

**THE ROWBOAT WIDOW**  
**By Carey Perloff**

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## CHARACTERS

**CRYSTAL DARWIN** A tough, curvaceous woman in her late forties, lives in a ruined house in the Far Rockaways but dreams of glory. Smokes and drinks with gusto.

**MITCHELL DARWIN** Mid-fifties but looks ancient, scrawny and sunburnt and homeless at the top of the play. A vagrant with a taste for Dante and a longing to come home.

**JEB DARWIN** Mid-twenties, son of Crystal and Mitchell. A pool man, he has always been described as “slow”. Everything he knows in life he has learned from children’s books.

**DERMOTT MacDONALD** An insurance broker, early forties with very white hands

LIGHTS UP TO REVEAL CRYSTAL DARWIN'S HOME, A BEDRAGGLED ROW HOUSE IN THE ROCKAWAYS, WITH ONE SIDE COMPLETELY RIPPED AWAY. THERE IS A WORN OUT SIGN READING "WE SHOOT LOOTERS" LEANING ON ITS SIDE ON THE PORCH, AND A RED "RESTRICTED USE" WARNING IS TAPED ACROSS THE DOOR. IT IS APRIL 2014, A YEAR AND A HALF AFTER HURRICANE SANDY HIT NEW YORK. WE SEE A MODEST LIVING ROOM, WITH A FRONT DOOR LEADING OUT ONTO A PORCH. THERE ARE PILES OF COBALT BLUE BATHROOM TILES EVERYWHERE.

CRYSTAL IS ON THE PHONE, SMOKING A CIGARETTE AT THE SAME TIME.

DERMOTT

You deserve it.

CRYSTAL

You think so?

DERMOTT

You know you do. Besides, what's life without a little risk? "Crystal Darwin, Too Fabulous To Fail."

CRYSTAL

You have a mouth on you.

DERMOTT

You only live once.

CRYSTAL

Once is more than enough.

DERMOTT

How *else* are you going to pay for things around here if you don't borrow? (SHE TAKES A BIG DRAG ON HER CIGARETTE, BLOWS OUT CLOUDS OF SMOKE) You smoke too much.

CRSYTAL

I'm making up for all those lost years.

DERMOTT

Mitch didn't let you smoke?

CRYSTAL

He said he had asthma. I think he was just too cheap.

DERMOTT

Well nothing's going to happen till you find that title.

CRYSTAL

Okay, I'll look for it. Just as soon as I have time. First I've gotta finish tiling the bathroom.

DERMOTT

If you got the money, someone else could tile the bathroom.

CRYSTAL

You have a point.

DERMOTT

(PECKING HER ON THE CHEEK) See you tonight.

CRYSTAL

That's all I get?

DERMOTT

For now. (HE EXITS)

CRYSTAL PUTS OUT HER CIGARETTE. LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW AND SURVEYS THE VIEW).

CRYSTAL

Fucking dump. (TURNS AND SURVEYS THE ROOM. WANDERS AROUND A BIT) Okay! If you were the title to this dump of a house, where would you be? (SHE STOPS. GETS AN IDEA. SITS ON THE COUCH AND DIALS HER SON. WAITS. HE PICKS UP) Jeb? Where are you, son? (PAUSE) Has everyone else gone home? (BEAT) OK, I need you to do something for me. Just listen, it's real simple. First of all I need one of those brochures you people give out to folks who want a pool. (BEAT) I'm sorry? Yeah. Not the kind of pool that sits on top—the kind you have to dig for. That's right. Can you get me one of those? A clean one? With the prices on it? (BEAT) And Jeb? Jeb, listen to me—are you near Mr. Sawyer's Inbox? His *inbox*, sugar. It's a *box*—and you put things *in* it. You know, like signed contracts and things. I think it's on that file cabinet by the door. Yeah, that's the one. Anything in the Inbox? Well see what it is! (BEAT) An envelope? OK. Is it sealed? (BEAT) Is it thick, like a contract? (BEAT) That's perfect, dear. That's what mama needs to look at. Take it. (BEAT) I said *take it*. That's right. (BEAT) Mr. Sawyer won't know. He'll think it's lost. (BEAT) Don't be silly, things get lost all the time! (BEAT) Get over it, Jeb, we'll give it back. I just wanna *look* at it. (BEAT. STARTING TO YELL) For chrissake, Jeb, take the envelope, put it in your backpack, and bring it home, you hear me? I'll expect you in half an hour! That's right, son! Don't get distracted. Take a deep breath and tell me what you're going to do. (SHE LISTENS TO JEB TELL HER) That's right. Now do it.

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. CRYSTAL LOOKS TOWARDS THE DOOR.  
Hang on...

(ANOTHER KNOCK)

CRYSTAL

(YELLING OUT) I'm busy! Go away! (ANOTHER KNOCK. INTO PHONE) Jeb  
sweetie, someone's at the door. (THE KNOCKING GETS MORE INSISTENT. SHE  
PADS OVER TO THE DOOR SUSPICIOUSLY) Who's out there? What do you want?

MORE KNOCKING.

CRYSTAL

Cut it out! I said go away! This is private property! (INTO THE PHONE) Okay, son, I'll  
see you soon. (SHE HANGS UP THE PHONE. MORE KNOCKING. YELLING  
OUTSIDE) You want me to call the cops?

(A VOICE IS HEARD OUTSIDE THE DOOR. IT IS MITCH)

MITCH

(QUIETLY) No ma'am.

CRYSTAL

Who's out there?

MITCH

May I use your facilities?

CRYSTAL

My what?

MITCH

Facilities. (PAUSE) Toilet. (PAUSE) I need to take a leak!

CRYSTAL

Are you kidding me? Go to the shelter—it's in the old porn theater.

MITCH

Where have all the houses gone...?

CRYSTAL

(SINGING, TO THE TUNE OF "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?") Where have all  
the houses gone... long time passing? (SHE GOES BACK TO HER TILING)

MITCH

(INTERRUPTING) I mean it! What happened to the houses?

CRYSTAL

They were ripped up by the storm. Obviously. Go away!

MITCH

(INSISTENTLY) All of them? (BEAT) Is this 75<sup>th</sup> Street?

CRYSTAL

Used to be!

MITCH

(PANICKING) It can't be! (LOOKING BEWILDERED) How come you're the only one left?

CRYSTAL

What's it to you?

HE STARTS KNOCKING AGAIN. DESPERATELY.

MITCH

Open up!

CRYSTAL

Not on your life! I'm busy! I'm tiling my bathroom!

MITCH

What color?

CRYSTAL

What color?! (SILENCE. SHE SURVEYS THE TILES WITH PRIDE) Cobalt blue! I'm tilin' it cobalt blue!

MITCH

Isn't that for swimming pools?

CRYSTAL

It's the color of serenity.

MITCH

Says who?

CRYSTAL

Oprah.

MITCH

*Oprah?* (TRYING TO PIECE IT TOGETHER) So you didn't evacuate?

CRYSTAL

Nope.

MITCH

Even when the house got ripped in two? Jesus! We always evacuated!

CRYSTAL

We who? (PAUSE) What are you, the tax man or something?

MITCH

Not on your life.

CRYSTAL

(CROSSING TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW) Well you're not selling Bibles, I can see that much!

MITCH

(WANLY) Surprise!

CRYSTAL

Excuse me?

MITCH

Don't cry.

CRYSTAL

Why would I cry?

MITCH

You'll cry when you look through the keyhole.

(SHE DOES, QUICKLY, THEN PULLS AWAY)

CRYSTAL

I don't know you.

MITCH

(BEWILDERED) You sure? Look again!

CRYSTAL

You stink, whoever you are! I can smell you from here—

MITCH

Keep looking!

CRYSTAL

(SHE DOES) Never saw you in my life.

MITCH

(GETTING DESPERATE) Try harder! Use your imagination!

CRYSTAL

Give me a break. I'm warning you—

MITCH

I'm not a thief, I promise—

CRYSTAL

Well that's lucky because I'll shoot you if you are. Look at the sign. "WE SHOOT LOOTERS!"

MITCH

(LOOKING AT IT) I'm not a looter, I promise. (BEWILDERED) You sure this is 75<sup>th</sup> Street? (HE LOOKS AROUND)

CRYSTAL

There is no more 75<sup>th</sup> Street! There's no more 76<sup>th</sup> or 77<sup>th</sup> or 78<sup>th</sup> streets! They're *gone*! The Rockaways are no more! Forget about it! We are an island unto ourselves out here.

MITCH

A what?

CRYSTAL

An island!

MITCH

Look, you've gotta let me in. Just let me look at the stairs. Then I'll know.

CRYSTAL

Know what?

MITCH

You want me to smash my way in?

CRYSTAL

Don't you dare! I'm very cozy with the police.

MITCH

(WHISPERING URGENTLY) Listen to me!

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CRYSTAL  
I'm expecting someone any moment!

MITCH  
That's a lie!

CRYSTAL  
And I have two attack dogs in here.

MITCH  
They won't bite. They know me!

CRYSTAL  
Don't bullshit me, mister. Go find a wet mattress and lie down.

MITCH  
I'm starving and I need a piss!

CRYSTAL  
Not my problem.

MITCH  
Let me speak to your husband then.

CRYSTAL  
He's dead.

MITCH  
Dead?

CRYSTAL  
Washed away in the storm. One minute he was on the porch, next he was gone. Went to check out the rising waters in his little old rowboat, and never came back.

MITCH  
That's not what happened!

CRYSTAL  
How do you know?

MITCH  
What about the dogs?

CRYSTAL  
The dogs crawled back after a few days, bug-eyed and starving and soaked to the bone. Then they died.

MITCH

Fuck! Did you even *look*?

CRYSTAL

What do you think, I'm heartless or something?! My boy drove up and down the coast for days in the old pick up truck, bawlin' his eyes out, till I made him come home.

MITCH

Why'd you do that?

CRYSTAL

He's slow. Can't be by himself.

MITCH

Is he in there? (PAUSE) What have you done with him? (PAUSE) You hear me? What's going on in there? Who's living here now?

CRYSTAL

Me! Just fabulous me!

MITCH

Let me look at you.

CRYSTAL

No. I don't have time for vagrants.

MITCH

Vagrants? What the fuck is a vagrant? (SILENCE) Goddamn I gotta relieve myself. Does that toilet under the stairs still work?

CRYSTAL

The toilet under the stairs is the toilet I'm tiling.

MITCH

OK then. Lemme pee in it.

CRYSTAL

No way!

MITCH

Come on—you can't deny me that! I have puked in that toilet. I have pissed on those stairs. I have passed out on that carpet.

CRYSTAL

(SCARED) That's a lie.

MITCH

It's the lord's truth.

CRYSTAL

Are you psycho? The Rockaways are full of homeless nutcases wandering around these days.

MITCH

Why? It was a good neighborhood—

CRYSTAL

Once the lunatics got out of Creedmoor Psychiatric they never got 'em back! I'm telling you-- go to the shelter—they'll give you some soup.

MITCH

I fucking *hate* soup. If I never ate another bowl of soup-- (LOOKING AROUND) There was a tree here, wasn't there? A big tree with a tire swing —?

CRYSTAL

It's gone. *Everything's* gone! Torn up by the roots.

MITCH

That was a great tree. It just grew too near the window is all. He couldn't stop himself from crashing through that day, on his swing--

CRYSTAL

That wasn't my fault! I told him not to pump so hard!

MITCH

Yeah. (BEAT) And now the tree's gone. (BEAT) Maybe God wanted us to forget.

CRYSTAL

(BEGINNING TO PANIC) Forget what? Who told you about the tire swing? (SHE OPENS THE DOOR DEFIANTLY. STARES AT HIM) Don't mess with me, mister. You'll be sorry.

MITCH

I'm already sorry.

CRYSTAL

You're not sorry, you're nuts.

MITCH

Don't pretend you don't know.

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CRYSTAL  
Know what?

MITCH  
Who I am.

CRYSTAL  
How would I know?

MITCH  
Isn't your name Crystal? Like a Crystal ball?

CRYSTAL  
Very funny. You read it on the mailbox is all. You don't know me and I don't know you.  
Go away. NOW. Before I scream.

MITCH  
If you don't let me at that toilet, I'll have to piss right here on your very clean front porch.

CRYSTAL  
No! I said get lost!

MITCH  
(BEGINS COUNTING) One. Two. Three... (HE BEGINS UNZIPPING HIS FLY)

CRYSTAL  
Oh for the love of Jesus! (SHE OPENS THE DOOR) Make it quick. (MITCH PASSES BY HER, LIMPING PAINFULLY, AND ENTERS THE HOUSE. SHE STARES AT HIM AS HE CROSSES. THEN SHE GOES OUTSIDE. SITS ON THE PORCH SWING. INHALES. COUGHS LOUDLY. DIALS ON HER CELL PHONE. WAITS. WHISPERS) Hey there. It's me. (PAUSE) *Crystal*. What? (WHISPERS LOUDER) Because I have to. Listen, something's happened. (PAUSE) No, I didn't forget. I'm going to be late, is all. (PAUSE) I can't leave right now. What? Of course I'm ready. I've been ready for months. (PAUSE) That sounds nice. (PAUSE) No no, no cold feet. Just dealing with a sick dog, is all. OK then. I'll be there as soon as I can. (SHE HANGS UP, GOES BACK INSIDE)

MITCH ENTERS THE ROOM, ZIPPING HIS FLY. LIMPING. IN PAIN, BUT TRYING TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.

