

TERMINAL HAPPINESS

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Meditative music playing on speakers. Balloons and positivity posters plastered on walls. Laughters in the distance.

MIRANDA (20, bubbly), braided long hair, in a blue pajamas, sits on the floor as she draws a self-portrait (the most prominent feature being her hair). TAAVI (40s, charming), in a pink doctor's coat, stoops next to her.

TAAVI

Well done! A gold star for you.

Taavi puts a gold-star badge on Miranda's pajamas - next to four other gold stars.

TAAVI (cont'd)

That's five stars, which means...?

MIRANDA

Some chemo-cool for me?

TAAVI

That's right!

Miranda stands up and gets on a wheelchair. She puts a blue sock puppet on her lap. NURSE #1 wheels Miranda away.

They are surrounded by CANCER WARRIORS, who are also on the floor drawing, supervised by NURSES in pink uniforms. They're in a hospital ward.

A huge banner dangles on the ceiling: *WE'RE CANCER WARRIORS, AND WE'RE LOVING IT.*

TITLE IN:

TERMINAL HAPPINESS.

Miranda enters from the direction of a 'CHEMO-COOL' room, no stars on her shirt. She approaches Taavi and Nurse #1 who are at a corner, handing out happy pills to a line of Cancer Warriors.

The doors to the main entrance opens to a kiddy chime. Enters FRAN (20s, sarcastic), wearing all black with a backpack on her shoulder - a blot in this sea of pastel.

She strides in, glaring at anyone who dares to give her a look. The sight intrigues Miranda.

Taavi rushes out to greet her.

TAAVI  
Hello, hello, hello! I'm Taavi,  
welcome to Happy Therapy. Let me be  
the first to congratulate you on your  
cancer! You must be Fran, yes?

He shakes Fran's hands, excited like a puppy. Fran tries to yank her hand away, but Taavi's grip is too strong.

FRAN  
(sarcastic)  
Yes, ready for all the happy crap-

TAAVI  
(cuts her off)  
Here, you will learn to have the  
correct attitude to deal with your  
new challenge! Your treatment regime  
means you're going to be here full  
time with us. We're gonna have such  
an exciting and fun journey together!  
(gestures to Miranda)  
This is your new roommate.

Miranda jumps at being put on the spot. She waves shyly.

MIRANDA  
Heya.  
(shows sock puppet)  
Meet my tumour friend, Jimmy.  
(high-pitched)  
Hullo!

Nurse #1 comes by and yanks Fran's backpack away.

FRAN  
Hey, that's mi-

TAAVI  
So, what's your favourite colour?

FRAN  
Um, black.

TAAVI  
(wags finger)  
Ah-ah-ah, let's keep it bright and  
friendly! What comes first to mind  
when you think cancer?

FRAN

Black?

TAAVI

Let's see. Green? Red?

MIRANDA

Yellow?

TAAVI

(pondering)

Yes, yellow's nice. Strong, happy colour.

Taavi whisks out a bunch of socks from his coat pocket and shoves a yellow one in Fran's hands.

FRAN

Between you and me, is there a chance I can get treatment without all this bullsh-

Taavi puts a finger on Fran's lips.

TAAVI

Shhhhhhh.

They stare at each other.

TAAVI (cont'd)

Bad words are a no-no.

FRAN

(muffled)

No, really, I can just skip-

TAAVI

You did sign the paperwork, yes?

FRAN

Yes, bu-

TAAVI

(sing-song)

Then you know this is compulsory. *Everywhere*. No smile, no treatment!

Taavi reaches over. Pulls the corners of Fran's lips up to make a smile.

TAAVI (cont'd)

That's better.

Fran glares at Taavi, her forced smile still in place. Miranda grins brightly at both of them, oblivious.

3 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

3

Their room is like a nursery: Photos of smiling puppies, sunrises and rainbows line the wall.

Fran spots her backpack on the bed. She rummages through it, but it's filled with random stuff. Emoji keychains. Animal stickers. Yellow pajamas. A huge book titled *Positive Techniques*. Fran upends the bag. Nothing else.

Miranda sneaks up to Fran, 'Jimmy' on one hand.

MIRANDA  
(high-pitched)  
Are you a horse?

FRAN  
What?

MIRANDA  
(high-pitched)  
Why the long face then?

Fran chuckles despite herself. She relaxes.

FRAN  
I'm in a bloody prison.

Miranda looks at Fran like she's from Mars.

MIRANDA  
This place is so much fun! Why would you say that?

FRAN  
I wouldn't be here if I had a choice.

