

**NEVER FEAR THE NIGHT**

A Noir Play in Two Acts

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## **CHARACTERS**

JESS  
*early thirties*

RITA  
*mid forties*

BOBBIE  
*mid forties*

MANNY  
*late thirties*

THE FATHER  
*late sixties*

## **THE SET**

*Two platforms – USL platform doubles as Rita’s bedroom, then Bobbie’s bedroom. USR platform doubles as the prison visiting room and Jess’ apartment. DSC open area serves as Rita’s backyard.*

## **TIME AND PLACE**

*Yuma, AZ  
Summer 1992*

“We’re criminals, Roy. Let’s face it . . . “

*-The Grifters*





**ACT ONE**

(Morning. Jess, in bed, awakens and stretches. Rita enters in a short robe and sits beside him on the bed)

Coffee?  
RITA

Sure.  
JESS

And would you like ham, bacon or sausage?  
RITA

You mean the back, middle or side of the pig.  
JESS

Or, the whole hog, if you want.  
RITA

And become an even bigger pig.  
JESS

Not with these muscles.  
RITA

Okay. The ass.  
JESS

Ham it is. Eggs?  
RITA

Sunny side up. And runny. I want yoke dripping from the side of the plate.  
JESS

You are a pig, aren't you?  
RITA

What man isn't?  
JESS

(She laughs. They kiss)

RITA

And how 'bout hash browns?

JESS

Shit! You really go to work, don't you?

RITA

Only when there's a male figure in the house.

JESS

And how often –

RITA

Don't ask.

(Another kiss, and she starts to pull him out of the bed)

Now c'mon, big boy! If you're getting this feast, I want you up and punching.

JESS

What? No breakfast in bed?

RITA

Not when you just had an appetizer in the sheets.

JESS

Nasty girl.

RITA

The way you like it, baby.

(They laugh. Another kiss)

JESS

How come you're not piss green with a hangover?

RITA

I've never gotten a hangover.

JESS

Bully for you!

RITA

And as for last night – thanks.

JESS

Performing my civic duty. I wouldn't want to see a beautiful lady drive wasted.

RITA

My white knight!

JESS

Not so white.

RITA

Huh?

JESS

Nothing.

RITA

No, tell me.

JESS

You don't want to hear my troubles. Besides, we just met.

RITA

Maybe I like trouble.

JESS

C'mon.

RITA

What makes you think I wasn't looking for it last night?

JESS

Are you trying to tell me something?

RITA

Maybe.

(Silence)

What do you think?

JESS

Now that you mentioned it, I *think* you might be dangerous.

RITA

And men don't like that in women, do they? Girls flip over a dangerous man, but



a dangerous woman puts a man in the wind.

JESS

So, why am I still here?

RITA

*I think . . . I suspect, you're dangerous, too.*

(Silence. Jess rises, begins dressing)

Something wrong?

JESS

Cool it, will ya?

RITA

Sorry.

JESS

You, uh . . . need help with breakfast?

RITA

When there's a man in the house, I cook.

JESS

Dangerous and old fashioned.

RITA

Yep. And I've got an idea: let's go dancing tonight.

JESS

With what you tied on, wouldn't a little time off be more appropriate?

RITA

I ain't letting you out of my sight. Ergo, I'm willing to put in a little overtime.

JESS

Okay. Where do we go dancing?

RITA

I know a really nice place.

JESS

Where?

RITA  
A place with a bar and a cute little dance floor.

JESS  
Where?

RITA  
It's a small place.

JESS  
*Where?*

RITA  
And they're open late.

JESS  
WHERE? Or I'll vaporize you!

(They laugh)

Listen, I do have something to tell you first.

RITA  
Uh oh!

JESS  
No . . . hold on –

RITA  
Wait! Let me guess – you're married.

JESS  
No.

RITA  
You've got kids.

JESS  
Hell, no.

RITA  
Are you a sex offender?

JESS  
If I were, do you think I'd tell you?

RITA

Alright, then – you're a fugitive . . . having just escaped jail.

(Silence)

Oh, my God.

JESS

It ain't that, either.

RITA

I'm getting warm, though, right?

JESS

Sort of.

RITA

What is it?

JESS

Forget it.

RITA

Oh, no! You don't get to tease me, then zip up 'cause all of a sudden you think it's too small.

JESS

You don't scare easily, do you?

RITA

Nope.

(Silence)

JESS

I've done time, Rita. Nothing violent. Just some shit with my brother. A while ago. Armed robbery. I . . . I did three years. I just . . . I thought it best to let you know now . . . in case – Listen, I'll run you back so you can pick up your car. And from there, I'll just be on my way –

RITA

We'll get to that. After you've had your breakfast.

JESS

Didn't you –

RITA

I heard, baby. And it's okay. Really! Now, listen: you'll sit in the kitchen and have coffee while you watch me cook. We'll eat. Then, we'll jump back into bed and knock ankles some more. After which, we'll have a shower. Then, you'll take me to pick up my car. Tonight, we'll go dancing. And afterward we'll bounce back here, get naked, and wear each other's asses out all over again.

JESS

You've been around the block, haven't you?

RITA

More than a few times, yeah.

JESS

Thanks, Rita.

RITA

Don't mention it.

(Fade out)

(Cross fade to a prison visiting room. Jess sits and talks to his father, who speaks with a Romanian accent)

JESS

How ya doing?

FATHER

Enjoying life.

JESS

You always say that.

FATHER

What you want me to say? I feel like shit, I'm miserable?

JESS

You can be honest with me.

FATHER

Okay, you want honesty?

JESS

Please. Now how are you doing?

FATHER  
I'm enjoying life!

JESS  
Fine. Be that way.

FATHER  
How 'bout you? Still working?

JESS  
Yep. Working for the same company. Doing the same thing. Odd jobs around the site. Steady work. And it keeps me out of here.

FATHER  
Good boy. Not like that bastard.

JESS  
Quit calling Manny a bastard. Ma was your wife.

FATHER  
I never insult your ma. I only say . . .

JESS  
Yes, you are. When you refer to Manny as a bastard, you're insulting her.

FATHER  
Not that she wasn't above insulting. Right?

JESS  
Don't start with her. Not again. I mean it.

FATHER  
What she did don't bug you no more?

JESS  
As a matter of fact, now that I can put all the pieces in place – no.

FATHER  
Sure! Your stinking father fucked up it all. Everything!

JESS  
I never said . . . everything.

FATHER  
I fucked up enough, though, yes?

JESS  
Let's forget it, huh?

(Silence)

FATHER  
They turn down my parole again.

JESS  
I ain't surprised.

FATHER  
Bastards. I mean, when you think about it, I ain't such a bad guy, right? At least I ain't no . . . what you say, a –

JESS  
Hardened criminal?

FATHER  
Something like that. I mean, it was accidental. Only accidental.

JESS  
Pa, we go through this every time I come to see you.

FATHER  
But why can't they give me a break? I keep saying this all the time – over and over – it was accidental.

JESS  
The same *accident* – twice?

FATHER  
C'mon! It ain't like I killed a whole stinking parade. And on purpose, too.

JESS  
As always, I'm never surprised when they turn you down.

FATHER  
What you say?

JESS  
You're gonna die here.

FATHER  
You think your pa's too stupid to get out?

JESS

In so many words, yeah.

FATHER

Fuck you.

JESS

If you'd had at least a scrap of a brain in that rock-head of yours . . .

FATHER

Look, I ain't no dumb wog! Okay? If I was some limp-dick, I'd tell those shit-heels what they want to hear, yes? Then, maybe – maybe they give me parole and let me walk in this piss-country free like a good limp-dick American citizen and not some scum limp-dick American citizen.