MITCH  
Thank you.

CRYSTAL  
Don't mention it.

MITCH

(LEANING AGAINST THE WALL) That was a religious experience...

CRYSTAL

Huh?

MITCH

Like a yellow river pouring into a white toilet bowl in a cobalt blue bathroom. Beautiful.

CRYSTAL

What are you talking about?

MITCH

I must've pissed for ten minutes. (PAUSE. HE AND CRYSTAL STARE AT EACH OTHER) Look at *you*.

CRYSTAL

Look at you. (TOTALLY MYSTIFIED) Who *are* you?

MITCH

The Old Man from the Sea.

CRYSTAL

The Old Man AND the Sea. AND. God people are illiterate. (PAUSE. STANDING ON HER DIGNITY) I don't believe I know you. So now that you've relieved yourself, if you could kindly leave my house—(MITCH SMILES. STARES AT HER APPRECIATIVELY) What're you starin' at?

MITCH

(SMILING) You look *good*.

CRYSTAL

I'm in mourning!

MITCH

So clean.

CRYSTAL

Of course I'm clean—what do you think I am?

MITCH

It's been a long time since I've been close to a clean woman.

CRYSTAL

I'm not surprised.

MITCH

(CIRCLING BEHIND HER) And curvy. I like it. You're almost ... (HE SEARCHES FOR THE WORD)... hot. Gimme a hug. (MOVES TOWARDS HER)

CRYSTAL

Cut it out! You smell like a dead pig.

MITCH

We can fix that. I'm going to get into that cobalt blue tub and climb out a perfect specimen--

CRYSTAL

Of what?

MITCH

Of manhood, baby! You're gonna be so proud you're my wife!

CRYSTAL

(STARING AT HIM) Your *wife*? In what universe am I your wife? You're a bum.

MITCH

Nevertheless.

CRYSTAL

And you've had your piss, so get out or I'll call the cops.

MITCH

On what grounds?

CRYSTAL

Breaking and entering.

MITCH

You let me in.

CRYSTAL

To take a leak.

MITCH

What if I told you this was my home?

CRYSTAL

I'd tell you it's not.

MITCH

Wait and see.

CRYSTAL

I'm not seeing anything!

MITCH

You're seeing me. I'm not a ghost. I've come back.

CRYSTAL

No one comes back! Not when they've been dead for over a year!

MITCH

People change.

CRYSTAL

No they don't!

MITCH

There are miracles every day. We just don't always see 'em.

CRYSTAL

What do you think this is, Bible Study?

MITCH

Something like that.

CRYSTAL

You don't have a leg to stand on. Not a leg.

MITCH

Then I'd better sit down. (HE DOES)

CRYSTAL

Get up! You think you can dump that disgusting carcass all over my furniture?

MITCH

Lemme explain. (BEAT) This time last year, I decided to quit.

CRYSTAL

Quit what?

MITCH

Everything. Every fucking thing. I quit smoking, I quit talking, I quit pretending, I quit using my name, I just quit.

CRYSTAL

People don't quit. They either kill themselves, or they keep going the way they were...

MITCH

Not necessarily. There's lots of things in between—

CRYSTAL

Like what?

MITCH

Like drifting out to sea in an old rowboat and staring at the shore. Like sleeping in church basements and drinking holy wine. Like-

CRYSTAL

Why would anyone do that?

MITCH

Because the longer you don't come home, the longer you don't come home.

CRYSTAL

What is that, a country tune? You trying to scare me? I'm not scared. I'm just—(PAUSE. SHE IS SCARED. ) I don't know what I am! Appalled! Who are you to come waltzing in here and--

MITCH

Waltzing? Who's waltzing? (HE SWAYS A LITTLE) No one's waltzing. (STAGGERS) I'm barely sitting. (HE SINKS INTO THE COUCH, EXHAUSTED)

CRYSTAL

Get up!

MITCH

I've been fantasizing about its blueness... burrowing deep into its downy softness...all year... I was sleeping on the fucking sidewalk... but in my heart, I was dreaming... about... this... (HE BEGINS TO NOD OFF. SHE STARES AT HIM. LONG PAUSE. CROSSES CLOSE TO HIM. HORROR)

CRYSTAL

This is not happening. Please god don't this let be happening! (SHE LEANS OVER THE SLEEPING MITCH) I mean, even on Oprah, people don't reemerge from the dead. It takes a *miracle*. It takes the hand of *God*! (SHE SURVEYS HIS FACE. TOUCHES IT) Look at that! Like a rotten piece of fruit. Wow. Help me, God! Not in my wildest worst nightmare. NO.

THE PHONE RINGS. SHE GRABS IT FAST, VOICE SLIGHTLY COY.

CRYSTAL

Crystal Darwin. (BEAT. LETS THE COY VOICE DROP. SLIGHT PANIC) Hey Jeb. You on your way? (PAUSE) You did what? Why the hell did you talk to *anyone*, Jeb—I told you to take the envelope and come right home! (BEAT) He said what? (PAUSE) So what! So what if there are cracks! It's not your problem! You hear me? You know nothing and you're just doing your job! And stop talking to Sam! (PAUSE. SHARPLY) Now listen, sugar—change of plans. Don't come to the house—go to your apartment and I'll be over real soon. I have some company over right now. (BEAT) No! Someone else! An old friend. Needed to use the facilities. (PAUSE) The facilities. (PAUSE) The *toilet!* (PAUSE) No, that wouldn't be a good idea, dear. You wouldn't like him. (PAUSE) Because he smells. But he's going right home, just as soon as he does his business. (PAUSE) You're hungry? (SHE SIGHS) Got any of those spare ribs left? How 'bout you eat those while you're waiting for mama? Use plenty of napkins with 'em so you don't get sauce all over your clothes, you hear me? What're you wearing? (PAUSE) The blue one? That's okay—blue won't show. Just don't spill on your backpack. And keep that envelope clean! (PAUSE) Go on, then. Don't worry about a thing. I'll come by just as soon as I can. (SHE HANGS UP. THEN SHAKES MITCH AWAKE)

MITCH

Stop it! Get off me! OFF! Get lost!

CRYSTAL

Hey! (SHE TOUCHES HIM. HE FAILS AROUND WILDLY)

MITCH

Go away! I gotta knife!

CRYSTAL

You what?! (SHE SHAKES HIM) Wake up! This is enough! (HE SLOWLY OPENS HIS EYES. PANICKED. )

MITCH

Where am I?

CRYSTAL

On the couch.

MITCH

What couch?

CRYSTAL

My couch.

MITCH

(TOTALLY CONFUSED) Who're you?

CRYSTAL

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Why do you ask?

MITCH

(STARING AT HER) Am I dreaming?

CRYSTAL

Maybe.

MITCH

Am I dead? Is this the Inferno?

CRYSTAL

The what? Stop it. Where's the knife?

MITCH

Nowhere. They told us to say that. If we got attacked.

CRYSTAL

Who's attacking you?

MITCH

(LOOKING AROUND. PANICKING) This isn't a home! It's a swimming pool!

CRYSTAL

It's gonna be a new bathroom.

MITCH

What new bathroom?

CRYSTAL

I already told you! Now get up. I have to go see my kid.

MITCH

What kid?

CRYSTAL

My son!

MITCH

Where is he?

CRYSTAL

He moved out.

Why? MITCH

None of your business. CRYSTAL

He'll get in trouble. MITCH

So what! CRYSTAL

What do you mean? You're his mother! MITCH

You don't know me. CRYSTAL

Maybe you're right! You don't look like anyone I know... (PARANOID) You got another man in here? MITCH

Huh? CRYSTAL

I'll bet there's another man in here! MITCH

What's it to you? CRYSTAL

Don't lie to me! MITCH

I am a widow, mister, and I am living my life the way I choose. End of discussion. CRYSTAL

(STARING AT HER, HORRIFIED) How can you say that? This isn't how it was supposed to be! MITCH

How what was supposed to be? CRYSTAL

MITCH

Like the Odyssey! Or one of those movies on the Lifetime channel! Where's the faithful family retainer?

CRYSTAL

The what?

MITCH

A dog is supposed to be barking as the old man comes up the walk in disguise!

CRYSTAL

Oh yeah?

MITCH

Where's the shock of recognition? The tearful reunion? Something is totally wrong with this picture—

CRYSTAL

Well maybe you're in the wrong house.

MITCH

(ANXIOUS) You think so? (HE STARTS PICKING THINGS UP, EXAMINING THINGS.)

CRYSTAL

(FIRMLY) Let me tell you something, mister. My husband wanted to disappear. You understand?

MITCH

How do you know?

CRYSTAL

Who else sets off to explore the neighborhood five minutes before a hurricane hits? Everyone else was in the shelters—but not Mitch—he took off with a bottle of bourbon and was never seen again!

MITCH

Wow. What about the dogs?

CRYSTAL

I told you! The dogs died.

MITCH

You killed the dogs?!

CRYSTAL

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I didn't kill 'em. They must've swallowed a lot of crap in all that water—they rolled around on the porch with swollen bellies for a few days, and then they died.

MITCH

Let me see the boy.

CRYSTAL

No way!

MITCH

I've gotta see him! That's why I'm here! I have to tell him something!

CRYSTAL

He's not here. (BEAT. MITCH STARES AT HER) I rented him an apartment, down the street.

MITCH

*A what?*

CRYSTAL

He wouldn't stop crying. Drove me nuts.

MITCH

You kicked your own son out cause he was *crying??*

CRYSTAL

He's twenty-three years old! Its time he lived on his own!

MITCH

Why?

CRYSTAL

That's what people *do*.

MITCH

What people?

CRYSTAL

Lots of people! Kids grow up, and move out. They have their *own* lives.

MITCH

On whose nickel?

CRYSTAL

What's it to you?

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MITCH

You said he was retarded.

CRYSTAL

We don't use that word. We say "slow".

MITCH

We who?

CRYSTAL

I am looking out for him, don't worry.

MITCH

With what? You don't have two cents to your name.

CRYSTAL

I'm doing just fine!

MITCH

How? You been stealin'?

CRYSTAL

Takin' what's mine.

MITCH

*I'm* the only thing that's yours. (RESOLUTELY) Lemme take a bath.

CRYSTAL

Not in my house you're not.

MITCH

(INSISTENTLY) I'm gonna take a bath and clear my mind. And while I take a bath, you're gonna make me dinner. Understand?

CRYSTAL

Are you threatening me?

MITCH

(HE IS THREATENING HER) You're gonna make me dinner. You got that? We're gonna eat. And when I'm *clean*, and I am *full*, then we'll talk.

CRYSTAL

No! No we won't! Those days are over, buster.

MITCH

Oh yeah?

CRYSTAL

Yeah! I don't answer to anyone now!

MITCH

(A QUICK SHIFT) Okay then. (BEAT) How 'bout I make dinner for you?

CRYSTAL

What?

MITCH

You sit down. Put your feet up.

CRYSTAL

Now I *know* you're not Mitch!

MITCH

I'm gonna knock you out with my cuisine.

CRYSTAL

(DUMBFUNDED) You are?

MITCH

You bet. Just as soon as I've had my bath. (HE EXITS. SHE WATCHES HIM IN HORROR)

LIGHTS CHANGE. WHEN THEY COME UP AGAIN, CRYSTAL IS HUDDLED IN THE CORNER, ON HER CELL PHONE.

CRYSTAL

(WITH ANXIETY) Was that the beep? (PAUSE) Did it beep? Where's the fucking beep? (PAUSE. FAUX CALM VOICE) Hello there, it's me again! Your friend Crystal! It's about 4 o'clock. I'm not sure why you're not answering—I have left at least *three* messages. (GAILY) I guess that's the life of a busy man on the go—always running from pillar to post! No time to check your phone! (PAUSE) Listen, I've hit a little snag—nothing to worry about—but I'm not going to make it to your office today by six. I know this was the deadline but I've had an unexpected—visitor. Who knew?! One of those crazy days! (PAUSE. DEEP BREATH. BUSINESSLIKE) So how 'bout this? Put the papers in your briefcase and bring them to the Blue Moon at nine. I'll sign them there. Understand? Just put an "x" on all the places that need my signature and Bob's your uncle. You got that? (PAUSE. PURRING AGAIN) I'll wait for you in the parking lot. I'll be the blonde in the pink lipstick.

MITCH

(FROM OFFSTAGE) Crystal? (EXCITED, CALLING FROM OFFSTAGE) You ready?

CRYSTAL

(WITH AN EDGE IN HER VOICE) Call me back to confirm. (COVERS THE PHONE. YELLS OFFSTAGE) I'm not holding my breath, if that's what you think. (BACK INTO PHONE. PURRING) Okay! That's all for now. Bye bye. (SHE HANGS UP)

MITCH

(FROM OFFSTAGE, YELLING) Prepare yourself for a surprise! The ladies in the homeless shelter thought I was hot.

CRYSTAL

“Hot” as in stolen?