MIRANDA  
(high-pitched)  
Don't be so grumpy - a smile a day keeps the doctor away!

FRAN  
Your nose is bleeding.

Miranda looks down at her dripping nose. She wipes it away.

MIRANDA  
 (normal voice)  
 It's all right. Just a little  
tingling.  
 (high-pitched)  
 We have a Technique for *everything*.

Miranda grins. Fran takes a look at her.

FRAN  
 Even for when I'm vomiting black and  
 blue on the floor?

MIRANDA  
 Of course!

Miranda grabs the *Positive Technique* book from the bed.

MIRANDA (cont'd)  
 (flips through book)  
 Look here, Positive...

4 INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

4

TAAVI  
 ...Technique no. 183. Laugh. Laugh.  
 Laugh! There's never a bad situation.  
 There's only a bad perspective.

Several Cancer Warriors gather in a line. Fran and Miranda are also there, Fran now wearing her yellow pajamas. Taavi circles around them to check their postures.

TAAVI (cont'd)  
 Close your eyes. Breath in. Breath  
 out. Picture your tumour. Now picture  
 it...with eyes and ears! Wearing a  
 hat! Singing a song!

The Warriors breath in. Breath out. Some smile.

TAAVI (cont'd)  
 How do you feel? Transform that  
 energy into the most hearty laughter  
 you can get. Get set...Go!

The Warriors all burst into laughters.

Fran waits until Taavi is out of sight to yawn in exaggeration. Other Warriors give Fran a weird look and pretend she's not there.

But Miranda can't take her eyes away from Fran's antics. Fran notices this, and continues, miming silly actions: vomiting, strangling, shooting herself, as if to say *please save me from this boredom*. Miranda snickers.

Taavi appears from behind them.

TAAVI (cont'd)

Fran. It's very important that you learn every technique *properly*.

Fran makes a motion as if about to throw up.

FRAN

Oh sorry, guess I'm just not enough of a trained monkey.

TAAVI

Chemicals only work best with positive thoughts. And people are having fun. Don't you agree, guys?

The Cancer Warriors around them nod and smile.

FRAN

What if, just *what if* - I don't want to smile?

TAAVI

If you want some motivation, we can put you in our 'happy room' - 24 hours of uninterrupted happy music, happy exercises, and happy flashing colours. Your mood will be up in a jiffy!

Fran stays silent.

TAAVI (cont'd)

Or, you can give me the biggest grin you can manage and go get some chemo-cool...Right now!

Taavi holds up a gold star badge, tempting it in front of Fran. Fran manages a huge grin with all teeth.

TAAVI (cont'd)

That's more like it!

He fastens the badge on Fran's shirt. Taavi pats Fran on the head and walks away. Fran waits until he's out of sight and blows raspberry behind his back. Miranda laughs, despite herself.

5 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

5

Taavi's voice drones on from the speakers in the room.

TAAVI (V.O.)  
Rise and shine, warriors. There's  
nothing healthier than catching a  
beautiful sunrise!

Cue morning exercise music. Miranda sits up on her bed. Clumps of fallen hair scatter her pillow. She quickly turns the pillow over to hide it.

FRAN  
Hey, catch.

Fran throws something to Miranda from the bed opposite. It's a pair of earplugs.

FRAN (cont'd)  
If you want some peace and quiet.

MIRANDA  
Where did you even get-

Fran puts the earplugs on and returns to sleep. Miranda eyes the items warily but puts them on. She lies back, fidgets as all the music and noise of the facility fade away. She stares at the ceiling. Closes her eyes. Suddenly calm.

6 INT. PA BOOTH - DAY

6

Taavi sits in his office, watching a surveillance monitor on his desk. On the monitor is the warriors gathering for exercises. This is his sanctuary. He speaks on the PA system.

TAAVI  
Positive Technique no. 185. Exercise!

He presses a button to play a tape on the speakers.

7 INT. DINNING AREA - DAY

7

Taavi's sing-song voice comes from the speakers. The Cancer Warriors stand in a half-circle around Nurse #1.

TAAVI (O.S.)  
(singing)  
*If you've cancer and you know it,  
clap your hands!*



All sing along and clap.

TAAVI (O.S.) (cont'd)  
 (singing)  
*If you've cancer and you know it,  
 stomp your feet!*

All stomp their feet and cheer.

TAAVI (O.S.) (cont'd)  
 (singing)  
*If you've cancer and you know it, if  
 you really wanna show it, if you've  
 cancer and you know it, shout hurray.*

ALL WARRIORS  
 (shouts)  
 Hurray! Hurray!