JESS

And that's the idea. America's not such a bad racket – once you understand there are ropes and that you just have to learn how and when to yank 'em.

FATHER

You think you're smart boy, yes? Smarter than your pa?

JESS

Smart enough to stay out of here.

FATHER

Don't get smug. You was "here" once, too, y' know.

JESS

Speaking of which – Manny's getting out soon. I'm gonna drive to Florence and pick him up. Then keep him at my place for a while.

FATHER

If you know what's good, you'll leave him to rot in some hole.

JESS

Well, it's always been my problem to never know what's good for me.

FATHER

Right! Always . . . how you say, uh –

JESS

Naïve.

FATHER

Like your ma.

(Jess rises)

Hey – hey! Hold it! Wait – son, please . . . please. I’m sorry.

(He sits again)

You settled into life on outside good. I’m glad for you. Sometimes, I wish I had your stuff, you know? The smarts to get out and stay out. You think growing up in Romania when that stinking Ceausescu had us living like scared dogs in prison, and almost getting shot escaping that shit-temple . . . You’d think a stinking louse like me would know enough to keep his dumb ass out of jail. But, no, from Romania to America, I get mad. Always getting mad. At everybody. I punch my boss on job ‘cause I get mad. I push your ma around ‘cause I get mad. I get in a fight with a cop ‘cause I’m mad. And your poor stepma, I – What I try to say is, I always knew you wasn’t cut for this, see? I never saw you as no criminal. That’s why I knew your stinking brother got you into shit with him.

JESS

I let him talk me into it. I ain’t totally guiltless.

FATHER

Whatever – I’m trying to say this rotten brother of yours, he’s worse than bad. So much, I almost don’t know where he came from.

JESS

He’s just like his pa.

FATHER

What you say? Say it again.

JESS

Forget it.

FATHER

I kick your ass, boy. All over this room.

JESS

Like you did Manny. And look at how he turned out.

FATHER

You think I had a hand in his shit?



JESS

No – I'm not blaming you for anything.

FATHER

Then, Jess, listen to me –

JESS

No, pa – you listen: Manny's no sweetheart, but I ain't gonna kick him down the stairs like some mutt.

FATHER

Let him go, boy . . .

JESS

Just leave it alone, pa. Alright?

(Silence)

FATHER

Your ma, she was good woman. Good woman. I was so mad – pissed – when she left. It's only now that, after all this time, I feel . . .

(Silence)

JESS

Listen, if things get crazy with Manny, I'll know what to do.

FATHER

I doubt it, son.

(Fade out)

(Lights rise in Jess' apartment. Manny is sitting on the sofa finishing a beer)

MANNY

That's more like it.

JESS

Want another?

MANNY

Please. Shit! Cold beer rolling down my throat. Little brother, I feel like I'm being baptized.

JESS

Does this mean you're gonna be a good boy for a change and give Santa a reason to throw a few presents your way this year?

MANNY

Who's got the time to be good when you can just knock the old bastard over? C'mon, bro! I ain't cut for nothin' else.

JESS

I swear, they tore you and pa are from the same old rag. The two of you are gonna fossilize in jail.

MANNY

And you won't?

JESS

I'm through being locked up.

MANNY

What's this? The joint ain't good enough for you no more?

JESS

Let's say three years was enough to wear out my welcome.

MANNY

To each his own. As for your big brother, with seven big ones under his belt, he feels lucky. Lucky enough to take on another job.

JESS

We can find you work.

MANNY

I said a job, bro. Where real money's involved. I can't cut work.

JESS

Where does it end, Manny?

MANNY

If I get nabbed again, hey – I go back to the pen. It ain't so bad.

JESS

You sound like a criminal.

MANNY

Well, I guess I ain't like you, alright?

JESS

Nobody said you had to be like me.

MANNY

And quit talking like some goddamned shrink.

JESS

Right! I keep forgetting. You're a hard head. Like pa.

MANNY

Speaking of which, when was the last time you saw him?

JESS

A week ago.

MANNY

I can't believe he's still alive.

JESS

Sixty-seven ain't old.

MANNY

Shouldn't he have had a heart attack by now, or something?

JESS

You want him to die?

MANNY

Why not? Put him out of his misery.

JESS

I don't suppose you'd care to see him, now that you're out?

MANNY

I'd rather slurp piss through a straw.

JESS

You'll never know how much you're alike, will you?

MANNY

Aw, fuck it! And fuck him.

JESS

Okay. You've made your point. But I think you should know that not only are you still on his proverbial shit list, he also told me – in so many words – to maintain a

safe distance from you.

MANNY

What? He thinks I'm gonna try to get you into shit again?

JESS

Does he have a reason to?

MANNY

And I suppose he still refers to me as a bastard.

JESS

I wish he would stop. It's an insult to ma.

MANNY

And I'll bet he'll never find it in himself to conjure too many fond memories of her, either.

JESS

Actually, I think he's finally regretting what he did to her.

MANNY

Good. Serves him right to cry in his milk.

JESS

The thing is . . . I don't want him to die in prison.

MANNY

They ain't gonna give the motherfucker parole.

JESS

If I could only get him to . . .

MANNY

He ain't getting' outta the joint, little bro. He knows it. And I'd lay odds it's what he wants – You ain't gotta take my word for it. Next time you see him, ask him.

JESS

The thing is I already have. In different ways.

MANNY

Then, stop lying to yourself.

JESS

It's stupid, but I can't.

MANNY

Well, I hate to break the news, but it's a little late in the day to try and salvage anything that could pass for a family. Ours is dead, if it ever had a chance to live. Got another?

(Jess gets him another beer)

Our lives are our own. And as for me, I don't give a shit. The world can go and take a dump in the middle of the street, for all I care. Including that excuse for a father going to rust back at the hard head Hilton. And the next time you visit the old fuck, for what it's worth, tell him his evil spawn of a son does have one redeeming factor: he loves his little brother. So, he can have pleasant wet dreams 'cause I ain't lettin' none of my shit rub off on you.

And by the way, I ain't forgot what you did for me back in Florence. You're the reason I not only kept my balls, but my life along with 'em. You went to work and did the job without so much as courtin' a scratch. You ought to be proud of yourself!

JESS

I'm not. Listen, I've gotta tell you something: I've been sort of . . . seeing a lady.

MANNY

Yeah?

JESS

Yeah. Anyway, she's having a little thing at her place. You know, she's gonna fire up the grill, have a friend over –

MANNY

A lady friend?

JESS

Yes, Manny. The thing is, I told her about you and . . .

MANNY

You're asking me on a double date, in other words.

JESS

No, it's not a – Look, nothing personal, but I didn't want to bring you.

MANNY

What? You ashamed of your hard head brother?

JESS

Give me a break! I was in the joint, too. And do you know what it's like to tell

that to a woman?

MANNY

Depends on the woman.

JESS

These are good women. Especially her friend, Bobbie.

MANNY

And you're saying they know everything about us?

JESS

More or less, yeah.

MANNY

Huh.

JESS

Anyway, when I told her, she kind of persuaded me to bring you along. She says she hates to see anyone left out.

MANNY

A lady with a big heart.

JESS

I'm asking you to go easy. *Especially* with Bobbie. Who didn't want to come.

MANNY

When have you known me to get rough with a woman?

JESS

Are you kidding?

MANNY

Well?

JESS

Okay, for example – back at the foster home? Recall that?

MANNY

I was a kid. Besides, she deserved it.

JESS

Oh, Jesus . . .