MITCH

Hot as in “firin’ on all cylinders”. You ready? Close your eyes.

CRYSTAL

(DOES SO) They're closed.

THE DOOR OPENS. MITCH ENTERS. HE IS TOTALLY CLEAN NOW, HAIR WASHED, THE WORKS. HE LOOKS PRETTY GOOD—KIND OF A LIKE A HUGE BRONZED SEA GOD, BUT LIMPING BADLY. HE IS WRAPPED IN A LARGE BEACH TOWEL, HIS SUBSTANTIAL GIRTH PULLING AT THE FABRIC. CRYSTAL OPENS HER EYES.

CRYSTAL

Holy Jesus! (SHE RUSHES TO THE BLINDS AND CLOSES THEM) Put some clothes on!

MITCH

I haven't got clothes.

CRYSTAL

Don't blame me! I gave Mitch's clothes to Good Will—Oprah says that's part of the healing process—

MITCH

What the hell does *she* know?

CRYSTAL

Look at you! You're—

MITCH

What? What am I?

CRYSTAL

Huge!

MITCH

That's right. (HE SMILES) Whaddaya think?

CRYSTAL

Oh my god. Stop it! What kind of guy walks in here half naked, struts his stuff in a towel and expects me to cream myself?

MITCH

How 'bout some *tears*? This is a reunion we're having here!

CRYSTAL

No it's not, it's a freak show.

MITCH

I haven't been this clean since 1958. Year of my birth! Look!

CRYSTAL

(CROSSING TO HIM SLOWLY. STARING) Holy shit.

SHE REACHES OUT TO TOUCH HIM, AS IF TO TEST WHETHER HE'S REAL. HE SUDDENLY RECOILS.

MITCH

Don't touch me like that!

CRYSTAL

Like what?

MITCH

Like I was a ghost.

CRYSTAL

You *are* a ghost.

MITCH

Says who?

CRYSTAL

Me!

MITCH

You think so?

CRYSTAL

I know so.

MITCH

Maybe if I had some clothes... (ANXIOUS) What am I supposed to do with no clothes? A man's gotta have *clothes* if he wants to hold his head up in the world—

CRYSTAL

Not my problem!

MITCH

Stop saying that! It's *all* your problem. Let's make dinner.

CRYSTAL

(SUDDENLY REMEMBERING) Dinner! Shit! Poor Jeb is sitting at his kitchen table waitin' for mama to come with his dinner. Damn! What'll I tell him?

MITCH

Tell him to come on over and we'll cook up a huge pot of spaghetti and—

CRYSTAL

(PANICKING) No! No no no—you don't understand. He's got his dad's remains under his bed—

MITCH

What remains?

CRYSTAL

You know-- two skeet rifles-- a bunch of pill bottles with Mitch's name on 'em—his favorite mop-- some fishing tackle—

MITCH

Fishing tackle? Did we ever go fishing?

CRYSTAL

How do I know? Jeb gathered up whatever he could find and stuck it in a box labeled "Papa."

MITCH

Maybe *he* has my clothes!

CRYSTAL

Closure! He needed closure!

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

What's closure?

CRYSTAL

It's something that helps you let go. The insurance man told us about it.

MITCH

What insurance man? (PAUSE. CRYSTAL LOOKS CAUGHT.)

CRYSTAL

Put the dead to rest. That's what he told us to do.

MITCH

The dead don't die! That's what they say! They just come on back for round two.

CRYSTAL

(BUSTLING ABOUT) Look, I gotta take my son his dinner.

MITCH

I'll come with you.

CRYSTAL

No you won't! You're wearing a towel!

MITCH

How 'bout my old painter's pants? They must be here.

CRYSTAL

What painter's pants?

MITCH

Wasn't I wearing painter's pants the day Jeb...? (PAUSE) I think you saved 'em. So we'd remember.

CRYSTAL

I forgot.

MITCH

Don't tell me I'm making this up--

CRYSTAL

Who knows what you're doin'? I've gotta go--

MITCH

Don't leave me alone!

CRYSTAL

What am I, your mother?

MITCH

My wife. Remember? You're my lawfully wedded wife!

CRYSTAL

Listen to me. I don't know what you're talking about and I don't believe you're for real. I think you're making this all up to get a hot meal and some clothes. It's not right.

MITCH

But what if it's true?

CRYSTAL

You'll upset my son! When he gets upset it takes weeks to calm him down!

MITCH

He loves me!

CRYSTAL

That's the point! We had a *memorial* service. There were bagpipes. It's over.

MITCH

(PLEASED) There were bagpipes?

CRYSTAL

Yup.

MITCH

I love bagpipes.

CRYSTAL

Good!

MITCH

Except that I'm not dead!

CRYSTAL

That's your opinion.

MITCH

Whoever I am, I'm alive! And I'm starving to death. You got some chips or nuts or something?

CRYSTAL

Beside the bed.

MITCH

Beside the *bed*?

CRYSTAL

I eat in bed now, yeah! It's one of the many pleasures of living *alone*!

MITCH

What else? What else you taken to doing? Walkin' around naked?

CRYSTAL

Don't you wish...

MITCH

Don't you talk to me like that! For five hundred and thirteen days, I've been dreaming of coming home! I've been dreaming of dogs barking on my front porch, and some real cooking and a few kind words and a woman's soft body waitin' on the bed.....

CRYSTAL

And I've been dreamin' of beautiful new bathroom right out of the kit and a cozy house with a car out front and fresh flowers every day and plenty of food for me and Jeb. So I guess our dreams just don't add up.

MITCH

Maybe they could...

CRYSTAL

I doubt it. (SHE HEADS FOR THE DOOR, GRABBING HER PURSE AND A COVERED DISH) You be quiet when I open the door. Hide yourself. Go on. Get away from the door. (BEAT. HE DOES AS HE'S TOLD) I'll be back in half an hour. Nice to meet you. Feel free to be gone when I come home.

CRYSTAL EXITS OUT FRONT DOOR. SLAMS DOOR BEHIND HER.

BLACKOUT. MUSIC. LIGHTS UP.

MITCH IS LYING ON THE COUCH IN HIS DUNGAREES, DRINKING A BEER. HE'S FEELING EXPANSIVE. CRYSTAL IS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY.

CRYSTAL

I'm back.

MITCH

I'm still here.

CRYSTAL

I'm sorry to see that.

MITCH

(STRETCHING OUT ON THE COUCH) I feel like Lazarus, returned from the dead.

CRYSTAL

That's bullshit. Lazarus' family *begged* him to come back!

MITCH

That's right! There's always a new beginnin'.

CRYSTAL

Not in the Rockaways. Did you see what it's like out there? (AT THE WINDOW) Look! The whole street's torn apart, and not a thing's been done about it. Piles of stinking furniture and wet mattresses lying out there for over a year. Rats everywhere. Stray dogs. See? Crazy people who wandered out of the loony bin during the hurricane and never went back. This is the end of the line. The ninth circle of hell. We're the only house left. And no one cares. Not a single one of those politicians even remembers we're here. All that talk, and now everyone's just moved on... and left us in the mud!

MITCH

(AWED) Like Dante!

CRYSTAL

Dan who?

MITCH

The Inferno! I told you! Dante and Beatrice! It's a sign!

CRYSTAL

You bet it is. You've walked in on Crystal Darwin's Chapter Two. I'm starting from scratch.

MITCH

How do you do that?

CRYSTAL

I have my ways.

MITCH

Well unless you can make the globe spin faster I don't know how you're pullin' it off—

CRYSTAL

What globe?

MITCH

Seven years. A person's got to be missing seven years before they can legally be declared dead. Not only that, but you have to prove you've *looked*. Really hard. For seven years!

CRYSTAL

Not if there's a natural disaster.

MITCH

What?

CRYSTAL

You think all those 9/11 widows waited seven years to collect? Not on your life. The whole thing was declared a disaster and the state distributed death certificates like they were peanut M&M's...

MITCH

What the hell does 9/11 have to do with anything?

CRYSTAL

It's a *disaster*, moron. Like Hurricane Sandy was a disaster. Dozens of people washed out to sea—

MITCH

And you got my death certificate?!

CRYSTAL

*Mitch's* death certificate. You bet I did. First in line. We went to the beach and found that old rowboat broken to bits on the shore, surrounded by piles of stinking junk. So they sent out the Coast Guard—search dogs—the whole nine yards. Told me and Jeb to keep looking for as long as we could. And after a year—we called it a day.

MITCH

This is outrageous.

CRYSTAL

What could we do? I couldn't wait seven years! We would've starved! You think anyone cared? I had bills to pay. People to see. Places to go.

MITCH

On whose nickel?!

CRYSTAL

(TOUGHING IT OUT) The insurance man explained exactly what to do. Said he regretted my loss, and that the check should clear in thirty days. And if I wanted to borrow on it in the meantime, he'd introduce me to the right mortgage man. Anything to help me in my time of grief.

MITCH

*What?!*

CRYSTAL

“Anything to help me in my time of grief.” No one had ever said that to me before...

MITCH

What check?

CRYSTAL

I figured why not... I deserved a break for once in my life.

MITCH

(INTERRUPTING) What are you talking about? (PAUSE. CRYSTAL SQUIRMS) What the hell check are you talking about? (PAUSE. EVENLY) You wouldn't be talking about... about *life insurance*, would you? (SILENCE) Did you cash in my fucking life insurance?

CRYSTAL

It wasn't yours.

MITCH

Whose was it?

CRYSTAL

My husband's.

MITCH

You mean *mine*?!

CRYSTAL

You are not my husband.

MITCH

According to whom?

CRYSTAL

According to me! You think I don't know who I married? Just because you barge in here and tell a lot of stories and *say* you're my husband doesn't mean it's true!

MITCH

Why not?!

CRYSTAL

Mitch was a skinny pale guy who chain-smoked. Spent most of his time sneaking off in his security guard uniform to shoot skeet while I cleaned houses and raised our retarded son. You think I don't know who's who?

MITCH

Jeb is not retarded. You said so yourself. He's "slow".

CRYSTAL

(ENRAGED) Don't you wordsmith me!

MITCH

And Mitch is not skinny and pale. Not any more.

CRYSTAL

Why would you do this? Why would you come in here *pretending* to be--

MITCH

(INTERRUPTING) Who's pretending! Listen to my voice!

CRYSTAL

Mitch's voice was scratchy—like a banged up old record--

MITCH

He smoked two packs a day!

CRYSTAL

And you--?

MITCH

I told you. I stopped. Cold turkey. Nearly went insane.

CRYSTAL

You *are* insane. You're hallucinating. You've got the wrong house.

MITCH

I do?

CRYSTAL

Yup. The wrong house. The wrong woman. The wrong couch. Maybe you're Sam O'Shaunessey from the corner house. He disappeared too.

MITCH

He did? (PAUSE. CONSIDERING) I don't *look* Irish...

CRYSTAL

And another thing. I touched you. While you were asleep. Your skin's like an old prune.

MITCH

I've been sleeping on the boardwalk.

CRYSTAL

Mitch's hands were soft. Almost creepy soft. Like a lady's. I always told him he should work in a mortuary with those hands.

MITCH

(DEFENSIVELY, BEGINNING TO PANIC A LITTLE) Don't worry, they'll get soft again, soon as I recover a little.

CRYSTAL

I don't get it. If a man don't look like Mitch, or sound like Mitch, or smell like Mitch, or feel like Mitch, or talk like Mitch, what exactly is it that you think makes him *Mitch*?

MITCH

I don't know.

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE. THEY BOTH CONSIDER THE QUESTION.

MITCH

It's *existential*. That's what the Priest said. It's time to come full circle and reunite with my past.

CRYSTAL

You think this is your past? (BEAT) What if it's just an abandoned dump in the Rockaways?

MITCH

I want my life back.

CRYSTAL

There is no life! There never was! Just a shitty day-to-day existence with never enough money and a line of creditors out the door!

MITCH

I'm coming out of the dark forest.

CRYSTAL

*Forest?* This is a beach!

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

In my darkest dreams, I never imagined my wife would become a con artist.

CRYSTAL

I'm a survivor! That's what they call 'em on "Lost".

MITCH

Then I guess you'll have to kill me!

CRYSTAL

What?

MITCH

Go on! Kill me! Pretend we're a reality tv show! Right here in my own living room! Then you're safe keepin' the dough!

CRYSTAL

I'm not killing anyone! My husband is dead!

MITCH

They'll send you to jail!

CRYSTAL

(GETTING SCARED) It's not my fault!

MITCH

That policy was for the *funeral*—all the expenses—

CRYSTAL

It's called *life* insurance. It pays for *life*.

MITCH

(THUNDERING) You don't get life insurance while the person it's covering is still ALIVE! (BEAT) They'll investigate. They'll turn you in. You hear me?

SHE TURNS AWAY, REFUSES TO SPEAK. LONG PAUSE. HE STARES AT HER. THEN:

MITCH

So how much did you get?

CRYSTAL

How much what?

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

For the loss of your husband?

CRYSTAL

A lot.

MITCH

How much is a lot?

CRYSTAL

Two hundred fifty thousand dollars.

MITCH

No shit. (IMPRESSED) That's a lot of dough. (SMILES) I didn't know I was worth so much.

