

ANNIE. I need the consistent, not the creative.  
 WILLIAMINA. She can do it, Annie. She understands.  
 ANNIE. Good. Please show Miss Leavitt to her station.  
 WILLIAMINA. Will do, Mr. President.  
 ANNIE. You make me crazy and you know you make me crazy.  
 WILLIAMINA. Balance of power, darling. *(Annie exits.)* Alright, you. More questions?  
 HENRIETTA. Is she mean or just to me?  
 WILLIAMINA. Oh nono. She's just meticulous. And blunt. And she sings.  
 HENRIETTA. Sings what?  
 WILLIAMINA. Like a crow, but still. Shows her humanity — atonal though it may be. You want her on your side. She's always on the right one.  
 HENRIETTA. Good. Because I have some pressing issues with ... science.  
 WILLIAMINA. The whole of it?  
 HENRIETTA. A lot of it. As far as I can tell we do not appear to know where we are. Astronomically. Which is shocking. This is the modern age. We've been looking *up* for millennia and we don't know how far away those stars are? We don't know if the Milky Way is the universe? That's just unacceptable.  
 WILLIAMINA. You're fun. But here's some perspective. I was Pickering's housekeeper before he brought me here. So we're a lot of things, but at present we are cleaning up the universe for the men. And making fun of them behind their backs. It's worked for centuries. *(Annie enters with more plates.)*  
 ANNIE. Working isn't talking.  
 Here we like to say: WILLIAMINA.  
 The sky's the limit. The sky's the limit.  
 WILLIAMINA. And there's so damn much of it.  
 ANNIE. And so we work. *(She deposits the plates. The women sit down at their desks and work. As they label each star — a single bright star pops into being in their spare sky, accompanied by a musical note. Rote.)* Star Name —  
 HENRIETTA. Star Name —  
 WILLIAMINA. Star Name —  
 HENRIETTA. Alpha Leonis 3982.  
 ANNIE. Beta Orionis 1713.  
 WILLIAMINA. Ninety-five degrees declination.

**Start**

ANNIE. Seventy-three degrees —  
 HENRIETTA. Fifty degrees.  
 WILLIAMINA. Spectral Class B.  
 ANNIE. Spectral Class B. *(Henrietta takes out her hearing device — The sound of the room softens, dulls. Henrietta and Margaret are normal volume.)*  
 WILLIAMINA. Magnitude: one-point-two-five.  
 ANNIE. Magnitude: point-six-five. *(Margaret appears in a letter.)*  
 MARGARET. Henrietta! We miss you.  
 HENRIETTA. Star Name —  
 MARGARET. And I can't stand the conversation since you left.  
 HENRIETTA. Alpha Andromedae 15.  
 MARGARET. Everyone is so sensible.  
 HENRIETTA. Eighty degrees declination.  
 MARGARET. Please write back.  
 HENRIETTA. Uh-huh. Thirty-three right ascension. *(Peter enters.)*  
 PETER. Morning, ladies.  
 WILLIAMINA. Correct on both counts, Mr. Shaw.  
 ANNIE. Good morning, Mr. Shaw. Back again?  
 WILLIAMINA. And so soon.  
 PETER. Just passing by — Dropping these off — Picking these up.  
 HENRIETTA. Spectral Class A.  
 PETER. Hello, Miss Leavitt.  
 HENRIETTA. Magnitude: two-point — What? Oh. Hello, Mr. Shaw. How are you today?  
 PETER. Good ... *(Lovely, awkward pause, during which he finds nothing else to say, except.)* Bye. *(He leaves quickly, embarrassed again.)*  
 HENRIETTA. He's an odd one.  
 WILLIAMINA. And getting odder.  
 ANNIE. Star Name —  
 HENRIETTA. Star Name —  
 WILLIAMINA. Star Name — *(Time is passing as the sky fills up in swatches. Another letter.)*  
 MARGARET. Henri! Wish you'd be here for Thanksgiving. Daddy's planning a marvelous sermon on *family*.  
 HENRIETTA. Uh-huh. Magnitude: two-point-eight.  
 MARGARET. You missed the news ...  
 HENRIETTA. Star Name.  
 MARGARET. I'm pregnant!  
 HENRIETTA. *(Finally stopping.)* Oh Margie. Oh my goodness.