MANNY

Alright. I promise I won't embarrass you. In fact, I'll be good and white.

JESS

You sure it won't be too much for you?

MANNY

The two good women have nothing to fear, bro. I'll even keep my hands to myself.

JESS

Please. Want another?

MANNY

Nah. I think I'll take a nap, if you don't mind.

JESS

The couch is yours.

(Manny stretches out)

Something else – and I need to say this: when I did that thing back in the joint, I did it to save your sorry ass. I really didn't want anything to do with it. And I don't ever want to get accustomed to anything like that –

MANNY

Hey . . .

JESS

I'm not done. In Florence, you made a bad situation worse. You put us both in harm's way. After it went down, I was sick for two weeks. I puked till all I could heave up was air. I'm telling you this because not only have I outgrown that timid little punk who clung to his older brother, but I also won't find myself ankle-deep in your shit again. If you start another bad ordeal, I'm warning you – you're on your own.

MANNY

I stand warned, little brother.

(Fade out)

(Laughter as lights rise on Rita's backyard)

BOBBIE

Rita, you're terrible.

RITA

I have my moments.

JESS

And you're still working there?

RITA

Oh, he's not gonna fire me. Not after I called his bluff.

BOBBIE

He's afraid of her now.

JESS

I guess. So, tell me another fun story.

RITA

You tell some.

JESS

Don't have any.

RITA

You're lying.

BOBBIE

Or maybe he's holding out on us.

JESS

Nah . . .

BOBBIE

Oh, c'mon! You work on a construction site, for Pete's sake. All those men. You must have a bag full of lurid tales.

JESS

For your information, madam, we've got quite a few women on the site. In fact, the supervisor is a woman.

BOBBIE

Nice.

JESS

Which means we men must mind our lingo.



RITA

How boring.

JESS

We're there to work, not entertain ourselves.

RITA

Speaking of entertainment, what happened to your brother?

BOBBIE

He introduced himself, then skipped to the bathroom. And stayed.

RITA

Did we scare him?

JESS

I'll go see if he's hiding.

BOBBIE

Or, if he's actually in the bathroom.

JESS

What?

RITA

Nothing, Jess. Go knock and see if he's okay.

JESS

You think he's casing the joint?

RITA

Jess. She didn't mean it. And thanks again for being okay with this, Bobbie.

BOBBIE

Oh, sure. Anyway, sorry. I guess it slipped out.

(Manny enters)

MANNY

What slipped out? Your right tit, or the left?

JESS

Shut up, asshole.

RITA

Sit down, Manny. Have a beer.

MANNY

That I will.

(Rita hands him a beer. He sits and cracks it)

Nice set up you got.

RITA

You take a tour of the house?

MANNY

Only what I saw going to the johnnie, ma'am. Which was the living room.

RITA

Thanks, just the same. Even though it's not much. Not really.

MANNY

With what I'm used to, it's enough.

RITA

I'll go get the food for the grill.

BOBBIE

Do you need . . . ?

RITA

I'm fine, honey. Sit and entertain my guests.

(Rita exits)

MANNY

You picked a ripe one there, bro. And she likes you.

BOBBIE

You can tell?

MANNY

I got eyes.

BOBBIE

Hmm.

MANNY

And what about you? You're pretty ripe yourself. You in anybody's fruit basket?

BOBBIE

Not at the moment.

MANNY

Good looking well put together female like yourself won't have to wait long.

BOBBIE

If I were looking.

MANNY

I get it. Picky.

BOBBIE

No, it's like I said – I'm not looking.

MANNY

I see. Ain't nobody good enough for you, so you're playin' it celibate.

JESS

Leave her alone, Manny.

MANNY

I'm just talkin'.

BOBBIE

Getting a little personal, aren't we?

MANNY

What? Am I crawling under your skin?

BOBBIE

Well, I'd hate to ruin your fun, but . . .

MANNY

Relax. At the very least, I'll keep my hands to myself. Like I promised my little brother.

BOBBIE

Why, thank you.

MANNY

Anyway, what do you do?

BOBBIE  
*Do?*

MANNY  
 Yeah. You work, don't you?

BOBBIE  
 I'm an administrative assistant at a warehouse.

MANNY  
 Woman's work.

BOBBIE  
 Somebody's gotta do it.

MANNY  
 If you can cut it.

BOBBIE  
 And what about you? Are you looking for a job, or . . .

JESS  
 Manny's . . . weighing his options right now. He . . . he's looking.

BOBBIE  
 In that case, he might want to talk to Rita. Or, what about your company?

JESS  
 Well . . .

MANNY  
 Truth is, I'm looking to freelance.

JESS  
 Like I said . . . he's weighing his options.

(Rita re-enters with food which she brings to the grill)

RITA  
 Somebody looking for work?

BOBBIE  
 I think Jess' brother is –

MANNY

No, Jess' brother is not.

JESS

I told Bobbie that Manny is looking into other things. He's . . .

MANNY

You ain't gotta hold my dick, little brother. I got a mouth. And I'm man enough to make it speak.

JESS

Take it easy.

RITA

It's nobody's business, anyway.

BOBBIE

Right.

RITA

Besides, we're here to enjoy ourselves. Eat. Have a little fun. So, I want everybody to relax. Lighten up. Smile. Laugh.

MANNY

Chill.

RITA

Exactly. Let's be comfortable with each other.

MANNY

You saying you wanna fuck?

JESS

MANNY!

RITA

It's alright, Jess. I'm sure your brother was making a joke.

MANNY

All in good fun.

RITA

Absolutely.

MANNY

Tell me – what’s to do around here other than drink and chase . . . what do they call ‘em? Jackrabbits?

RITA

You could take a tour of Yuma Prison.

MANNY

A prison?

RITA

It’s an old prison. Like Alcatraz. Sort of.

JESS

The remnants of an old prison. It was built in 1876 by the prisoners themselves –

MANNY

No dice, bro.

BOBBIE

Should have known that was a bad idea.

RITA

Well . . . there’s the Camel Farm.

MANNY

Camels?

JESS

It’s like a zoo. Sort of. You go in and see the camels and – never mind.

MANNY

What you’re telling me is I’m knee-deep in some piss-water town?

RITA

It’s not so bad.

MANNY

Then why does the whole set-up feel like an old peoples home?

BOBBIE

There are signs of life.

MANNY

Where?

JESS  
I'll take you around and show you. Okay?

MANNY  
Sure, bro. You ladies from here?

BOBBIE  
No –

RITA  
No. We're from Green Valley.

MANNY  
Green Valley?

RITA  
A little town south of Tucson.

MANNY  
Small town girls, huh?

RITA  
That's us.

MANNY  
I never would have thought. I don't mean no disrespect, but you girls look like you've been around, y' know.

RITA  
Well, we've . . . travelled.

MANNY  
Yeah? Where?

RITA  
We went to Tahiti.

MANNY  
Together?

BOBBIE  
Yeah . . .

RITA  
. . . Um hmph.

MANNY

Tahiti! Man! That's it? C'mon. You birds got more under your shoes than that.

JESS

Manny . . .

MANNY

I'm trying to get to know my new-found friends. You gotta problem with that?

RITA

He's not bothering us. Leave him alone.

MANNY

Thank you, Miss – what's your name again?

RITA

It's Rita. And you really aren't bothering us. So, you can cool it with the act.

BOBBIE

After all, we're civilized, mature human beings. Right?

MANNY

You asking me?

RITA

Would you like another beer?

MANNY

I do believe I would, ma'am. Thanks.

(She hands him one)

And, for what it's worth, I would also like to thank you for inviting me to your home and for your warm and gracious hospitality.