CRYSTAL

Once you take it, you can't give it back, can you?

MITCH

No. (PAUSE) No, you can't. (PAUSE. MITCH THINKS)

CRYSTAL

I need that dough.

MITCH

(SMILING) I bet you do.

CRYSTAL

Half of it's already spent.

MITCH

I guessed as much. (PAUSE) You've got it all mapped out, haven't you?

CRYSTAL

Well...

MITCH

Amazing. Where's that chubby lady in curlers who was scared of her own shadow? (STARING AT HER) It's funny how you got thin and I got fat.

CRYSTAL

Hilarious.

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

Like Jack Spratt and his wife, right?

CRYSTAL

Whatever you say.

MITCH

We deserve that dough, don't you think?

CRYSTAL

We do? (CRYSTAL STARES AT HIM, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HE'S THINKING)

MITCH

You think anyone saw me come in here tonight?

CRYSTAL

I doubt it.

MITCH

I mean, no one's seen me for a year, right?

CRYSTAL

Right.

MITCH

Even you didn't know me!

CRYSTAL

I still don't know you!

MITCH

That's right. I'm a new person.

CRYSTAL

That's what I keep telling you!

MITCH

For all I know I'm Sam O'Shaunessey from next door! Who gives a shit! I'm alive! And no one needs to know!

CRYSTAL

Know what?

MITCH

(GETTING EXCITED) You need a dead husband, Mrs. Darwin? I'll be dead! Why not? Dead and resurrected! Identity is in the eye of the beholder! Get it? The only thing constant is our *soul*. That's what God gave us, our own little identity badge. But people forget they *have* souls—they lose touch, like they lose their hair, and their eyesight, and their sex drive, till pretty soon their souls shrivel up and go into hiding. Only after a man's gone down into the Inferno and climbed all the way up to Paradiso does he recognize his own soul—and by then, it might as well have burnt up!

CRYSTAL

Burnt up! Shit-- the dinner! (SHE RUNS OFF TO THE KITCHEN. WE HEAR BANGING)

MITCH

(CALLING OUT TO HER, VERY ENERGIZED) Ill be whoever you want me to be! You're a widow! You want to fuck a total stranger, be my guest. It's a free country!

CRYSTAL

No it's not. There's nothing free about it. It's just a long series of debt payments.

MITCH

(SLOWLY) Look at me. (BEAT) Take a good long look. (QUIET BUT FIRM) Underneath the fat—and the tan—and the beat up body and the tough-ass voice—if you really stop and *look*—what do you see? (PAUSE) What do you want to see? You see a man you know? A man you've slept with and fought with and eaten with and gotten drunk with and had a kid with and forgotten about and pretended was dead? Is that what you see? You've gotta make a choice here, Crystal.

CRYSTAL

I don't know! I don't know what I see!

MITCH

(WHISPERING) Do I look dead to you?

CRYSTAL

(SHAKEN) Well...

MITCH

'Cuz I'm not. And you know it. (COMING CLOSER) You knew it the moment you looked through the keyhole, didn't you? I could see it in your eyes.

CRYSTAL

You could?

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

You bet I could. I know you, Crystal.

CRYSTAL

(BREATHLESS) You do?

MITCH

Underneath those new curves and the sexy hairdo—you're the same gal I left behind.

CRYSTAL

No I'm not! I'm not the least bit the same! I'm a totally different person!

MITCH

Even better. (HE MOVES TOWARDS HER) Come on over here, totally different person, and welcome me home. Because this is it, Crystal.

CRYSTAL

It is?

MITCH

You and me. Whoever we are.

(PAUSE. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER ACROSS THE ROOM. SHE IS TERRIFIED)

CRYSTAL

What are we supposed to do now?

MITCH

I just told you.

CRYSTAL

Should we sit here together?

MITCH

That would be a start.

CRYSTAL

What about Jeb?

MITCH

Doesn't he want his dad back?

CRYSTAL

I don't know what he wants. He's retarded.

MITCH

*Slow.*

CRYSTAL

Poor Jeb. He talks to *flies* for god's sake.

MITCH

Talkin' to flies is better than nothing! I'm going to tell him things—all the things I never told him before!

CRYSTAL

Like what?

MITCH

Things a dad should tell his son! Everything I know! Everything I found out over this past year!

CRYSTAL

He won't understand.

MITCH

I'll figure out how to explain. I just have to rest up a little, and then I'll figure out. I'm going to sleep for a month, and then I'm going to cultivate my soul.

CRYSTAL

Your soul?

MITCH

I have things to do. I'm a new man, Crystal.

CRYSTAL

You're not gonna turn me in, are you?

MITCH

I haven't decided.

CRYSTAL

Why would you want to do that?(SHE STARTS WORKING HIM... SMELLING HIS HAIR) Mmmm. That you who smells so good?

MITCH

Maybe.

CRYSTAL

You use my special shampoo?

MITCH

I used what was there.

CRYSTAL

Mitch never used to smell of anything.

MITCH

Now I smell of everything.

CRYSTAL

(RUNNING HER HANDS THROUGH HIS HAIR) It's nice. Where'd you get so much hair? You never had hair before.

MITCH

Guess it just grows. When you leave it alone.

CRYSTAL

And the beard?

MITCH

Same thing. It just kept on coming. Good for catching crumbs. Bad for kissing.

CRYSTAL

You tried?

MITCH

No—I'm just *saying*—

CRYSTAL

(CURIOUSLY, CAUTIOUSLY) You met other women—out there?

MITCH

Nah. You meet other men?

CRYSTAL

(IGNORING THE QUESTION) Five hundred something days-- no *women*? That doesn't sound like the Mitch I knew...

MITCH

I wasn't. I was some other person. (BEAT) Listen, you have any idea how much brain power it takes just to find some warm corner of sidewalk to sleep on, to scrounge for food the second you wake up, to search all day for a shower in some godforsaken homeless shelter, avoid getting bludgeoned to death by a lunatic schizo in the park, and find another sidewalk for the night where no asshole steps on you or arrests you? You think I was chasin' *women*? It was a victory to make it through the day.

CRYSTAL

*That's* what you were doing all that time?

MITCH

You never glimpsed me on the boardwalk—?

CRYSTAL

What boardwalk?

MITCH

Coney Island, mostly. So many bums around there, I figured it's easy to blend in.

CRYSTAL

(INTERESTED) What were you doing on the boardwalk all that time?

MITCH

Nothing. For once I was doing nothing. Nothing but trying to eat and trying to sleep. All day every day. I slept in an open coffin for three weeks. In that crypt. Until some perverted kid and his girlfriend found me while they were trying to... you know...

CRYSTAL

(AWD) Weren't you scared?

MITCH

I was cozy. It was the quietest place I ever slept. And cool. I loved that coffin.

CRYSTAL

So what was the point?

MITCH

I was waiting—

CRYSTAL

For what?

MITCH

A light.

CRYSTAL

You said you stopped smoking.

MITCH

Not that kinda light. The kind that shines at the end of a tunnel.

CRYSTAL

That's usually the oncoming train.

MITCH

See how you are? (PAUSE) The priest told me I was in a dark forest waiting to emerge into the light.

CRYSTAL

And now you're emerging?

MITCH

Yup. (PAUSE) Heading for Paradiso. Or rather, hell. First hell, then paradise.

CRYSTAL

You lost me.

MITCH

I'll explain. (HE PUTS HIS FEET UP ON THE TABLE. THEY ARE ALL CRACKED AND CALLOUSED. SHE STARES AT THEM.)

CRYSTAL

Sweet Jesus! Look at your feet!

MITCH

(HIDING THEM) What about 'em?

CRYSTAL

Is this what happens when you live on the streets? You turn into a religious nut with fucked up feet?

MITCH

I told you. "Nel mezzo di cammin di nostra vita, mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, che la diritta via era smarrita".

CRYSTAL

That sounds beautiful. Is it Spanish?

MITCH

Italian. "In the midst of the road of my life, I found myself in a dark forest, because the right path was lost."

CRYSTAL

What were you looking for?

MITCH

(SHRUGGING) Plan B.

CRYSTAL

Gotta be better than Plan A. (BEAT) I was so panicked when that storm hit. It's not like we'd never seen a hurricane, but this one—this was like the end of the world. Fire and ice. Less than a mile away, entire blocks were burned to bits that night—all those electrical fires and no fire truck could get through—so they just watched it all burn to the ground. Over here we just got wet. Drenched. Half the house blew away. There were cops everywhere-- we hadn't paid the mortgage in so long I kept waitin' for them to come haul Jeb and me to jail. I didn't have a clue what to do—I never did the books or made those kind of decisions. Jeb didn't stop bawling for two weeks. That's when I got him the apartment. Couldn't take it anymore. I taped plastic across the ripped up walls, waited for the power to come back, sat on the moldy couch and watched Judge Judy reruns for a solid month. Only ate when some social worker left a bag of food. Didn't move. Then one day the doorbell rang and a nice man from FEMA was standing on the porch. Just like you were tonight. Except he wasn't here for a piss. He had a big envelope of papers. Asked could he come in and speak to me, said he had checks for victims of the hurricane, and he'd take me to the Fire Station for counseling. I told him that I'd lost my husband and couldn't cope on my own. That's when he asked if my husband had a life insurance policy, and did I want him to take me down to the insurance folks on Utica to find out. So I did.

LONG PAUSE. CRYSTAL EXITS TO THE KITCHEN.

MITCH

Maybe it's providence. What if I lie low for a coupla months? Only go out at night. Get my feet back. We could buy those tickets to Florida. Take off in the dead of night. We could change our name... become Puerto Rican or something-- call ourselves Rodriguez maybe. Drink tequila... go salsa dancing. Who's ever going to remember me anyway? Five hundred thirteen days and twenty five minutes and did a single person even—

CRYSTAL RE-ENTERS WITH TWO PLATES. SHE STARES AT HIM

CRYSTAL

Are you talking to yourself?

MITCH

I guess so. (BEAT) That's what you do when there's no one else to talk to. (PAUSE. HE LOOKS AT HER. SHE IS STARING AT HIM, QUIZZICALLY) What?

CRYSTAL

(SOMEWHAT SHYLY) Tell me something. Did you miss me?

MITCH

(LOOKING AT HER) Miss you?

CRYSTAL

When you were sleeping on the sidewalks by the heating vents?

MITCH

The Rowboat Widow April 2014

Of course I missed you.

CRYSTAL

Isn't that why you came back?

MITCH

I guess it is.

CRYSTAL

(SHE PUTS THE PLATES ON THE TABLE) Okay. Here you go then, Lazarus. Don't get used to it, but here's your dinner. Bon appetit.

SHE PUTS A CD ON THE CD PLAYER BESIDE THE COUCH. IT'S THE BEACH BOYS. SHE STARTS DANCING.

CRYSTAL

I'm putting on some music while we eat!

MITCH

Man oh man... (WIPING HIS MOUTH)

CRYSTAL

(OVER THE MUSIC) I bet you don't believe I cooked that myself, do you? See what you missed? I learned how to do it from an English lady with red fingernails on tv. She comes on first thing Sunday mornings, all dolled up, and shows you how to make fabulous food for the whole family...

MITCH

Well give her my regards, will ya? (HE DOUBLES OVER, IN PAIN) Aaaaugh, my stomach—

CRYSTAL

You okay?

MITCH

Cramps. I gotta lie down... (HE DOES. WATCHES HER DANCE) Stop it. You're making me dizzy.

CRYSTAL

I'm gearin' myself up for Florida!

MITCH

Slow down.

CRYSTAL

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Maybe I should go to California like the song says?

MITCH

You're too old for California. (WINCING IN PAIN) Shit that hurts—turn the music off.

CRYSTAL

(SHE DOES. SILENCE. SHE SITS BESIDE HIM) You okay?

MITCH

Like knives in my gut

CRYSTAL

(SEXY) You don't want some?

MITCH

Give me time... (HE IS IN PAIN) Distract me. Tell me about the funeral.

CRYSTAL

You can't have a funeral without *remains*. We had a *memorial*—

MITCH

Did you cry?

CRYSTAL

Of course. I wore a sweet little black dress. You'd've liked it.

MITCH

How about Jeb?

CRYSTAL

Jeb wore his pool maintenance uniform. He wanted something formal.

MITCH

Who came?

CRYSTAL

Oh, you know... the neighbors... the pool guys... Harvey...

MITCH

Harvey?

CRYSTAL

You know, the sonofabitch you said cheated you for twenty years--?

MITCH

You invited *him* to my funeral?

CRYSTAL

Memorial. (BEAT) He brought the biggest wreath of all.

MITCH

I'll bet he did! And the music? Tell me about the bagpipes—

CRYSTAL

They were loud.

MITCH

I love that sound. They're loud enough to wake the dead!

CRYSTAL

I guess that's what they did.

MITCH

Very funny. Tell me more.

CRYSTAL

We stood on the beach right by where the jetty had been torn away, and Jeb read a story—

MITCH

(PLEASED) Yeah? Which one?

CRYSTAL

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD.

MITCH

(PLEASED) No shit.