FRAN & MIRANDA  
 (out of sync)  
 Hurray!

Fran and Miranda are out of sync with everyone else - not too obvious to draw the Nurses' attention.

When the song's over, Fran, under her long hair, takes out the earplugs. She winks at Miranda, who's doing the same.

They share a secret snicker, enjoying their small measure of victory in this fishbowl of a facility.

8 INT. YELLOW CORRIDOR - DAY

8

Miranda's self-portrait on the wall - the same one she drew at the beginning. Fran looks at it, at all the portraits around it. Happy people, with happy faces.

MIRANDA  
 Is yours on here yet?

FRAN  
 Nah...I just can't bring myself to  
 draw a happy face.

Fran takes out a piece of paper from her pocket. It's her self-portrait, all angry and indignant, being dragged away by a devil. It's comical enough that Miranda laughs.

MIRANDA  
 You want to be dragged away by the  
 devil?

FRAN

I feel like I'm going to die any second.

Miranda's not laughing now.

MIRANDA

Don't say that! You're not going to die! Happy people don't die!

FRAN

Aha, try telling that to all the happy people who *did*!

MIRANDA

Why are you afraid of being positive?

FRAN

Why are you afraid of being sad? If you die, I'll be sad for you. They won't. They'll be too busy covering walls with happy faces!

Miranda steers her wheelchair away. Fran calls after her, but Miranda's disappeared along the corridor.

9 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

9

Taavi's face fills up the frame. He is like Big Brother, over-imposing, all powerful.

TAAVI

Remember Technique no. 186. If you believe there's *nothing* wrong with you, there isn't!

Nurse #2 holds up an electric razor. Clumps of hair falls down on the floor as the blade whirrs away. Then, Nurse #2 puts a wig over Miranda.

Miranda looks at her new reflection in the mirror. She seems like a different person.

TAAVI (cont'd)

Just think of it as a trending fashion! Why keep your own hair when you can get any hair, right?

Miranda touches her new head. She reluctantly nods and smiles. Taavi attaches two gold-star badges on her shirt.

TAAVI (cont'd)  
Two gold stars for you! I know you  
wouldn't disappoint me, Miranda.

Taavi pats Miranda's head and leaves.

10 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

10

Miranda can't take her eyes off her reflection. Fran enters and notices the new wig.

FRAN  
Did you shave your hair?

Miranda snaps out of her reverie. She turns to her desk and starts doodling a new self-portrait - with the new wig.

MIRANDA  
It's the new fashion! Didn't you  
know?

Fran looks at Miranda, then rummages in her drawer for her yellow sock puppet. She picks up Miranda's blue sock on the bed, hides them both behind her back and approaches Miranda.

FRAN  
Hey there~

Fran brings her hands up.

FRAN (cont'd)  
(low-pitched)  
I'm afraid you've got cancer.  
(high-pitched)  
Oh no! How many months do I have  
left, doctor?  
(low-pitched,  
dramatic)  
...Tu-more.

MIRANDA  
If you believe you've got two months,  
you probably do.

FRAN  
Hey, it's just a joke.

MIRANDA  
Well, your joke is not going to help  
anybody. Cancer is a gift. It helps  
me become stronger, more-

FRAN

Jesus, not this again. How brainwashed can you be? Cancer's a fucking disease! Feel whatever you want, it won't matter!

MIRANDA

If you want to cling to that, fine-

FRAN

Look-

MIRANDA

- I hope the devil and you are very happy together!

Miranda ends the argument with a face-splitting grin, and returns to the new self-portrait.

Fran throws the sock puppets on the desk and returns to bed. For a moment, she feels dizzy.

FRAN

(murmurs)

Just a tingling...Just a tingling...

The words reach Miranda. But she can't bring herself to talk to Fran. She tries to focus on colouring her new hair, but messes up a line or two in her distraction.

11 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

11

A small party for the Cancer Warriors. Party flags decorate the venue. The Warriors make small talk as they wait in line to get food.

WARRIOR #1

I lost three kilos this week! All this non-appetite is working wonders for my figure!

WARRIOR #2

I know right? As for me, I feel so light in my head I could actually fly!

WARRIOR #3

Oh, yesterday, I tried Technique 183 after chemo-cool, and my tinglings went away, just like that!

Warrior #2 & #3 nod enthusiastically as Miranda hands out full plates of muffins to them.

Miranda looks around and spots Fran at a table sitting alone. Fran looks pale, with her head in her hands.