RITA

Why, thank you. It's my pleasure.

MANNY

And let me also say that my brother is one lucky dog for hooking up with a fine-lookin' fox like you.

RITA

Your brother's not so bad himself.



MANNY

If you need help keeping a smile on her face, man – let me know, huh?

RITA

Okay! Time to start cooking.

BOBBIE

I think I'll wash up and give you a hand, Rita.

RITA

Thanks, honey.

(Bobbie exits)

MANNY

That broad's been around.

RITA

She's a nice girl. Leave her alone.

MANNY

Lives just across the street from you, huh?

RITA

Yep. We keep an eye on each other.

MANNY

What? Ain't it safe in this dead man's town?

RITA

You'd be surprised.

MANNY

Who's gonna bother you out here?

JESS

It's not your concern, Manny.

MANNY

Why not? It's no big deal, anyway. Unless they got something to hide.

RITA

And what would that be?

MANNY

You want me to guess?

RITA

Look, I'm sorry if you're feeling a little . . . intimidated –

MANNY

Intimidated? You can't intimidate me, lady. And quit apologizing.

RITA

Well, obviously . . .

MANNY

And don't start begging for sympathy, either.

JESS

Let me take you home, Manny.

MANNY

Oh, sure! Take me home – put me to bed – roll back here, assassinate my character with your girlfriend, then bang her till she's loose. You'll do good, bro.

JESS

You piece of shit.

MANNY

Watch your mouth. I'm older than you.

(Bobbie re-enters)

BOBBIE

Why don't we put some music on and chill this beast.

MANNY

How 'bout I sing?

JESS

Or how 'bout we just go home?

RITA

Don't go, Jess. The two of you stay put. Like I said – your brother doesn't scare me. Obviously, he'd like to sit and stew in his juices. He enjoys it. Can't you see?

MANNY

What? You think I got something to prove?

RITA

Haven't you? That you're better than us law abiding mortals? That you can make us girls wet between our legs by exposing yourself as the badass you think you are? Or are you getting your own rocks off with this sorry attempt at intimidation, as opposed to being intimidated?

MANNY

What it is, lady, is a solid belief in being completely and uncompromisingly upfront.

RITA

Wow! An honest man.

MANNY

It works for me.

JESS

You'd say that.

MANNY

No, I say fuck it. And fuck you.

RITA

That's a boy! Get it off your chest.

MANNY

Why did you invite me here?

RITA

I thought I'd do your brother a favor. I hate to see a person, however undeserving, left out.

MANNY

I see. I'm a charity case.

RITA

I wouldn't put it like that . . .

MANNY

Alright, then – let's put it another way: maybe, for you, it's like kissing an ex-con on his ass so he'll change from a dick-less toad to a handsome, law abiding jerk – is this your way of contributing to the greater good?

RITA

Y' know, if I took you seriously, you'd be amusing.

BOBBIE

Listen, Manny – and I can only speak for myself: there’s no reason for you to put on like this. We never intended to make you feel as if –

MANNY

No, it’s me who’s making *you* feel “as if”, right, lady? Your ass has been squirming in that chair like a whore squattin’ over a doorknob from the minute I crawled up on this yard.

JESS

Let it go, Manny.

MANNY

No way, bro. Let’s have some entertainment! You still want me to sing? You still wanna know what I do? Alright – I like to freelance. I don’t work ‘cause I can’t cut work. Now, here’s an item I was about to spring on you, Jess: in a couple of days, I’m gonna hook up with some partners of mine on the coast. Seems they’ll have a job lined up for me. In fact, it was laid out just before I got out of the pen. When the job’s done, my take will be worth five figures. Easy money – tax free! And after I’ve knocked this over, I’ll be on to the next operation. Freelance, y’ dig? The way I like it.

RITA

But, what if –

MANNY

I get nailed? *I don’t give a shit!* My ass has been in and out of somebody’s institution since I was, what? About eleven, or twelve, Jess?

JESS

Ten.

MANNY

Barely out of diapers. This is me, ladies. *I’m a criminal.* And if anybody’s got a problem with it – FUCK ‘EM!

(Silence)

BOBBIE

My! That *was* entertaining. I’ve worked up quite an appetite, in fact.

JESS

And aside from the fact that you’re a criminal, you’re also monumentally stupid.

MANNY

I could do worse.

JESS

You wanna tell us the exact date, time and place of the caper now?

MANNY

Why? You wanna join in?

RITA

No. We're done with it. And now that everything's out in the open, let's settle down and get ready to eat.

(Manny starts to exit)

JESS

Where are you going?

MANNY

I'm outta here. I've lost my appetite.

(He leaves)

JESS

Manny . . .

RITA

Let him go.

JESS

How's he gonna get back?

BOBBIE

Maybe he'll jack a car. I'm sorry –

JESS

No – no. It's what he'll probably do.

(Fade out)

(Later that evening. Bobbie steps into her bedroom, takes off her shoes, then flicks on the lamp on her dresser. She is immediately startled to see Manny sitting on her bed)

How – BOBBIE

Through the front door. MANNY

The front door was locked. BOBBIE

So? MANNY

GET OUT! BOBBIE

I'd like to talk. MANNY

What in the fuck would I have to say to you? BOBBIE

I don't know. Tell me a bedtime story. MANNY

Get the hell out of here! BOBBIE

Why? Are you scared? MANNY

(She goes to the phone on the nightstand and begins dialing)

Hey, put that down –

(She keeps dialing)

I SAID PUT IT DOWN!

(He grabs it and throws it across the room)

What do you want? BOBBIE

Courtesy. MANNY

You're out of your mind. BOBBIE

Maybe. MANNY

I've got a gun in the house. BOBBIE

I know. MANNY

(He shows her)

What do you want from me? BOBBIE

A few minutes of your life. MANNY

Why? BOBBIE

To get to know each other. Wasn't much of a chance for that back at Rita's. MANNY

You're wasting your time. BOBBIE

I'd beg to differ. MANNY

Look, I don't know what kind of game this is, but . . . BOBBIE

This ain't no game. I only wanna talk. MANNY

Talk? BOBBIE

Yeah.

MANNY

You came here to talk?

BOBBIE

Wasn't I plain enough?

MANNY

BOBBIE

I'm not sure. I mean . . . you break into my house . . . I come home and find you waiting in my bedroom –

MANNY

And don't go getting any ideas. Just 'cause you found an unmarried man in your bedroom.

BOBBIE

What?

MANNY

I'm kidding.

BOBBIE

I think you'd better go.

MANNY

I just got here.

BOBBIE

Please . . . I'm begging you –

MANNY

Chill out! Like when we was back at your sisters' place, I won't lay a hand on you.

BOBBIE

I appreciate that, but . . .

MANNY

Sit down.

BOBBIE

I'd rather not.



C'mon. Sit. On the bed.

MANNY

No.

BOBBIE

What's your problem? You wanna keep this nice and easy, or should I get rough?

MANNY

Fuck you.

BOBBIE

(He rises quickly, advances toward her, then stops)

Naw. We ain't gonna play it like that.

MANNY

Don't do me any favors.

BOBBIE

Will you quit acting tough? You're giving me a hard on. Now sit down. Let's talk.

MANNY

I don't want to.

BOBBIE

You wanna draw this out all night? Do ya?

MANNY

Is this all you're here for?

BOBBIE

Yes, ma'am.

MANNY

And after we talk, you'll leave?

BOBBIE

I sure as shit ain't gonna try to get you hot so you'll let me crawl in the sheets with you.

MANNY

(Slowly, she sits)

Good girl. Now, relax. You're in safe company. And you ain't gotta act cocky no more. Like when you was at your girlfriend's house.