CRYSTAL

By the time the little train was wheezing up the hill to save all those kids, he was cryin' so hard he couldn't speak. "I think I can I think I can I think I can..."

MITCH

(TEARING UP) Damn...

CRYSTAL

Yeah.

MITCH

He was crazy about me, that boy.

CRYSTAL

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Now he's crazy about flies.

MITCH

Poor kid. He's too young to lose his father.

CRYSTAL

You should've thought of that before! Now eat your dinner before it spoils.

MITCH

I can't.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

THEY FREEZE. IT RINGS AGAIN. THERE IS BANGING ON THE DOOR. THEN SILENCE. VERY SLOWLY, WE HEAR A KEY TURN IN THE LOCK. MITCH AND CRYSTAL STARE AT EACH OTHER, UNABLE TO MOVE.

CRYSTAL

(WHISPERING) Shit.

MITCH

Who's that?

YELLING, FROM OFFSTAGE:

JEB

Hello? (LONG PAUSE) Anyone home? (PAUSE)

CRYSTAL

(UNDER HER BREATH) Don't answer!

JEB

Mama? (PAUSE) MAMA! Where are you??

CRYSTAL

Maybe you should hide! Go on! Quick!

MITCH

(STILL IN PAIN) I can't.

SILENCE. SOUND OF A KEY IN THE LOCK. CRYSTAL AND MITCH FREEZE. THE DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS. THEN JEB WALKS INTO THE ROOM. STARES AT HIS MOTHER.

JEB

There you are!

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CRYSTAL  
(NERVOUSLY) Hello Jeb.

JEB  
Hi Mama. Why didn't you answer?

CRYSTAL  
Well, I... (SHE FADES OUT)

JEB  
Who's that? (LOOKING AT MITCH) Who's on the couch, Mama?

CRYSTAL  
Don't you know, dear?

JEB  
(QUIZZICALLY) What's the matter with him?

CRYSTAL  
He has a stomach ache.

JEB CROSSES AROUND TO STARE AT MITCH. MITCH STARES BACK.  
CRYSTAL JUMPS UP.

CRYSTAL  
Jeb honey—

JEB  
I know who he is!

CRYSTAL  
(PANICKING) I'm so sorry sweetheart—

JEB  
He's the company --

CRYSTAL  
Huh?

JEB  
You told me—you said he'd *go* soon as he'd used the... uh... the uh... (SEARCHING FOR WORD) The *facilities!* Yeah! You said he would *go* after that!

CRYSTAL  
That's right. (SHE TAKES A DEEP BREATH, NONPLUSSED)

JEB

(LOOKING AT MITCH) You've gotta go away now, sir! Crystal's busy!

MITCH

Huh?

MITCH SITS UP AND STARES AT CRYSTAL. IT'S CLEAR THAT JEB HAS NO IDEA WHO HE IS. MITCH STANDS UP. HE'S IN PAIN.

JEB

Go on! Mama needs to come home with me and eat dessert. (HE TURNS TO CRYSTAL)

MITCH

Wait a minute, kiddo—

JEB

I can't wait—when I'm hungry, I'm hungry. Right Mama?

CRYSTAL

That's right, son. (GAILY) I think introductions are in order! (TO MITCH) I'd like to introduce you to my son Jeb.

MITCH

(SADLY) Hey Jeb.

CRYSTAL

(TO JEB) Jeb, this is my friend. Harold.

JEB

Harold who?

MITCH

Rodriguez.

JEB

Hey Harold.

(LONG PAUSE)

CRYSTAL

You bring me that envelope, son?

JEB

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Right here in my backpack. (HE PULLS OUT AN OFFICIAL LOOKING MANILA ENVELOPE) Here, Mama.

CRYSTAL

(TAKING IT QUICKLY) Good for you. (QUICKLY) You finished your dinner?

JEB

Yeah. It made a big mess. Can you come help me?

CRYSTAL

Sure, dear. Soon as mama's done here, she'll--

JEB

(ABRUPTLY, TO MITCH) You need some Pepto Bismal?

CRYSTAL

Not now--

JEB

I get stomach aches all the time. I keep a lot of Pepto Bismal at home if you need it. It used to be pink. Now it's green. I can get it for you when I go home.

MITCH

Thanks. I appreciate that.

JEB

You come to tile the bathroom?

MITCH

You could say that.

JEB

I wanna help. Mama said I'd make it crooked. But I know how. I'm a pool man.

CRYSTAL

Don't bug him, Jeb—

JEB

She killed my flies. They're all over the floor.

MITCH

Your flies?

CRYSTAL

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I told you to collect some more--

JEB

(UPSET) I can't go home—there are legs and wings all over the floor!

MITCH

You need some flies, Jeb? Try lookin' in that bathroom under the stairs. There's a fly tape covered in bugs...

JEB

Yeah? (PAUSE. HE THINKS) Okay. (HE TURNS AND GOES.)

MITCH AND CRYSTAL EYE EACH OTHER.

CRYSTAL

Shit!

MITCH

Did you see his face?

CRYSTAL

He has no idea—

MITCH

No clue! (SHOCKED. SCARED) He doesn't know who the hell I am!

CRYSTAL

(APOLOGETICALLY) He's slow.

MITCH

There's slow and there's... *slow*. What is going on here? Maybe he's right! MAYBE I'M NOT HIS DAD!

CRYSTAL

Quiet down!

MITCH

(WHISPERING LOUDLY) Maybe Mitchell Darwin is really dead and he's the only one who knows it!

CRYSTAL

What are you talking about? Don't fuck with me! You said you were sure! You said you knew!

MITCH

This isn't how it was supposed to be! I thought he'd be waiting by the door. I thought he'd holler with joy and wrap his arms around me. I thought he'd throw me on his back like a true son and carry me out of the burning city.

CRYSTAL

What burning city?

MITCH

You never heard of Troy?

CRYSTAL

I don't think so.

MITCH

He's my son! He's supposed to look after me in my time of need!

CRYSTAL

You expect him to pick you up and carry you? You're huge!

MITCH

It's Greek! It's a metaphor!

CRYSTAL

Then leave him alone.

MITCH

(AFTER A PAUSE) He looks good. Like a real pool man.

CRYSTAL

Looks are not Jeb's problem. (PAUSE) Do we tell him?

MITCH

Tell him what?

CRYSTAL

That his dad has come back?

MITCH

He'll never believe it.

CRYSTAL

Poor kid. He's been mourning you for a year.

MITCH

Not me. He's been mourning the guy who left.

CRYSTAL

Same thing.

MITCH

Apparently not.

CRYSTAL

He'll figure it out. Eventually.

MITCH

What if he doesn't?

CRYSTAL

You mean let him go on mourning someone who's alive? That's just mean.

MITCH

He's cried enough. Let him meet someone new.

CRYSTAL

Like who?

MITCH

*Me!*

CRYSTAL

Why should he care about you?

MITCH

Maybe he'll love me. More than he loved his real dad!

MITCH

When I look at him, I can't remember anything. Not a single thing. (PAUSE. THINKING) How did I feel when he was born? Was I happy? Proud?

CRYSTAL

You were drunk. You're the guy who opened the keg *before* the kid was born.

MITCH

But what was I *thinking* about? Do you know? What exactly did I *feel* about you giving birth to my son? Did we ever even have a conversation about it? Jesus, Crystal, men wait all their lives for that moment! It's a metaphor for—I can't remember -- for *everything!* An heir. Someone to carry on the family name.

CRYSTAL

Darwin. Big deal.

MITCH

It is! Survival of the fittest! That must have been a huge moment in my life...

CRYSTAL

You think so. I was screaming my head off in the delivery room and my husband was out getting soused.

MITCH

I was? (PAUSE. THINKING) Was he a cute baby?

CRYSTAL

Adorable. A carrot top. He never cried.

MITCH

That's because he was slow. (BEAT) I can't believe he doesn't know it's me.

CRYSTAL

He'll figure it out. He may be slow, but he's not *blind*...

MITCH

Harold Rodriguez. That's who I've got to be... (THINKING) What would you be like if you were Harold Rodriguez?

CRYSTAL

Why Rodriguez? It's ridiculous.

MITCH

I took free salsa classes on the boardwalk before my feet got fucked up. The teacher was someone Rodriguez.

CRYSTAL

I thought you were starving on the streets! Now you tell me you were in dance class?!

MITCH

The butterfly was trying to come out of its chrysalis. (BEAT) He looks sad...

CRYSTAL

He *is* sad! We're all sad, Mitch.

MITCH

Harold.

Huh?  
CRYSTAL

I'm *Harold*. Rodriguez.  
MITCH

Sssshhhh.  
CRYSTAL

JEB RE-ENTERS WITH THE FLY TAPE. HE IS SINGING SOFTLY TO THE DEAD FLIES. FROM OFFSTAGE WE HEAR "Long long time ago... I can still remember how they used to cry..." THEN JEB ENTERS.

JEB  
(SIGNING SOFTLY)  
"We were singin'  
Bye bye Miss American Pie  
I drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry..."

HE STOPS AND LOOKS AT MITCH AND CRYSTAL. MITCH PICKS UP THE SONG WHERE JEB LEFT OFF.

MITCH  
"And good old boys were drinking whisky and rye  
Singing 'this'll be the day that I die...'  
'this'll be the day that I die...'"

JEB  
(PLEASED) That's good, Harold!

Thanks.  
MITCH

You know that song too?  
JEB

I guess I do. (BEA) Did you find the flies?  
MITCH

They're dead. (BEAT) I watched to see if any of 'em were still kicking their little legs.  
JEB

Maybe it hurts to kick those little legs...  
MITCH

JEB

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I know. When you touch ‘em, they turn to dust...

MITCH

(PEERING AT TAPE) They’re old.

JEB

Like... dinosaurs...

CRYSTAL

No, son, they’re just flies. Dead flies.

MITCH

Lemme see. (HE REACHES OUT AND TAKES THE FLY TAPE. STARES AT IT CAREFULLY) Wow. It’s like an ancient burial ground. (HE SMILES AT JEB) These are very old flies. Maybe even prehistoric.

JEB

Yeah?

MITCH

You ever been to the Natural History Museum near Central Park?

JEB

Sure. My dad took me there once. We took two busses and a subway. The red line. We stayed all day, and saw the dinosaurs. Little tiny ones and big huge ones. The sign in the museum said that one million two hundred thousand years ago, those dinosaurs could fly. Even the huge ones. They had wings the size of a house, and when they flew across the sun it turned dark all over the earth. And slowly their bodies got too heavy for the wings and they began falling to the ground. All these huge flying dinosaurs crashed to the ground and died. They ended up in pits for a million years, covered with tar. And people forgot they were there. And then one day a kid was walking along with his dad, and fell into the pit, and saw giant bird bones stuck in the ground, and took them to the museum. And that’s how we know about dinosaurs. (PAUSE) Every time we dig out a new swimming pool, I look for bones. Even just a few feathers. I won’t give ‘em to the museum, though. If I find ‘em, I’ll put them under my bed. In the box with my papa’s stuff.

MITCH

What else you got in there?

JEB

A hammer and nails. Skeet rifles. Two dog leashes. Uh... beer cans. A bunch of unopened bills with my papa’s name on ‘em...

MITCH

(UNDER HIS BREATH) I'll bet...

JEB

A book...

MITCH

What book?

JEB

You never heard of it.

MITCH

Try me.

JEB

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD?

(MITCH TRADES GLANCES WITH CRYSTAL. SHAKES HIS HEAD)

MITCH

No, son, I don't think I have.

JEB

(EAGERLY) Well there's this engine that's very small.

MITCH

Yeah?

JEB

And there's a very long train that has to get over the mountain to bring toys to the boys and girls in the valley.

CRYSTAL

OK, Jeb, we don't have to hear the whole story...

MITCH

I wanna hear. (HE DOUBLES OVER IN PAIN) Aaaugh—jesus—these cramps—

JEB

(SITTING NEXT TO HIM, VERY GENTLY) Rub your hands together like this. (HE DEMONSTRATES. MITCH FOLLOWS SUIT). They good and hot? (MITCH NODS) Now put them under your shirt, like this (HE PUTS HIS HANDS ON HIS OWN STOMACH). See? The warm makes it go away. (MITCH NODS)

MITCH

Tell me the rest of the story.

JEB

He wants to hear the rest, Mama.

CRYSTAL

(SIGHING) Okay...

JEB

So the long train asks all these huge engines to pull it up over the mountain—but none of them will do it...

MITCH

Bastards!

JEB

Yeah. They're too busy lying around in the sun getting their brass polished. So finally this little blue engine pipes up. He's been sitting all alone in the yard. No one will talk to him because he's so small. He says he'll try. The huge shiny engines laugh at him and line up to watch. So the little blue engine hooks up to the long train, takes a deep breath and starts to climb the mountain. He pulls and pulls, dragging the train of toys behind him. It hurts so much he can barely make it but he keeps saying to himself "I think I can I think I can I think I can—"

MITCH

(TEARING UP) Son of a bitch...

JEB

And he's panting and cryin' but finally he makes it to the top of the mountain—and down below are all the little kids waitin' for their toys. So the little engine goes flying down the hill pulling the train, and the toys tumble out all over the valley. All the children rush out and gather the toys, and everyone is screaming and yelling and they hug the little blue engine and thank him for making everyone so happy. The end.

