(KATE starts to exit now. LEAH
cries out in frustration.)

Wait! Kate, wait!!

(KATE stops. But it's not clear if this is in response to LEAH or because she has chosen to of her own accord. At any rate, she feels the need again to speak.)

KATE

Well, not that it matters now, but I... brought you something.

(she pulls papers out of her
purse)

It's my newest story. It's about you... actually. About us. Before you got sick.

LEAH

Let me see! Let me see!

(But KATE has already put it
back into her purse. LEAH's
face drops)

KATE

I've still been sending stories out. I know you'd be pissed off if I didn't. But honestly, Leah, the rejections are really starting to get to me.

LEAH

No, no, no, don't let them.

KATE

See, my brother made me that offer again. The one you and I laughed about, It's starting to look good to me. Especially now that my savings are almost shot.

(beat)

God, I wish you were here.

LEAH

I am. I am!