So. How old are you? Thirty-eight? Thirty-nine? Forty something? Whatever number's got you, it sure as hell ain't showing. You are some solid looking woman. Solid, y' know? All over. Well-toned in all the right places. You go to the gym?

BOBBIE

When I can.

MANNY

You look fine. Damned fine. Sexy. Where're you from? Originally?

BOBBIE

Georgia.

MANNY

OOH! A southern girl! Ever been married?

BOBBIE

What do you mean?

MANNY

You know, ever tied the knot? A *husband*! Did you ever have one?

BOBBIE

I'm not sure – no. I've never . . . married.

MANNY

What's the matter? You hiding something?

BOBBIE

No.

MANNY

You sure?

BOBBIE

I'm not hiding anything.

MANNY

Then why so tense?

BOBBIE

I don't know, maybe, considering the circumstances . . . maybe I'm a little on

edge. You can understand that, can't you?

MANNY

Sure. And perhaps you're a little tired even.

BOBBIE

Yeah.

MANNY

You work tomorrow?

BOBBIE

I do.

MANNY

Alright. I can take a hint.

(He rises)

One last question: who are you running from? Your ex-husband, a boyfriend?

BOBBIE

Running? I . . . no one.

MANNY

Listen, I've seen your type before. Something's wrong.

BOBBIE

I assure you, whatever it is, it's beyond anything you . . .

MANNY

And what exactly do you see in this place? A woman like you – in this dead-ass town? It don't add up.

BOBBIE

I thought you were leaving.

(He smiles, then starts to exit)

May I have my gun back, please?

(He stops)

MANNY

On one condition: you keep our little meeting between us. See, when I start

keeping company with a woman, I like to be discreet, y' know?

(He hands her the gun. She takes it. He exits.  
Fade out)

(Lights rise on Rita's backyard. Jess enters.  
Rita awaits him)

RITA

Sorry to bother you on a weeknight. And so soon after getting off work.

JESS

Not to worry. Are you okay?

(She shows him her jewelry box)

What's the matter? Is something missing?

RITA

I didn't notice until this morning. It's a necklace. There's a hook in a secret place in the box where I hang it. I haven't worn it often. I think I may have worn it twice. It's . . . very special.

JESS

What are you saying?

RITA

Sunday when you brought Manny to the house . . . when we thought he'd locked himself in the bathroom . . .

(Silence)

JESS

You noticed it missing today?

RITA

I didn't look into the box until today.

JESS

And you couldn't have lost it.

RITA

I couldn't have.

Shit. JESS

Don't say anything to him. RITA

Why not? JESS

We can't be sure – RITA

Who else could have taken it, Rita? Who? JESS

I guess you know him. RITA

Yeah. And when I see him, I'm gonna maul his ass. JESS

I just don't want . . . RITA

Let me handle it. Believe me, I'll get to the bottom of this. Rita, I'm sorry. JESS

Oh, don't be. RITA

Did he take anything else? . . . Rita? JESS

Only . . . a little money. RITA

Son of a bitch! JESS

About sixty dollars – which I *did* know about earlier. RITA

And you're only telling me this now? JESS

RITA

I wanted to be sure.

JESS

What do you mean? It's pretty goddamned obvious, don't you think? I wouldn't be surprised if the scum-sucking asshole admitted it.

RITA

What's he been doing, anyway?

JESS

Infesting some bar in town. I haven't a clue where he gets the money for – Shit!

RITA

How will you handle it?

(Jess is about to leave. Rita stops him)

Jess . . . honey, be careful.

(He exits. Fade out)

(Lights rise on Jess in his apartment waiting for Manny, who enters suddenly)

MANNY

Damn, bro. You look like some pissed off wife waitin' up for her piece o' shit old man –

JESS

Where is the necklace?

MANNY

Come again?

JESS

The necklace you stole from Rita's jewelry box. Where is it?

MANNY

Why? Does she want it back?

(Jess suddenly hits Manny in the face, knocking him down. He rises slowly)

Do that again and I put you in the grave – brother, or no brother.

JESS

Pa was right. You're so rotten you have to wonder where the hell you came from.

MANNY

Kid, I don't know why you even listen to that old fucker.

JESS

Where is the necklace, Manny?

MANNY

I'm not sure if I ought to give it up, with the information I got.

JESS

What are you talking about?

MANNY

Did the little lady tell you anything about this certain piece of jewelry?

JESS

It's hers. And it's all you need to be concerned with.

MANNY

So, you say.

JESS

Where is the necklace?

MANNY

In a very secure place, as a matter of fact.

JESS

What do you mean? What did you do with it?

MANNY

Listen, little brother, I'd forget about that piece of jewelry and that broad, if I was you. That is, if you ain't lookin' for trouble now that you're clear of the pen.

JESS

Manny, I swear, I'm about two inches from your ass –

MANNY

And if you value your worthless life, you'll heed pa's word and keep your distance!

JESS  
You hocked it, didn't you?

MANNY  
I should be so stupid.

JESS  
Manny . . .

MANNY  
You really ain't got a clue, do you?

JESS  
About what?

MANNY  
I can't believe this. Didn't you learn nothin' in the joint?

JESS  
I was too busy trying to get out.

MANNY  
Of course. You're the good boy, as pa would always say.

JESS  
I'll ask again – *where is the necklace?*

MANNY  
And I'll say again – forget it! If you know what's good for you, wash that broad and anything with her prints on it out of your memory.

JESS  
Why?

MANNY  
She's dirty. Her and that tight-assed girlfriend of hers.

JESS  
And what makes you think . . .

MANNY  
Instinct, bro. Something which you, despite your background, are severely lacking. *Those broads are dirty*, you hear what I'm saying? I can smell a dirty broad through a wall. It's something in their bones, a look they got about them, y' know? Or, like how they can't seem to answer you straight. About nothing. Not



one goddamn thing. For instance, I asked that Bobbie if she'd ever been married – a simple enough question for anybody, right? A retard could answer yes, or no. But this broad – you wanna know what she says? She says, *I don't know*.

JESS

And this proves what?

MANNY

Hang on, I'm getting' warm –

JESS

Oh, you've been busy.

MANNY

I'm looking out for your ass, alright? Now, I've been chillin' at this little watering hole in town. I'm talking to the bar keep. Nice fellow. Old timer. He's planted here. Claims to know a lot about this corner of the state. Okay. I start cracking his skull about our two friends. Oh, yeah, he says. He knows 'em. Now get this – you recall when I asked them where they were from? Someplace called, what, Big Valley . . . ?

JESS

Green Valley.

MANNY

Yeah, well, this guy remembers these two. Remembers twenty years ago when they cut into this stink hole of a town from *L.A.* – not from no Big-Green-Valley, or whatever, but *L.A.* Two young girls in their twenties. And he says they were hot! And I believe him. I mean, they ain't nothin' to throw outta bed now, but back when they were twenty-something, they must've been so hot they were smokin'. So, he told me about these girls. Fresh outta *L.A.* Sitting at the far end of the bar. Drinking. And tying it on. *They looked scared*, he says. And it was plain to everybody that they were drinking to chill.

JESS

Alright? So?

MANNY

What do you mean, "alright – so?" Don't all this strike you as a little odd? Think about it: you're young, beautiful. You got the whole world waiting in front of you like a ripe tomato! Why in the fuck would you leave Los Angeles to pitch camp in a piss-water town like this? *Unless you're running?*

JESS

And this is what a bar keep told you?