MITCH

That's a great fucking story.

JEB

I read it at papa's memorial. (PAUSE) My papa got lost in the storm and never came back.

MITCH

Really?

CRYSTAL

Listen—

JEB

People say he drowned. But I don't know...

MITCH

(SCARED) Why?

JEB

No bones.

MITCH

His bones would've sunk to the bottom of the ocean, kid.

JEB

Uh uh. It's like flies in the toilet. Mama always flushes my flies down the toilet. But they float on the surface. Right on my pee. They don't sink. They float. See?

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE. JEB TAKES THE FLY TAPE FROM MITCH AND LAYS IT ON THE TABLE. HE CAREFULLY REMOVES A FLY AND DROPS IT IN MITCH'S BEER GLASS.

Watch.

CRYSTAL

Don't do that! They're filthy!

JEB

They float. See? Dead flies float. They don't drown.

CRYSTAL

Your father was not a fly, dear. He was a big man.

JEB

No he wasn't. He was scrawny. That's what you always said.

CRYSTAL

(FLUSTERED) Well even scrawny men drown. They don't float. They sink.

JEB

(SHAKING HIS HEAD) Uh uh. (EARNESTLY) After work, I go to the beach. I sit on a rock and watch the waves come in. No bone has ever come out of that water. Not one

MITCH

So you think he's alive?

JEB

Yup.

MITCH

(QUIETLY) Where is he then?

JEB

Lost.

MITCH

Lost?

JEB

He's looking for the way to get home.

MITCH

Uh huh.

CRYSTAL

He'd ask for directions if he was lost! It's been more than a year...

JEB

It's dark.

MITCH

(PLAYING ALONG) And men hate to ask for directions, you know that...

CRYSTAL

(SNAPPING) Don't be silly. No one survives just wandering around for a year—

JEB

I could.

CRYSTAL

Oh for god's sake, Jeb, you can't survive a single day without Mama coming over to feed you and clean your clothes.

JEB

It's you who wanna clean my clothes. I'd be dirty.

CRYSTAL

And what would you eat?

JEB

Ice cream. Walter at Ben and Jerry's would give me ice cream. And Marge at the movies would give me old popcorn at the end of the day. I'd be okay...

MITCH

It's not like that, Jeb. When you haven't bathed in a month and you stink so much even dogs run away and your feet are covered in scabs and your stomach is full of acid from eating orange rinds off the ground and you can't see straight 'cause your glasses got smashed by some lunatic in the night, then Marge isn't so ready to give out the popcorn anymore, if you know what I mean...

JEB

That's why I have to find him. Before he starves to death.

MITCH

That's nice, Jeb. That's really nice.

JEB

He's my *dad!*

CRYSTAL

Forget it. Papa is dead. We're movin' on. We're gonna make a new life for ourselves, just like he would've wanted.

JEB

I don't want to make a new life.

CRYSTAL

We've talked about this, Jeb. You can't keep holdin' on forever—it's bad for you!

MITCH

You ever thought about goin' someplace else?

JEB

Like where?

MITCH

How 'bout... Florida?

JEB

No.

MITCH

Why not? Disney Land. Alligators. Miami.

JEB

No! (GETTING AGITATED) No! No! NO! I like it *here*.

CRYSTAL

You'd love Florida, honey. It's all swimmin' pools!

JEB

I gotta stay here. I'm gonna be here when Papa gets back.

CRYSTAL

(SHARPLY) Now stop that, son. He's not comin' back and you know it.

JEB

(FORCEFULLY) That's a lie! You didn't even cry at his memorial!

CRYSTAL

Yes I did!

JEB

Not real tears. You were happy. You invited that Dimwit guy.

CRYSTAL

(THROUGH CLOSED TEETH) His name is not Dimwit.

JEB

He smells funny. Sort of sweet, like those flowers he keeps sending.

MITCH

What flowers?

CRYSTAL

Nothin'—he's all mixed up—you're all mixed up, Jeb—Mama never got flowers from—  
from the insurance man—

JEB

Sure you did! All the time! Big bunches of roses! Red and yellow!

CRYSTAL

(TRYING TO BE DIGNIFIED) Those were from the mortgage company, dear.

MITCH

Why the hell are you getting flowers from the mortgage company?

CRYSTAL

(THROUGH GRITTED TEETH) You know perfectly well why.

JEB

Some came the day we hung the one-year wreath by Papa's sign at the beach. (TO  
CRYSTAL) You didn't cry then either! You were glad!

CRYSTAL

For god's sake, Jeb—he's been dead for a year! How much cryin' can anyone do?

JEB

I'm not movin'.

CRYSTAL

You bet you are! Don't be such a jerk! We've got places to go and things to do! We're not gonna stay in this dump forever!

JEB

Then why are you tilin' the bathroom?

(HE'S CAUGHT HER THERE! MITCH CHUCKLES. HE'S ENJOYING THIS, IN A STRANGE WAY)

MITCH

He's got a point there.

CRYSTAL

(FURIOUS) Shut up!

MITCH

(TO JEB) You're not as slow as you look, are you, son?

CRYSTAL

I'm increasin' the value of this dump so we can sell it! Now you listen to me! Both of you! Who the hell has been holding it all together since Mitch... since your dad just disappeared? Who's been paying the bills and looking to the future? Who's been meeting with all those businessmen to try and rescue us from the mess that man left us in? Don't you dare accuse me! You hear me, Jeb? I can tile my bathroom any day of the week if I so choose! You're gonna go home right now and clean up your mess. And then you're gonna go to bed, and get up and go to work, same as always. And when I tell you it's time, you're gonna shut your mouth and come with me to Florida.

JEB

I am not! I'll stay with Harold!

CRYSTAL

That's impossible. Tell him. HAROLD.

MITCH

I'm not going anywhere till these cramps let up...

JEB

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I'll bring you some Pepto Bismol, okay?

MITCH

You're a good kid, Jeb.

JEB

I want you to come see my apartment.

CRYSTAL

He can't, son. Don't even think about it. (GETTING ANXIOUS) What time is it?

JEB

(LOOKING AT HIS WATCH) Eight twenty-eight. Why can't he come? You gave me two beds so one day I could have a friend over. I have never had a friend over—

CRYSTAL

That's 'cause you don't have any friends! (FLUSTERED) How did it get to be eight twenty eight already?

JEB

I have a friend now. I have Harold.

MITCH

(EYEING CRYSTAL) What's wrong, you got a date?

JEB

(TO MITCH) Come on, Harold. I got a bed for you and everything. I'll rub my hands together and warm up your stomach. I'll show you all the stuff in my papa's box.

MITCH

I'd like that.

CRYSTAL

Don't be ridiculous. (TO JEB) Harold is MY friend. Leave him alone.

JEB

(TO MITCH) You gonna sleep here with my mama?

MITCH

Well...

JEB

You can't do that. What'll happen when Papa comes back?

CRYSTAL

None of your business! Go home now, Jeb. Go on! Mama's got things to do and Harold needs to rest on the couch. Go on home and I'll bring you your Ovaltine in a little while.

MITCH

(TO CRYSTAL) Why can't I go?

CRYSTAL

(OUTRAGED) You know perfectly well why—

MITCH

It's dark—

JEB

I know the way—don't worry. (LOOKS AT MITCH'S FEET) You got any shoes?

MITCH

Uh...

CRYSTAL

No. No shoes. He's not going anywhere. You've got to stop it—both of you!

JEB

What happened to your feet?

MITCH

Nothing—

JEB

They're all cut up.

MITCH

I missed my bus. Had to walk a long way.

JEB

Like the little engine, huh? (HE SMILES. SITS NEXT TO MITCH. WHISPERS) "I think I can I think I can I think I can..."

MITCH CURLS UP ON THE COUCH. HE IS IN PAIN. IT'S HARD TO TELL FROM WHAT.

JEB

Don't cry, Harold. We'll find you some shoes.

CRYSTAL

Oh for god's sake! Stop meddling where you're not wanted and go on home to bed! I mean it, Jeb. Mama is tired. It's been a long day and Mama needs to go to—

THE PHONE RINGS. PAUSE. IT KEEPS RINGING. CRYSTAL LOOKS AT THE NAME THAT POPS UP. BLUSHES.

CRYSTAL

Excuse me a moment. (SHE GRABS THE PHONE. PHONY VOICE). Hello? (PAUSE) Well hello there, how nice to hear from you... (SHE THROWS A GLANCE AT THE MEN. INTO THE PHONE) Just a moment, please. (TO JEB AND MITCH) I have to take an important call.

MITCH

(WHO SEES EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON) Oh yeah? Since when do *you* get important calls?

CRYSTAL

(THROUGH GRITTED TEETH) Since my husband died and I was left holding the bag. (SHE SMILES AT JEB) I'll only be a minute, sweetheart.

SHE EXITS. BEAT. JEB STARES AT MITCH'S FEET SADLY.

JEB

They're disgusting.

MITCH

Yup.

JEB

They look like nasty animals. How come you let 'em get like that?

MITCH

Couldn't help it.

JEB

You should put 'em in hot water.

MITCH

Yeah.

JEB

I have a big plastic tub at my apartment. Mama fills it with bath salts when I've been pourin' concrete all day and my feet hurt. I sit and put my feet in the water and turn the radio on and the salts heal them up.

MITCH

Nice.

JEB

You wanna come over to my house and I'll do it for you?

MITCH

I can't...

JEB

(ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Come on! I know how! You'll feel good! You can sit in my favorite chair and I'll play you some music while your feet soak in the tub.

MITCH

That sounds nice.

JEB

And on Friday nights we'll turn the lights down and open the blinds so you can see the girls across the street dancing in their pajamas.

MITCH

On Friday nights?

JEB

That's when they dance. (PAUSE) You like girls?

MITCH

Do you?

JEB

I like one. She has red hair and blue pajamas and when she dances her face gets hot and sweaty and she laughs a lot. I like her best.

MITCH

What's her name?

JEB

Angel. That's what I call her. I always start with A.

MITCH

Angel. I like that. (PAUSE) I never knew a girl named Angel.

JEB

If you come over you can pick names for the other ones. There are three more.

MITCH

How about "Beatrice"? That's a nice "B" name.

JEB

(GALLANTLY) Your choice, Harold. Come on!

MITCH

I can't. I don't have any shoes.

JEB

There must be *something*... (HE LOOKS AROUND. CRAWLS ON FLOOR AND LOOKS UNDER COUCH. PULLS A BIG FLUFFY PAIR OF PINK SLIPPERS OUT FROM UNDER THE COUCH.) Here! How 'bout these? They're new. (JEB STRUGGLES TO PUT THEM ON. MITCH WINCES IN PAIN)

MITCH

Ow—son of a bitch! Stop!

JEB

(STARING AT THE FEET) They're fucked up, Harold. Your feet are fucked up.

MITCH

You're tellin' me.

JEB

You need a doctor.

MITCH

Not now— just let me be--

JEB

Wait a sec! I have an idea! Hold on. (HE RUSHES OFF. WE HEAR HIM CLANG AROUND IN THE KITCHEN. MITCH PICKS UP THE PINK SLIPPERS, EXAMINES THEM CAREFULLY. JEB RETURNS WITH TWO METAL DOG BOWLS) Here! Put your feet in here!

MITCH

Those are dog bowls!

JEB

That's right! One for chow, one for water. (EXPLAINING) We had two dogs once.

MITCH

Oh yeah?

JEB

They disappeared after my papa left in the storm. Mama wanted to throw their bowls out but I kept them under the sink. Just in case.

MITCH

In case what?

JEB

In case someone needed them. See? (HE PUTS THEM BY MITCH'S FEET) You put your feet in. I'll get hot water. Then you can soak, one foot in each bowl.

MITCH

That sounds nice.

JEB KNEELS DOWN AND CAREFULLY PUTS MITCH'S FEET IN THE TWO DOG BOWLS. THEN HE RISES.

JEB

How's that?

MITCH

Good. It's good.

JEB

OK. Don't move. I'll be right back.

HE EXITS. BEAT. MITCH PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS, HIS FEET IN THE TWO DOG BOWLS. CRYSTAL ENTERS, CARRYING HER COAT. SHE HAS PUT MAKE UP ON AND FIXED HER HAIR. SHE STARES AT MITCH.

CRYSTAL

What's going on?

MITCH

(EYEING HER) Wow.

CRYSTAL

Wow what?

MITCH

That's some lipstick.

CRYSTAL

(TIGHT-LIPPED) Yes it is.

MITCH

(FAUX CASUAL) For me?

CRYSTAL

I'm going out.

MITCH

Where?

CRYSTAL

I have to take care of some business.

MITCH

What kind of business?

CRYSTAL

None of your business.

MITCH

It's all my business. These your slippers? (HE HOLDS OUT THE PINK FLUFFY SHOES)

CRYSTAL

Well they're not Jeb's. (BEAT. EVENLY) It's been more than a year. I have my own life now.

MITCH

Tell me something. How did it work? Was it quick? Like right away? Or did you slowly leave the old Crystal behind and turn into something new?

CRYSTAL

I don't understand the question.