MARGARET. I think Daddy is happier that I am. And think of it, you're going to be an aunt.

HENRIETTA. I'm going to be an aunt. And you. A mother? Congratulations, Margie, that's such — *(Annie coughs at Henrietta. Henrietta hides the letter.)* Star Name: Alpha Cygnus. Spectral Class A. *(Time is passing as the sky fills up in swatches. Peter enters again ...)*

PETER. Hellohello. Here I come. Coming around.

WILLIAMINA. A lot nowadays.

HENRIETTA. *(Putting in her hearing-aid.)* What's going on?

PETER. Just want to make sure she's — everyone's oriented.

WILLIAMINA. It's been half a year now. I think she can find the bathroom.

HENRIETTA. Am I doing something wrong, Mr. Shaw?

PETER. Nono. Of course not. I'm just ... curious.

WILLIAMINA. Uh-huh.

PETER. About the ... data.

WILLIAMINA. *(To Annie.)* Oh yes, he's dreaming about the "data."

ANNIE. We're a bit busy today, Mr. Shaw. Unless you have a message for the room?

PETER. Oh — yes — Dr. Pickering and I wanted Miss Leavitt's opinion on something of great interest. If I may steal a moment.

ANNIE. You may borrow Miss Leavitt, not steal her.

PETER. Of course. Just an expression.

WILLIAMINA. Was it?

HENRIETTA. I'm so glad Dr. Pickering values my opinion. I didn't know he noticed me at all.

PETER. He did. And does. *(He holds a star plate and points to a spot, but this is obviously just a reason to get close to her.)* I was — We were wondering if you could explain what sort of phenomena this might be? I haven't seen anything like it on the other plates and thought of you — *that you* might offer some clarity. *(She looks. She knows.)*

HENRIETTA. Well, Mr. Shaw. That's definitely a scratch.

PETER. Is it?

HENRIETTA. I'm guessing someone's pocketwatch or perhaps a belt buckle?

PETER. A scratch.

WILLIAMINA. We can name it after you if you'd like?

PETER. No need. Glad that's cleared up. Time to go.

ANNIE. Yes indeed.

HENRIETTA. *(Something in her warms to him.)* Thank you. For asking, Mr. Shaw. We're always here if you need us. *(Peter deeply appreciates Henrietta in this moment. He smiles and leaves just as — Time is passing as the sky fills up in swatches. Another letter.)*

MARGARET. Henrietta.

ANNIE. Thirty-two degrees.

MARGARET. Will we see you for Easter?

WILLIAMINA. Magnitude: six-point-two.

MARGARET. Daddy's asking for you.

HENRIETTA. Spectral Class B.

MARGARET. And I'd love to have you home —

HENRIETTA. Forty-five —

MARGARET. Henrietta, it's —

HENRIETTA. Magnitude —

MARGARET. *Henrietta.*

HENRIETTA. What? Yes. What?

MARGARET. I have a son.

HENRIETTA. Oh. Oh, Margie.

MARGARET. His name is Michael.

HENRIETTA. You have a son.

MARGARET. You should meet him.

HENRIETTA. I should — *I will* — How did this happen already?

MARGARET. It's April.

HENRIETTA. Oh my. Is it? It is.

MARGARET. Henrietta, let me tell you, babies are remarkable.

HENRIETTA. I'm sure but I'm sorry — I'm just so busy.

MARGARET. Too busy for me?

HENRIETTA. Too busy for *me* at the moment.

MARGARET. Can't you come home?

HENRIETTA. There are a lot of stars out there.

MARGARET. But you'd be so proud. I've found my calling!

HENRIETTA. Uh-huh.

MARGARET. I will compose!

HENRIETTA. Music? How nice.

MARGARET. When the baby's down and everything's clean it's just me and the piano.

HENRIETTA. That's great.

MARGARET. It's not a hobby.

HENRIETTA. I have to work.

MARGARET. It's very exciting.

**End**