MANNY

He ain't no slacker, bro. The man had a real head on his neck. And I'm peepin' at you and it's as clear as daybreak that what I said is knocking around in your skull. It makes sense. Admit it.

JESS

You're running with this, aren't you?

MANNY

Little brother, those broads are dirty. I know what I'm talking about. The whole shootin' match just don't add up. Now, my advice –

JESS

Fuck you and your advice! None of this means shit, Manny. And it's probably good this thing with the necklace went down. Finally, after all this time, I get to take a long look at you.

MANNY

What's this?

JESS

I want you gone.

MANNY

Just like that?

JESS

Out of here.

MANNY

Fine. I gotta head to the coast for this job pretty soon, anyway.

JESS

Good luck.

MANNY

No, good luck to you, little brother. In fact, just to show I still value the warm blood between us – even if you don't – I'm gonna waltz up to L.A. when this job is done and see what else I can scare up on your girlfriends.

JESS

You shouldn't exert yourself.

MANNY

I can't help it. When I told you I loved you, I meant every word. No bullshit.

(Fade out)

(Lights up on Jess sitting the in prison  
visiting area. His father enters and sits)

JESS

I gave Manny his walking papers.

FATHER

Oh, yeah?

JESS

I didn't want to, but . . .

FATHER

There you go again. I told you. Didn't I keep telling you?

JESS

Pa . . .

FATHER

Fuck him! Okay? And forget him. For once, listen to me and cut that louse off  
your back. It ain't worth it. Son, or no son – brother, or no brother. You hear what  
I say?

JESS

Yeah, pa. Yeah.

FATHER

Aside from that, how've you been?

JESS

Alright.

FATHER

You sure? You don't sound it.

JESS

I'm fine.

(Silence)

FATHER

I hate this stinking place.

JESS

No kidding?

FATHER

Don't laugh, but I start to think it might be bad idea to die here, you know?

JESS

What are you gonna do about it?

FATHER

Maybe, I . . . I stand tall in front of parole board next time. Like a real man. And not like some jerk.

JESS

I can see the sun shining through you already.

FATHER

Fuck that! And I ain't saying I'm gonna suck nobody's ass.

JESS

And they're not expecting you to. I'm sure of it. Like you said – they want to put a real man back on the outside. Not someone who likes it here.

FATHER

You be around? If I get out?

JESS

Of course, pa.

(Silence)

FATHER

Something's wrong.

JESS

I'm okay.

FATHER

Tell me. Is it a woman?

JESS

What are you, a priest?

FATHER

Hey! Watch your stinking mouth!

(They laugh. Silence)

This woman leave you?

JESS

No . . . no.

FATHER

Then, what?

JESS

I'm not sure. We've been seeing each other and all of a sudden, I think something might be going on with her. Something I probably don't want to know about. Or believe.

FATHER

A woman with a secret. Sounds dangerous.

JESS

Yeah.

FATHER

Why you think something's up with this dame?

JESS

A certain person bent my ear.

FATHER

Who?

JESS

It doesn't matter who.

FATHER

Why it don't matter? Was it your brother?

JESS

Manny's got nothing to do with it.

FATHER

But you still listen to him and not me.

JESS

Get off of it, pa. It's none of your goddamn business, anyway. I'm sorry I brought it up.

(Silence)

FATHER

Your ma had secrets, too. She won't dangerous. She only had . . . stuff, you know? Stuff that, with time, upset her. About a month, or so after we was married, she . . . you know, told me a thing, a little thing about herself. And she made me promise not to say nothing to no one. Later, not even our boys.

This woman . . . you feel good with her?

(Jess nods)

You're a good boy. You'll know how to keep a woman. You'll know what to say.

(Father rises and exits. Fade out)

(Bobbie is in her bedroom. She is standing at her dresser in a nightgown, preparing for bed when she suddenly becomes aware of Manny's reflection in the mirror. He has just entered)

BOBBIE

My gun is very close by.

MANNY

Good. In fact, get it and use it. The law's on your side, anyway. I broke into your house. At night. With the sole purpose of rendering harm.

BOBBIE

In other words, we're done talking. Now it's time to up the ante, right?

MANNY

You're some woman, you know that? I mean, you have a thing about you that makes a man wanna crawl over you and lick you in every crack.

BOBBIE

I'm flattered.

MANNY

What? You telling me no man's ever said how much you make his dick ache?

BOBBIE

Look, whatever you want to do, just get it over with and leave me alone. Please.

MANNY

Lady, what do you take me for? Some kinda turd?

BOBBIE

Worse.

MANNY

Now you're insulting me.

BOBBIE

Don't you live for that?

(He sits on the bed)

Are we playing this out?

MANNY

Maybe.

BOBBIE

For how long?

MANNY

I could spend the night.

BOBBIE

You wouldn't enjoy it much.

MANNY

That's okay. It don't take much to please me.

(Abruptly, she goes to her bed stand and takes out her gun from the drawer. She points it at Manny)

BOBBIE

Move your ass!

MANNY

When I'm ready.

BOBBIE

Didn't you hear me? I'm not playing!

MANNY

I know.

BOBBIE

What's the matter with you? GET OUT!

MANNY

I'd rather sit and watch you try to shoot me. Go ahead.

(She aims, struggling to pull the trigger.  
Finally, she relents)

Dirty cunt!

(Manny rises and slaps her. She falls on the  
bed, he wrests the gun from her, holds her  
down and points it at her)

Shooting somebody ain't nothin' to me. I've done it before. The first time I was fresh out of juvey. A black hood who called himself Pony brings me into his crew. He pays me three G's to whack some chump who was priming to squeal to the Feds. Caught him stepping out of a liquor store one night. I jumped behind him and planted two caps in the back of his skull. The chump went limp and fell all over the sidewalk like a black Sambo doll.

BOBBIE

It's good you got an early start.

MANNY

And I was a quick learner, at that.

BOBBIE

What's holding you back now?

MANNY

I'd like to see what you feel like first . . .

(He begins to rip her gown. Bobbie suddenly  
cries out, then is silent. Manny has stopped,  
affected by her scream. She is stiff with fear.  
After a moment, he releases her and rises)

BOBBIE

What stopped you?



MANNY

I think I should get to know you a little better.

BOBBIE

Really? What's the next step – a date?

MANNY

I ain't the datin' type.

BOBBIE

You could've fooled me.

MANNY

Hey! Watch your yap. You're gettin' off easy.

BOBBIE

I should be so lucky.

MANNY

Y' know, you'd be a lot of fun if you wasn't such a tight-ass.

BOBBIE

Listen, not to sound rude, but . . . could we call it a night?

MANNY

What? You think this is over?

BOBBIE

Of course not. Who am I kidding? It's never over for someone like you.

MANNY

I've been at this game for years.

BOBBIE

You should have been a cop.

MANNY

Yeah? You think I got the stuff?

BOBBIE

Breaking people down. Intimidation. You'd be gang busters in an interrogation room.

MANNY

Nah. I'd only get impatient and bust a lot of heads.

(He observes her gun)

You ever plug anybody with this?

BOBBIE

No. And I hope I never have to.

MANNY

See, that's your problem: you play everything too close to the tit.

BOBBIE

Manny, I have no desire to shoot anyone, much less kill them. Including you, believe it, or not.

MANNY

Killing's got nothin' to do with desire, the way I see it. It's always been about necessity. Or money. Sometimes. Y' know, I ain't never shot a woman before. At least, I don't think I have.

BOBBIE

Let me guess – you'll start with me and even the score.

MANNY

Sounds like you're asking for it.

BOBBIE

Begging! Just stop fucking with me!