Miranda grabs some muffins on a plate, then approaches Fran.

MIRANDA

Um, hey-

Fran glances at her. Miranda holds out the plate.

MIRANDA (cont'd)

Muffins?

Fran manages a weak smile and takes it. Miranda plays with 'Jimmy' on her lap.

MIRANDA (cont'd)

About the other day, I just want-

But Fran is not listening. She leans over the table and throws up. It's blood. She collapses.

Miranda stands up to help Fran. But several Nurses beat her to it and shield Miranda from Fran. Miranda slumps back on her wheelchair.

The Nurses promptly clean up the blood and carry Fran away. The door slams shut in Miranda's face.

TAAVI

Guys, guys, eyes on me. I know, let's sing a song! *If you've cancer and you know it, clap your hands...*

Other Cancer Warriors clap along, joining in the singing.

A random Warrior passes by the table. He points at Fran's muffin plate.

WARRIOR #4

You having this?

MIRANDA

No, that's-

He grabs the plate and leave, as though nothing's happened.

The singing echoes on. Miranda claps along in a daze out of habit, but her eyes are glued on the shut door.

12 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

12

Miranda stays up in bed, playing with her 'Jimmy' puppet, waiting for Fran.

Noises come from the corridor. Miranda perks up. But they're two Nurses, coming to clean Fran's side of the room. Miranda's face falls.

A picture falls on the floor in the cleaning frenzy, abandoned. It's Fran's self-portrait. Miranda quickly picks it up - saving the last bit of Fran, out of instinct.

She then turns over and buries herself under the blanket.

13 INT. BLUE CORRIDOR - DAY

13

Miranda, forcing a smile, hurries her wheelchair along the corridor, passing Taavi's positive posters every which way, like she can't wait to be told to be happy.

14 INT. DINNING AREA - CONTINUOUS

14

The Cancer Warriors gather round in a half-circle, with Taavi in the middle. He is telling a fairy tale.

TAAVI

Once upon a time, there lived a sad and angry warrior. She always had a negative outlook on *anything*. Despite the help of her brave and positive friends, she insisted on being gloomy all the time, dragging everyone down. Of course, what comes must come. Her sadness, bit by bit, made her weaker. Eventually, she passed on.

(pause)

So, what's the moral of the story?

WARRIOR #5 raises her hand.

WARRIOR #5

Don't be negative, is that right?

TAAVI

Correct! A gold star for you!

Nurse #2 attaches a gold-star to Warrior #5.

TAAVI (cont'd)  
Give it up for the negative girl  
who's gone to a better place!

Everyone claps and cheers, except for Miranda.

MIRANDA  
Her name is Fran! Why won't you say  
her name?

But her voice is drowned out by the celebration. Miranda  
looks around in horror. She quickly backs out of the room.

15 INT. BLUE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 15

Miranda wheels through the winding corridors. The posters  
surround her, bear down on her, seem to leave no escape.

16 INT. AQUARIUM/CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 16

Miranda, on wheelchair, reaches the PA booth in her mad  
rush. She halts in front of the door. It's unlocked.

With slow, hesitant steps, she stands up and limps inside.

17 INT. PA BOOTH - CONTINUOUS 17

Miranda approaches the microphone. She grips Fran's portrait  
on her lap. She raises her 'Jimmy' to talk to the drawing.

MIRANDA  
(high-pitched)  
Fran, Fran, what's the devil like?

The portrait doesn't say anything.

MIRANDA (cont'd)  
(normal voice)  
Fran, I'm sorry.

It just stares back at her. Miranda looks at the items side  
by side. Takes her 'Jimmy' off and drop it to the ground.

She turns on the system. The feedback from the mike is  
deafening.

18 INT. AQUARIUM/CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 18

Nurse #1 looks up at the feedback sound, confused.

19 INT. DINNING AREA - CONTINUOUS

19

The feedback draws the attention of Taavi and the Warriors.

MIRANDA (O.S.)

My name is Miranda. I have leukemia.  
My nose is constantly bleeding. I  
hate it. I feel like shit every time  
I smell food. Or anything, really. I  
hate it. I'm scared. And tired. So  
tired. I hate it.

TAAVI

Guys, eyes on me!

But Miranda's words resonate, and keep the Warriors' attention.

20 INT. PA BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

20

Miranda wipes away the tears on her face. Takes a breath.

MIRANDA

Let me tell you a true story. About a  
girl who was sarcastic, defiant, but  
honest. Who died from her brain  
cancer. About Fran.

BLACK OUT