

The Heidi Chronicles

(1974. Outside the Chicago Art Institute. It is raining. Everyone has umbrellas. Women are chanting “women in art.” Their signs say “Chicago Women's Art Coalition.” Heidi is speaking in a bullhorn.)

Heidi : This museum is publicly funded by our tax dollars. “Our” means both men and women. The weekly attendance at this institution is sixty percent female. The painting and appreciation classes are seventy percent female. Yet this “great” cultural center recognizes and displays only two female artists. And its current offering, the age of Napoleon, includes not one female artist. (People ignore the speech and keep walking into the museum). No one is stopping.

(Peter enters in jeans with a backpack. He too carries an umbrella. He is raising his fist as he chants, interrupting the speech)

Peter: No more master penises...no more master penises...no more master penises!!!

Heidi: Peter!

Peter: That was terrific. Just great.

Heidi: Peter this is serious!

Peter: Serious! This is urgent! There I was in my lonely intern's cell reminiscing about the three hundred stab wounds I had stitched last night and contemplating taking two quaaludes for my slight sore throat, when who should be on the pay phone, to say she can't see me because she'll only be in Chicago for four hours, but my innocent youth, my lost love, the lovely and talented Miss Heidi Holland.

Heidi: Thank you for coming. I think.

Peter: You think? (Peter looks around) I'm the only one who came!

Heidi. (Kisses him) You're a good friend.

Peter: And, I am a committed and selfless friend. Do you know what we are missing being out here? (the rain has stopped) Looks like the Gods are smiling on “Women in Art.” You look good.

Heidi. I do?

Peter: A little puffy. A little rhino skin. But you look good. So are you going to stand here until more women buy paints and finish a few masterpieces for this sexist, chauvinistic creepo institution to exhibit?

Heidi: You've become cruel in my absence.

Peter: Not cruel. Dyspeptic. I've developed a violent narcissistic personality disorder.

Heidi: You have?

Peter: Yes. But don't worry my darling. According to my mental health friends, we're heading into a decade of self obsession. I am simply at the forefront of the movement. (pause.) And speaking of the self obsessed and satisfied, how is Poopsie?

Heidi: Scoop! He's in Washington clerking for the Supreme Court.

Peter: Really! He isn't running for president yet! His parents must be ashamed of him. "Harry, Scoop is dead in this house. Do you hear me? Dead!"

Heidi: Actually he and my friend Susan were clerking for the same judge.

Peter: So you're still in touch with him.

Heidi: But I'm not involved with him anymore, I just like sleeping with him.

Peter: What a perky Seventies kind of gal you are! You can separate sexual needs from emotional dependencies.

Heidi: Are you okay?

Peter: Actually, I'm afraid I'm feeling sort of distant from you.

Heidi: Peter, I was writing my dissertation. (They sit on a nearby bench)

Peter: I'm not criticizing you. It's just how I'm feeling. I haven't seen you in eight months.

Heidi: Peter, you need a girlfriend. I have to find you a girlfriend.

Peter: Please don't.

Heidi: You've never liked my girlfriends.

Peter: Women friends. And I like Fran, the furry physicist from Ann Arbor.

Heidi: Fran is unavailable. I promise I'll find someone.

Peter: Heidi, I don't play on your team.

Heidi: Well, umm, but, uh uh

Peter: I prefer Stanley Zinc.

Heidi: Who?

Peter: My friend's name is Stanley Zinc. He's a child psychiatrist at John Hopkins. Anyway I'm thinking of replacing him with a waiter I met last week, we share a mutual distrust of Laura Nyro. I would have told you all this earlier, but I thought we deserved something more intimate than a phone call. So I chose the Chicago Art Institute.

Heidi: I wish Debbie would get back.

Peter: Why in God's name do you wish Debbie would get back!

Heidi: Because you are being impossible!

Peter: How am I being impossible!

Heidi: Fuck off Peter! (goes back to protesting) Women in art! Women in Art!

Peter: (trying to interrupt her) Heidi, I am gay okay! I sleep with Stanley Zinc, M.D. And my liberation and my pursuit of happiness of other men like me is just as politically and socially valid as hanging a couple of god damned paintings because they were signed by someone named Nancy, Gladys, or Gilda. And that's why I came to see you today. I am demanding your equal time and consideration. Heidi, I know that somewhere you think my world view is small and personal and that yours resonates for generations to come.

Heidi: I'm going to hit you.

Peter: Oh c'mon, I dare you. Put up your dukes. (he takes her hand and punches it against his arm) That's for my distorted sexual politics.

Heidi: Correct. (peter punches himself with her hand again)

Peter: And that's because your liberation is better than mine.

Heidi: Correct again. (she begins hitting him on her own) And that's for being so Goddamned...

Peter: Narcissitic? Supercilious?

Heidi: No um..

Peter: Sounds like?

Heidi: Oh I give up. (Suddenly she hits him again) And that's for liking to sleep with men more than

women. (she hits him again) And that's for not being desperately and hopelessly in love with me.

Peter: That hurts.

Heidi: Suffer.

Peter: (Pushing her) And that's for making me feel guilty.

Heidi: I did?

Peter: Yes. (Heidi sighs like it's all over) And that's for not remembering our tenth anniversary!

Heidi: We've known each other for ten years?

Peter: Well nine, but we don't look it. (he puts his arm around Heidi). Heidi, for the first time in my life, I'm optimistic. We just might have very happy lives with enough women's art for everybody. Judy Chicago in the morning, Judy Chicago in the evening, Judy Chicago at dinnertime. Just don't lose your sense of humor and don't marry that Poop.

Heidi: Scoop. (Pause as she looks at him) Peter, I'd like to meet doctor Stanley Zinc. (They embrace. However Peter pulls away and looks out)

Peter: But not imminently, I hope. I left out one thing. Heidi I invited the waiter to meet me here for lunch and take a deep breath, he's actually shown up.

Heidi: (looking out) He's cute.

Peter: He's adorable.

Heidi: He's okay.

END OF SCENE