(He aims, pulls the trigger. The sound of an empty chamber is heard. He repeats the action again and again. He stops and laughs)

MANNY

What's the matter? Why ain't you laughing? Oh, c'mon! Nobody got beat up, or nothin'. Right? Hey, it's all good. Alright – I might have taken the liberty of crawling into your house when you was at work to set the joke up, okay? . . .

BOBBIE

You dick-less lowlife.

MANNY

Here we go . . .

BOBBIE

Leave my house!

MANNY

What do you want, an apology? Okay, I'm sorry.

BOBBIE

Get your fucking ass out of here before I kick it!

MANNY

If I was you, I'd look into gettin' another heater. This pop gun wouldn't stop a rat. Just saying.

(He tosses her the gun)

Like I said back at Rita's, I'll be heading to the coast for a little while. That job I told you about? It's taking me to San Diego. And when I'm finished down there, I'm gonna prance up to L.A. and talk to a few souls. Ask around, y' know? See, I'm a curious sort, and all. And I gotta tell ya, there was something – *something* about you and your girlfriend that piqued my interest. To get to the point, you girls made it your business to lie to me. You ain't from no town south of Tucson. You crash landed here twenty years ago from L.A.

Something's up with you broads. I smell shit. Now I'm gonna go find the sewer.

(He exits. Fade out)

(Lights up on Rita's backyard. She's smoking and having a drink. Bobbie enters)

BOBBIE

We're in trouble. Manny was just at my house.

RITA

*Your* house? What was he doing there?

BOBBIE

He . . . he broke in. Again.

RITA

Again? What are you saying?

BOBBIE

The night you had the barbeque and invited him over . . . after I'd left and went home, I found him in my bedroom.

RITA

Oh, my God!

BOBBIE

That was the first time.

RITA

Why didn't you . . .

BOBBIE

He threatened me. He told me not to tell anybody.

RITA

Did he do anything to you?

BOBBIE

I wouldn't let it come to that.

RITA

You can't let this happen again – in fact, call the police right now.

BOBBIE

It wouldn't do any good.

RITA

What is the matter with you? This asshole breaks into your house – at the very least, get a restraining order.

BOBBIE

You think that will stop him?

RITA

Honey, you've got to do something.

BOBBIE

I'm afraid to call the police. Anyway, this is the least of our worries.

RITA

*Our* worries?

BOBBIE

I think he knows something.

RITA

And what would that be?

BOBBIE

He spoke to the bartender. He knows we're not from Green Valley.

RITA

Okay.

BOBBIE

This job of his, or whatever he told us about that day, whatever it is . . . as you know, it's taking him to San Diego.

RITA

And?

BOBBIE

He says he's going to Los Angeles when this thing, or whatever is finished with the intent of – as he puts it – asking around about us.

RITA

And?

BOBBIE

He says he's suspected something from the start.

RITA

Which is?

BOBBIE

Come on, Rita! He's going to L.A. to ask questions.

RITA

And who is he? Nothing but a cheap, dirty crook. Who's gonna talk to him?

BOBBIE

I wouldn't underestimate this guy.

RITA

But, who in that town is gonna tell him anything? Besides, he's going to Los Angeles, for Christ's sake.

BOBBIE

By way of San Diego. And think about the company he'll be keeping. These are organized criminals. They don't work in a vacuum. They're a network. They rub shoulders. And San Diego and L.A. are practically in each other's back yard.

RITA

Bobbie, nobody's telling him anything. And if by some slender chance he should unearth something, what's he gonna do? Go to the police?

BOBBIE

He won't have to. He'll have the whole story. Which means he'll have more than enough to knock us around.

RITA

Baby, you're losing it.

BOBBIE

I don't care! Rita, I'm scared!

RITA

Do you want a drink?

BOBBIE

No! Now, goddammit, take me seriously!

RITA

What I'm trying to get you to see is the only thing serious in this whole scenario is you going off the deep end.

BOBBIE

Rita . . . what if someone should lead him to the *old man*?

RITA

The old man is dead.

BOBBIE

You bought that story?

RITA

Yes, because it made sense. Now take it easy.

BOBBIE

What about Silvio? No doubt he's running things now.

RITA

Bobbie, it's been twenty years.

BOBBIE

And are you crazy enough to think these people forget?

RITA

Wasn't this the entire idea behind stopping in this town to hibernate and wait it out for this long? Honey, we're okay. Manny is shit. And those circles we knew of wouldn't pee in his direction.

BOBBIE

I hope you're right.

RITA

We're fine. And guess what? In a little while we'll be in Mexico. As planned. Right? Who's gonna know us down there?

BOBBIE.

What about Jess? What are you going to tell him? I mean, the two of you are getting pretty cozy. You'd think he'd have the right to know something now.

RITA

When the time comes . . . we'll talk.

BOBBIE

Or, you'll say nothing and leave him. I should go.

RITA

Are you okay?

BOBBIE

I don't know. I . . . I – I'll see you tomorrow . . .

RITA

Have a drink first. Please. It will calm you down.

(Bobbie sits as Rita pours her a drink. She hands it to her, then sits, smiling occasionally as she watches Bobbie tentatively sip the drink)

(Lights fade. End Act One)

**ACT TWO**

(Lights rise on Rita's backyard, night, where she sits smoking, sipping a drink. Jess enters with a beer)

RITA

Not that I'm concerned, but have you heard from Manny?

JESS

No.

RITA

It's been over a week.

JESS

He's no longer on my radar. In fact, I hope to God the shithead stays gone.

RITA

Your only brother?

JESS

We never had a real family, Rita. Although, there's pa. Who I still talk to when I can.

RITA

Does he ever ask about Manny?

JESS

He never wanted to know him.

RITA

Shit.

JESS

I know. I mean, it's like . . . like being cursed – cursed with a goddamn stain . . . a stain that won't wash. Like . . . some curse of Cain. Always marked.

Always a criminal.

I'd watch our old man crawl in and out of the joint for one bullshit reason or another when I was a kid, with Manny following his lead. And it got to me. And poor ma . . . it got to her, too. Even then, I knew it would all come down to where she couldn't bring herself to sleep through the nightmare anymore: sure enough, I'd wake up one morning and find her gone. I cried for a week. After a while, pa took up with another woman dumb enough to marry him, too. Things were civil for a month. Then one day I'd watch him shoot the poor woman in the face. I was



eight. He'd been drinking. They fought. He said it was an accident. He pulled the trigger, and her face seemed to cave into the bullet. I was scared – so scared for pa. Yeah, I saw him kill a woman, but all I felt was fear over what would happen to him.

When they put him away, me and my brother were tossed into a foster home, which wasn't too bad, with Manny there to watch my back. But, over time he'd find himself in the shit, too: he beat the housekeeper with a mop handle. Badly. When they arrested him, he walked out smiling. Once again, I couldn't stop crying. What in the world was I supposed to do without my brother to look after me?

Meanwhile, pa pulled a dime and got out. A few years later, he was back inside for second degree murder. The judge threw the book at him and gave him twenty to life. Again, he called it an accident. He'd been living with a young Mexican girl. And wound up getting drunk and beating her head in with a pipe.

The years pass. And Manny finds himself incarcerated. Again. This time – I'm with him. I'm working the kitchen in a restaurant when he finds me. I let him sweet talk me into joining him on a "job." I go with him. Things get screwed up. We get caught. I get three years. He gets seven.