MITCH

Is it like the chrysalis and the butterfly? Was this Crystal always in there waiting to come out? Or was the process more like painting a house till it looked different on the outside?

CRYSTAL

I don't know. Maybe both.

MITCH

Yeah?

CRYSTAL

I guess so.

MITCH

I'm trying to figure out who you've turned out to be. (BEAT) Which I guess would depend on who you were to *begin* with.

CRYSTAL

Don't you remember?

MITCH

I thought I did. Now I'm not so sure.

CRYSTAL

Me neither. (BEAT) Everything's different now.

MITCH

You think all that stuff in Dante was just wishful thinking? Dido killing herself when Aeneas sailed away...? I guess no one throws herself on a pyre when her man leaves town anymore, huh?

CRYSTAL

(CROSSING TO THE COUCH AND SITTING FIRMLY ON THE ARM) Listen to me, Mr. know-it-all. You ever heard of Noah and the Ark? Well that's what this was. Except Noah skipped town and left Mrs. Noah alone with what was left of the species of the world. So Mrs. Noah had to get her shit together real fast before the ark rotted to bits and she and little Noah starved to death. Two by two. That's what it was. I took the first helping hand I could find and hung on till the sun came out. And now that it's out I'm going to enjoy the weather a little bit because I deserve it! Is that clear?

MITCH

(SMILING) That's the first metaphor I've ever heard you use.

CRYSTAL

Oh yeah?

MITCH

I like it.

CRYSTAL

I'm glad. (SHE SMILES) You're crazy, Mitch.

MITCH

Harold.

CRYSTAL

Harold. (SHE TOUCHES HIS HAIR) What the hell am I going to do with you, Harold?

MITCH

I'll be fine. You go on.

CRYSTAL

I won't be long.

MITCH

(GENTLY) Try not to do anything stupid.

CRYSTAL

(SADLY) It might be too late for that...

MITCH

Yeah? (BEAT. HE TAKES HER IN. LAUGHS) Since when do you wear furry pink slippers?

CRYSTAL

I am *finding* myself, Mitch.

MITCH

Well don't let me stand in your way.

JEB ENTERS WITH THE TEA KETTLE AND A WATERING CAN.

JEB

Hey, mama. Harold and I have it all worked out. Watch. (HE CAREFULLY POURS SOME WATER OUT OF THE WATERING CAN ALTERNATING WITH WATER OUT OF THE KETTLE.) Just like fillin' up a swimming pool. Real careful, so the cement doesn't crack. (MITCH GROANS, FIRST IN PAIN, THEN IN PLEASURE) Nice, right? Just sit still. (MITCH NODS) Now take some deep breaths, like this (JEB DEMONSTRATES) See? (JEB LOOKS AT CRYSTAL) Why've you got all that make up on, Mama?

CRYSTAL

(FLUSTERED) Just trying to look presentable!

JEB

You looking nice for Harold?

CRYSTAL

That's right. (CROSSING TO DOOR) Mama has to go out. I'll be back in half an hour.

JEB

You goin' to clean up my dinner mess?

CRYSTAL

No dear. I have a—meeting. You'll have to clean your own mess tonight. (SHE GLARES AT HAROLD) And *you*-- don't move.

MITCH

(CHUCKLING) That shouldn't be a problem.

CRYSTAL  
I have something to attend to.

MITCH  
Crystal—

CRYSTAL  
What?

MITCH  
Be careful.

JEB  
We'll be right here, mama. Harold and me. Soaking his feet.

CRYSTAL  
That's nice. (FOR A MOMENT, A LOOK OF REGRET PASSES ACROSS HER FACE) Okay then, gentlemen. Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

MITCH STARES AT CRYSTAL. SHE TURNS AND EXITS RAPIDLY. MITCH SLUMPS BACK ON THE COUCH. HE GETS WHAT'S GOING ON. JEB LOOKS AT HIM.

JEB  
She's always like that when she's seeing the insurance guy.

MITCH  
Oh yeah?

JEB  
She buys pink lipstick. She says it makes her look foxy.

MITCH  
*Foxy?* Who the hell says "foxy" anymore?

JEB  
He does.

MITCH  
You're kidding. What a weirdo. How often does she see him?

JEB  
I don't know. A lot.

MITCH

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What's he look like, the insurance guy?

JEB

He looks like... um... a suit... big tie... kinda slicked back hair—like—like--

MITCH

Like an insurance salesman.

JEB

(LAUGHING) Yeah. (PAUSE) My Papa would've zapped him.

MITCH

You think so?

JEB

Definitely. Pops wanted to hang a big bug strip on our front porch, to zap people if they came over and annoyed us.

MITCH

(SMILING) Sounds like a good idea. Does he annoy you?

JEB

I don't see him much. Mama doesn't let me come over when he's here.

MITCH

So what do you do?

JEB

I hang out with my flies.

MITCH

At your apartment?

JEB

Yeah. (PAUSE) How're the feet?

MITCH

Coming along. (HE SMILES) Thank you, Jeb. I appreciate it.

JEB

That's funny how you said that.

MITCH

Why?

JEB

My Papa used to talk like that. If a guy offered to open his beer at the 7-Eleven or fill his truck up for him, that's what he'd say. "Thank you, sir. I appreciate it."

MITCH

You think I would've liked your pops?

JEB

When he wasn't mad. (BEAT) He always thought people were coming to take our money. (PAUSE) I hope he's making a lot of money at the casinos and will come get me soon. I have to get out of here before all the pools crack. (MITCH LOOKS AT HIM, PUZZLED) They're fucking up the pools. They pour a second layer of concrete before the first one has hardened to save time but that makes the first layer crack and then they tell us to just paint over it cuz no one will see a hairline crack so it's no big deal—but when people put water in their brand new pools it starts draining out, you know? Very slowly, but it does, through those cracks, and so people have to keep refilling their pools, and one day someone is gonna find out that it's our fault that the concrete is all cracked, and then they'll get rid of me.

MITCH

Wow. (PAUSE) Why would they get rid of you?

JEB

I'm the new guy.

MITCH

Have you told anyone?

JEB

Only Mama. She says it's not my problem.(ANXIOUS) She says to shut up and go to work every day and not worry. But I know it's happening. In my sleep I see cracks all the time. Just cracks, getting bigger and bigger, all over the place.

MITCH

I think you should quit.

JEB

Then what would I do?

MITCH

I don't know. Hit the road. Go look for your Dad...

JEB

Would you come with me?

MITCH

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I can't walk, Jeb.

JEB

I could carry you. On my back. I'm strong.

MITCH

(SMILING) Oh yeah?

JEB

Sure. I'll carry you. It would be my pleasure.

MITCH

(MOVED) Son of a gun.

JEB

It would've been easier with my dad.

MITCH

Why's that?

JEB

He was a skinny guy.

MITCH

So I hear... (PAUSE. MITCH WIPES HIS EYES. HE IS DISTRAUGHT) You're a good kid, Jeb. How is it... (HE STOPS) How come your papa left you?

JEB

He didn't leave me.

MITCH

No?

JEB

No. It was the hurricane. People got lost. (RUBBING MITCH'S FEET)

MITCH

Lots of people? (BEAT) Did lots of people get lost?

JEB

Mr. O'Shaunnessey from the corner got lost. Everyone else went to the shelter and slept on pieces of old foam. And then after awhile, they started moving away.

MITCH

All of them?

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JEB

Everyone except us. Mama wouldn't budge.

MITCH

She's got a will, doesn't she? (PAUSE. THEY ARE BOTH THINKING. THEN...)

JEB

Hey Harold--

MITCH

What?

JEB

How about... (PAUSE) If my Papa doesn't come back soon...

MITCH

Yeah...

JEB

How about we pretend *you're* my dad.

MITCH

Me? (HE STARES AT JEB) Why would we do that?

JEB

I like you.

MITCH

(MOVED) You do?

JEB

Maybe even more than my dad. (PAUSE) My dad was mean. And mad. All the time.

MITCH

Mad about what?

JEB

He said people were bastards and he hated his life.

MITCH

No shit.

JEB

And sometimes he said he hated us. And he'd throw things around.

MITCH

Maybe he didn't mean it, Jeb.

JEB

He meant it. He was like the big black locomotive in the story, that ran over the toys and smashed them all up. He was always smashing things up.

MITCH

(WINCING) Why are you telling me this, Jeb?

JEB

(SHRUGGING) He said living in America was a con game and only the bad guys won.

MITCH

Maybe he's right.

JEB

I don't think so.

MITCH

You don't?

JEB

Nope. I think some day soon those bad guys who are cracking the pools are going to get arrested and sent off the jail. Not me, just Ralph and Giovanni who run the place.

MITCH

From your lips to God's ears!

JEB

Does that mean yes or no?

MITCH

It means they're not going to win, Jeb. You're right. One of these days, they're going to get a big old fine and the firm will go belly up. And then you and I will sail away to the South Seas!

JEB

That's just what my Pops used to say! When he'd had a few beers and was feeling cheerful, he's say, "Let's pack up everything and sail away to the South Seas!" You sound just like him.

MITCH

Maybe that's what he did!

JEB

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You think so? That would be good.

MITCH

Yeah.

JEB

(JEB CONTEMPLATES MITCH) If Pops went to the South Seas... (PAUSE) then you could be my dad, Harold.

MITCH

I could?

JEB

Yeah.

MITCH

Why?

JEB

Why not! (WHISPERING IN MITCH'S EAR) "I think I can I think I can I think I can..."

BLACKOUT. MUSIC.

LATER THAT NIGHT. MITCH IS ASLEEP ON THE COUCH. JEB IS CURLED UP ON THE FLOOR BESIDE HIM, ALSO ASLEEP. BEAT.

SOUND OF A KEY IN THE LOCK. WE HEAR CRYSTAL LAUGHING OFFSTAGE.

CRYSTAL

(OFFSTAGE) I'll do it first thing! (PAUSE) I understand. (PAUSE) Yes indeed. I'll find something perfect and bring it on over to the office. Night night now. Thanks for your help. See you in the morning.

SHE ENTERS THE LIVING ROOM AND SWITCHES ON A LIGHT. SHE SEES THE SLEEPING MEN. STEPS GENTLY OVER JEB AND SHAKES MITCH AWAKE.

CRYSTAL

Mitch! Hey there! Wake up! (HE GROANS. ROLLS OVER) Listen to me! You've gotta get up!

MITCH

(CONFUSED) What's happening?

CRYSTAL

We've got to scrub out the entire house.

MITCH

(CONFUSED) What house? What are you talking about?

CRYSTAL

Listen to me! Now!

MITCH

I'm sleeping.

CRYSTAL

Not any more. (SHE STRUGGLES. ROLLS HIM OFF THE COUCH)

MITCH

Stop! Get your hands off me, woman! (HE LANDS WITH A THUD ON THE FLOOR)  
Owwwww. Shit, that hurt. (HE GROANS AND CURLS UP)

CRYSTAL

You think I'm kidding?

MITCH

Calm down! What's the matter?

CRYSTAL

Your fingerprints are all over the house. That's what's the matter!

MITCH

My what?

CRYSTAL

Fingerprints, asshole! Get up!

MITCH

I can't. I'm never moving again.

CRYSTAL

(WHISPERING FIERCELY) Listen to me! The mortgage people are way tougher than the life insurance people. They're out to get you. You hear me? I tried to sign for the loan tonight—

MITCH

(GROGGILY) What loan?

CRYSTAL

The loan on your life insurance policy! Wake up! I even studied one of Jeb's pool contracts so I'd know what all that fancy language meant. Dermot said it was just a *formality*—a walk in the woods-- but when he got the papers, they asked for all this stuff I didn't *have*—

MITCH

Like what?

CRYSTAL

To borrow against the life insurance, they have to know you're really dead...

MITCH

That's reasonable.

CRYSTAL

It's bullshit! I have the state issued death certificate that everyone said was just fine.

MITCH

I guess you're going to have to fuck some guy at the Mortgage office now.

CRYSTAL

(APPALLED) Mitchell Darwin wash your mouth out with soap!

MITCH

I'm just saying...

CRYSTAL

It wouldn't do any good! They said for the loan to be secure after a (READING OFF A PAPER) "Death in Absentia" there has to be evidence of a "diligent and unsuccessful search".

MITCH

What the hell does that mean?

CRYSTAL

It means the cops go dusting within a five-mile radius of the last place the deceased was seen—you know—for evidence of fingerprints and stuff. To see if he's really dead. And Dermot says they're gonna start here. HERE. In my torn up house which is covered in your freshly-minted fingerprints!

MITCH

Calm down. Maybe Harold Rodriguez has different fingerprints.

CRYSTAL

This isn't a joke!

MITCH

Who's joking? Don't fat people get new fingerprints?

CRYSTAL

Would you please *focus* for a minute? Dermot says there's some fingerprint database they check to make sure the person in question is really deceased and not living an alternative identity somewhere else and that I shouldn't sweat it because it was just a formality --and I'm thinking, a *formality*?! A *formality*? And what about the man who is sitting on my couch at this very moment drinking a beer with my son —what the hell am I supposed to do about *him*?!

MITCH

Actually, I was fast asleep... I need to *sleep*--

CRYSTAL

Too bad! Sleep is over! If they come here looking for fingerprints we're *fucked*. Your prints are all over every inch of the Rockaways, and now they're all over here again!

MITCH

I've been thinking—

CRYSTAL

This is no time to think! We've got to bleach the whole house!

MITCH

Maybe Jeb's right.

CRYSTAL

Right about what?

MITCH

Maybe I really *am* Harold Rodriguez.

CRYSTAL

What are you talking about? You just made that name up!

MITCH

How do I know? I can't remember a thing! I read your name on the mailbox out front. I walked into a house that looks like a swimming pool and I thought it was my home! I have no idea what the truth is anymore! Jeb says his Dad was like the big black locomotive that smashed up all the toys. Did I do that? Was that me or some other guy? Was I ever even here? Maybe it was all in my mind! Maybe I ate too many orange rinds on the boardwalk! Maybe I'm someone none of us has ever met!

CRYSTAL

(PANICKING) Tell it to the Marines! You can't choose who you want to be now that the law's on your back. All those Dante stories not going to help us right now, my friend. Fingerprints are fingerprints! What are we going to do?

MITCH

Get your insurance pal to make it go away, Crystal. He's a talented guy—he paid out life insurance on a guy who's still *alive*! Remember what he said? “Anything to help you...”

CRYSTAL

“... in my time of grief!” That's right! It sounded so good!

MITCH

Uh huh. It *was* good. Really good. What exactly did you have to give him in exchange?

CRYSTAL

I beg your pardon?

MITCH

What'd you do, Crystal Darwin, to get that check? Wanna tell me what you did?

CRYSTAL

No.

MITCH

(SMILING) Anything to do with that foxy lipstick?

CRYSTAL

Who told you that?

MITCH

Jeb. He may be slow, but he's not dumb.

CRYSTAL

(GETTING UPSET) He was just helping me out! He waived the need for—I don't know—all that legal language and confusing stack of papers—he said he'd take care of the whole thing without a problem and did I want to come to his place for a drink while he went through all the details and –

MITCH

And one drink led to another and you started fucking him until he went ahead and cashed a check that had nothing whatsoever to back it up and so now you've both committed a major crime. (PAUSE) Did he take a cut?

CRYSTAL

A cut?

MITCH

I don't guess a sleazy guy like that would hand over a quarter of a million dollars to a grieving widow without taking a piece of the action—

CRYSTAL

Dermot wouldn't do that—

MITCH

His name's *Dermot*?!

CRYSTAL

He's Irish. You got a problem with that? Where do you think the bagpipes came from?

MITCH

Bagpipes are *Scottish*! The guy's a con artist.

CRYSTAL

He saved my life! He told me what to do! He mapped out my beautiful future!

MITCH

Is he good in bed?

CRYSTAL

I beg your pardon?

MITCH

Is he talented in that arena? Or does he just write nice checks?

CRYSTAL

(WHISPERING) That's your son sleeping there! You want him to hear that kind of filth?

MITCH

You did it, sweetheart. I'm just asking for some details. You have gotten into bed with a shark. And now the shark is going to start circling, looking for blood. And it's not just my blood, sweetheart. It's mine, and yours, and Jeb's. So take off your coat and have a seat. Because we have some creative thinking to do before the sun comes up.

BLACKOUT.

MUSIC.

LIGHTS UP. DAWN RISING OVER THE DARWIN HOUSE. MITCH HAS HUGE RUBBER GLOVES ON. CRYSTAL IS IN SWEATS AND BARE FEET, CARRYING A LARGE CAN OF WINDEX AND A MOP. THERE IS SPANISH LANGUAGE TV BLARING LOUDLY IN THE BACKGROUND. JEB COMES IN WITH A PILE OF WET RAGS.

MITCH

Buenas dias, amigo! Que pasa?

JEB

Huh?

MITCH

Que pasa? What's happening?

JEB

Speak English, Harold! You can do it! (WAVING HIS RAGS) Look, Mama! I covered every single inch of the porch with bleach, like you told me!

MITCH

Congratulations, amigo! And the toaster goes to—

CRYSTAL

Jeb Darwin! (SPRAYING WINDEX IN THE AIR) Yahooooo!

JEB

What toaster?

CRYSTAL

Any toaster you want, son! Pretty soon, you'll be able to have any toaster in America, just you wait!

JEB

I already have a toaster.

MITCH

So have another! Have ten! You deserve it. There's nothing like toast, Jeb, to make a man feel at peace with the world.

JEB

You want one, Harold? A toaster? I love toast!

MITCH

I already feel at peace.

JEB

That's good, Harold! Toast is good! (HOLDING OUT THE RAGS) What do I do with these?

CRYSTAL

Take 'em out back, son. We'll burn 'em.

JEB

(EXCITED) Like a bonfire? Can I do it?

CRYSTAL

You bet. Go for it. Grab some matches from under the sink and burn everything! Every rag—everything Harold has touched. You hear me? Then stamp out the ashes and bury ‘em by the trash heap, you hear? Can you do that?

JEB

I think I can, I think I can, I think I can... (JEB EXITS OUT BACK. THEY WATCH HIM GO. THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE)

CRYSTAL

This is the happiest I have ever seen that boy.

MITCH

It’s gonna be better now, Crystal.

CRYSTAL

You think so?

MITCH

We’re gonna look after him and make him happy.

CRYSTAL

Okay. (BEAT) Take your gloves off a minute. (HE DOES) Hold this. (SHE GIVES HIM A HAMMER) Yeah, that’s right. Rub your fingerprints all over it. (HE DOES. SHE TAKES IT) OK. This’ll be the evidence. I’ll give them the hammer and tell ‘em it’s the only thing left that you touched. I’ll tell ‘em I saved it all this time because it was your favorite tool —

MITCH

For hitting guests over the head.

CRYSTAL

Whatever it takes, sweetheart. (SHE SITS. SURVEYS THE ROOM) Okay. The whole rest of the house is clean. I think we’re good.

MITCH

(SINKING INTO THE COUCH) I’m dead.

CRYSTAL

Don't touch! Don't touch a thing! (SPRAYING AROUND HIM) You're not dead, but you will be if they find you. Now get up!

MITCH

Please...

CRYSTAL

Come on you big lummoX. Where the hell are we going to hide you?

MITCH

Under the stairs?

CRYSTAL

How?

MITCH

Take out the paneling behind the bathtub.

CRYSTAL

I'm tiling it!

MITCH

There's a panel behind the tub where the plumbing goes down to the basement. I could go through there and stay downstairs—

CRYSTAL

For good?

MITCH

For now. Till they go through their fucking database and can't follow my fingerprints.

CRYSTAL

How long do you guess that'll take?

MITCH

Depends how greedy they are.

CRYSTAL

Oh Mitch I'm scared.

MITCH

Cheer up. You sure there's no one at the mortgage company could sleep with? Just till they get off our backs?

CRYSTAL

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Don't say that!

MITCH

Just asking. It could help.

CRYSTAL

I'm better than that!

MITCH

I know you are. I'm just—grasping at straws...

CRYSTAL

(BEAT. SITTING BESIDE HIM) You think I'm a criminal, don't you?

MITCH

Well...

CRYSTAL

You think I deserve what I get.

MITCH

I think you're peddling as fast as you can—

CRYSTAL

You bet I'm peddling! I had to fucking peddle! When your husband disappears and leaves you holding the bag--

MITCH

Then you've gotta peddle like there's no tomorrow. I know.

CRYSTAL

(SHOCKED) I'm sorry?

MITCH

What?

CRYSTAL

What did you just say?

MITCH

I said, I know. You're right. You did what you had to do.

CRYSTAL

That's right.

MITCH

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I'm impressed.

CRYSTAL

(AMAZED) You are?

MITCH

Si, Chiquita. Muy impresado!

CRYSTAL

(LAUGHING) Muchas gracias!

MITCH

It's a new world, senorita!! A new dawn for the Darwin family!

CRYSTAL

You betcha! Just you wait. No more sitting around waiting for life to happen—no more dead flies and cheap cigarettes and pink lipstick—we're gonna squeeze the world dry and drink the juice!

MITCH

Hallelujah!

CRYSTAL

Watch me! Watch me do it! (SHE STARTS SPRAYING WINDEX LIKE IT WAS CHAMPAGNE)-- you're going to be amazed at your wife, Mitchell Darwin!

MITCH

I'm already amazed!

CRYSTAL

It's a whole new era on 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue!

MITCH

To the Darwins! Wheeehoo! Long may they rule! (HE GRABS THE WINDEX, SPRAYS IT IN THE AIR. THEY WHOOP AND HOLLER AND DANCE AROUND.

SUDDENLY WE HEAR A CAR DRIVE UP OUTSIDE. A HORN HONKS LOUDLY. THEY FREEZE)

CRYSTAL

Fuck! Fucking hell! (THE CAR HONKS AGAIN. THEY CAN'T MOVE)

MITCH

Who is it?

CRYSTAL

Must be Dermot! He's never been up this early in his life!  
CAR HONKS.

MITCH

Help me. I can't move that fast-- (HE LIMPS OVER TOWARDS THE BATHROOM)

CRYSTAL

(LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW) There's no time! Shit! He's getting out of the car!

MITCH

(FROZEN) What are we going to do?

CRYSTAL

Sit down and shut up. He'll never guess. You're Harold, remember. Harold Rodriguez. Take a deep breath and start speaking Spanish.

MITCH

I was just messing around! I hardly know a word of Spanish, you know that!

CRYSTAL

Neither does he, believe me!

WE HEAR AN OFFSTAGE VOICE CALLING:

VOICE

Crystal? You up yet? Hey Crystal!

CRYSTAL

(PUTTING ON HER COY VOICE) Dermot! What on earth are you doing up at this hour?

VOICE

I thought we'd better get started!

MITCH

Fuck. *Fuck*. It's over.

CRYSTAL

Quiet. (CALLING OUT GAILY) Can't you let a girl get a little more beauty sleep first? Go on home, Dermot—I'll call you in a few hours—

VOICE

It's no good, Crystal—they're on to us—we've got to do this *now*— let me in--

CRYSTAL

Now?

SUDDENLY WE HEAR JEB FROM OFF. HE APPEARS ON THE PORCH CARRYING A CAN OF GASOLINE AND A BOX OF MATCHES.

JEB

(IN A STATE OF HIGH DUDGEON) What do you want with my mama? Go away! You hear me? I said go away!

CRYSTAL

(FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE) Jeb, sugar, come on inside! Everything's okay...

JEB

(YELLING) I got matches, mister! I got gasoline! You can't come in here any more! We don't need you! Keep your stinking flowers to yourself! If you step on this porch I will light a bonfire and burn down the house! I will!

CRYSTAL

(FROM INSIDE, YELLING, TRYING TO STAY CALM) Jeb! Stop it! Stop talking and come inside! Right this minute!

JEB

No! I won't! Because you wanna know something, mister? We got a big surprise for you, don't we mama?

CRYSTAL

I said stop talking, son! Come inside! NOW! Before I come out there and—

JEB

We don't have to be scared of him anymore, Mama! Not any more! Because guess what, Mister? Guess what happened last night?

VOICE

I have no idea.

JEB

My papa came home!

CRYSTAL

(SCREAMING) Jeb! That's enough!

JEB

(RELISHING EVERY MOMENT) You thought he was dead, didn't you? You thought he'd never come back and you could come in here and take my mama away! But you're wrong!

CRYSTAL

For the love of God—(TO DERMOT) He doesn't know what he's saying, Dermot—he's slow—you know that—he has no idea—

JEB

Oh yes I do. I told you my papa wasn't dead! You should see him now! He's fat! Big and fat with fucked up feet! He's alive, just like you and me! He was wandering in the wilderness, all alone, just like the little blue engine. But now the little engine has made it up over the hill with toys for all the girls and boys!

VOICE

Oh yeah?

JEB

Yeah! We're all going to be happy! And if you come in here, I'll make a fire so big everything will burn up, and I'll rescue my pops from the burning city and carry him on my back to safety—

CRYSTAL

(IN DESPAIR) Jeb!

JEB

(RELISHING EVERY MOMENT) And then we're going to found a new city, him and me—just like the Trojans when they got to Rome!

MITCH

(YELLING, FROM INSIDE) You tell him son!

VOICE

Who's that?

MITCH

I think I can, I think I can...

VOICE

Who the hell is inside the house?

JEB

(JOINING HIM) I think I can, I think I can..."

MITCH

Come on, Crystal! Let's show the world what you're made of!

CRYSTAL

(PICKING UP THE REFRAIN) I think I can, I think I can, I think I can..."

JEB

(AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS) Come on out, Mama! Come out, Papa! “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...!”

THE THREE DARWINS HOWL THE REFRAIN AT THE TOP OF THEIR LUNGS.

MITCH AND CRYSTAL STEP OUT ONTO THE PORCH, ARMS HELD HIGH. THEY GRAB JEB’S HAND, AND ALL THREE MOVE TOWARDS THE LIP OF THE STAGE, LIKE BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID BEFORE THEY JUMP OFF THE CLIFF.

MITCH

(FROM INSIDE) Ready or not, Darwins? Here we come!

THEY FREEZE.

SILENCE.

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.