In the joint, Manny made trouble. And because he's my brother, I looked out for him. He started fucking with this old inmate. I warned Manny – leave him alone. He's old school. Harmless. Quit bothering him. But Manny wouldn't let up. And we all knew it was down to the clock before the old fuck would try to take him out. I warned Manny again – watch your ass. But, as usual, with Manny, I pulled up a blank. When it finally went down – we were in the shower. I saw it coming and –

(He looks down at his palms)

Would you believe . . . would you believe I've still got that old fuck's blood on my hands? I didn't want to see my brother hurt. And for that . . . I've got a man's blood . . . all over my hands. The stain . . . This goddamned stain! It won't go away, Rita! It won't . . . !

(Rita embraces him, which calms him. After a moment, she kisses him, then breaks the embrace)

RITA

Y' know . . . I may not be as tough as you think.

JESS

You're telling me you haven't been around the block?

(Silence)

You trying to scare me away?

RITA

Jess, honey, I want you so bad I can taste it.

JESS

Then let me see the whole picture. Show me a real woman down there and not something I can play with, or who plays with me.

RITA

What did Manny tell you?

JESS

What do you mean? . . .

RITA

Nothing. Forget it.

JESS

No – you don't get to do that either. Now what about Manny?

RITA

He spoke to Bobbie. Before he left . . . he threatened her.

JESS

Why?

RITA

I think you already know.

JESS

Let me hear it from you. Why did he threaten her? It's a simple question. It's not like I'm asking you to figure out the world.

RITA

Which would be easy.

JESS

And we're passed easy. It's time to get real.

(Bobbie enters with Manny. He has a bottle of liquor, which he pulls from throughout the scene)

RITA

What do you want?

MANNY

What? I ain't welcome no more?

RITA

You got it! You're in a no-fly zone, mister.

MANNY

But this ought to give me clearance . . .

(He shows a gun lodged in his pants)

. . . Wouldn't you say?

(He laughs)

Bye the way, that San Diego job went smooth, man. By the numbers. Not even the slightest hitch. And a big job, at that. We pinched about twelve, maybe fifteen loads of copper piping from a distribution center. Night job. One of the guards was our guy. The other guard, we had to take care of. We kept it clean, though. Had a guy who took out the surveillance like it was switching off a light. Clean! Didn't leave a mess. Had a fence and a buyer all set up. Made myself twenty G's. YOW!

What's the matter, bro? You ain't lookin' well.

JESS

What's your beef with these women?

MANNY

It ain't me who's got a beef. Though, it seems I've been paid handsomely, and will receive additional compensation, from a certain individual who *does* have it in for them.

RITA

Is that so?

MANNY

Straight up, sis'.

RITA

And where is this person?

MANNY

The deal is I take care of business myself. Which means, I left him in L.A.

JESS

And who in their proper mind would hire you without supervision?

MANNY

It won't easy, I'll tell you that. I had to do some serious bucking and jiving before I could bring that wop around.

RITA

What wop?

BOBBIE

It's not him, Rita. The old man is dead.

MANNY

Dead! As cold meat! Wha' d' ya know? There was somethin' to that story after all.

BOBBIE

Manny spoke to Silvio.

MANNY

The old man's son. You know him.

RITA

No, I don't.

MANNY

You are acquainted with him, though, right?

RITA

Okay. What do you want?

MANNY

Whoa! This is gonna be easier than I thought.

RITA

What do you want, Manny?

MANNY

We'll get to that. First, sit down. Everybody. I said SIT!

(The women sit. Jess remains standing)

Take a load off, bro.

JESS

Or, what? You'll shoot me?

MANNY

Fine. Be that way.

RITA

I'd offer you a beer, but you seem to be taken care of.

MANNY

The hooch is jackin' me up nice, but thanks.

RITA

And would this be your first or second bottle?

MANNY

I ain't gonna drop out on ya, baby. I can hold my liquor.

RITA

Well, then I don't suppose you'd let me excuse myself to the bathroom?

MANNY

Sure. Go ahead.

RITA

Unsupervised.

MANNY

If you gotta go – go.

RITA

You're serious?

MANNY

If you want to run or dig up your heater, lady, it makes no difference to me. But I've got some news that might cool your heels if you're, in fact, leaning in the direction of popping me one.

Y' see, I have what you would call a very small window of time in which to complete this task for Silvio. He gave me one day – twenty-four hours. And if he don't hear from me by this time tomorrow night, he's coming out here himself. In fact, you'll more than likely receive a knock at your door around that hour. So, if you're still lookin' to squeeze out a way to whack me, then vanish into the deep night, the big man in L.A. has – as he himself put it – the situation *in hand*. Take

from that what you want, but – if I was you – I’d treat me like a guest, I wouldn’t look to sneak up and tap me on the head with nothin’, and I sure as fuck wouldn’t go nowhere.

JESS

This is bullshit.

MANNY

You think I’m jokin’, motherfucker? Okay! Lead your little girlfriends by their hands to the getaway car and try to make your break and you’ll understand what bullshit is!

BOBBIE

He’s not lying, Jess. And he told me everything.

MANNY

In fact, what I did was present to the big guy several pieces of a puzzle. Starting with one very large piece. A fat piece, in fact.

RITA

You spoke to Big Roy?

MANNY

Big Roy’s dead. Bought it in prison. He had a heart attack.

RITA

Then, who . . .

MANNY

Of all people, would you believe it was one of our guys on the Diego crew?

RITA

And how, pray tell, would this man know –

MANNY

Stories have a way of knocking around, lady. For a long time. Years, in fact.

RITA

In other words, I suppose I ought to be afraid.

MANNY

I’d be.

RITA

Alright. What do you know?

MANNY

Enough. For instance, about the bag of cash Big Roy'd tote from L.A. to San Diego twice, sometimes three times a year to that Chinese restaurant. And how he'd get a room at a swanky hotel and call that escort service just across the street to hook up with his two favorite pair of minx's for a little playtime. *The same two girls with every visit.* Girls who knew their way around a man.

BOBBIE

Whatever we did –

(Rita gestures to Bobbie to keep quiet)

JESS

Okay. Are you about done?

MANNY

What? You gettin' bored?

JESS

Quite!

RITA

Give him time, Jess. Besides, we're already at the chase, anyway. Right, Manny?

MANNY

You talking about when the back room of that chink joint got robbed?

RITA

And let me guess: you, of all people, know who busted the joint?

MANNY

No, but Silvio's got a pretty good idea, I'll say that. After I piqued his interest, he started to fill in the blanks. Y' see, there were two lost souls who happened to be working late that night and in harms way – one of whom happened to be Silvio's nephew –

RITA

I don't believe you!

MANNY

Oh! *You getting' scared now?*

And that piece of shit who ran that escort service was part of that break in, won't he? In fact, that part of it you *did* know. And your glorified pimp had help, didn't he? It's pretty clear. How else should it have come about that *he'd* be laid beside the other two stiffs with a couple of caps in him and no sign of the loot if

he hadn't had at least one or two strings?

(Bobbie wants to speak. Rita motions for her to be quiet)

Half a million in cash – gone! And what about the diamonds? The rocks?

(Silence)

Silvio said that ten million in diamonds got yanked from a wall safe.

RITA

Really?

(Manny nods)

And Silvio divulged this information to *you*?

MANNY

I came to him with a product, lady. I'll admit, I ain't much to come home to, but when you're carting valuables, even King Tut will look at you straight.

RITA

But there's a problem.

MANNY

Which is . . . ?

RITA

I remain unconvinced. Silvio believes you – *YOU*? Some hump who drops in unannounced out of the gutter? A small-time crook worth less than his own spit? And a man like that not only listens, not only talks, but lays out good money *to you*?

MANNY

Ain't you forgetting something? Ask me. Isn't there anything in particular you wanna know? About a certain valued item maybe?

RITA

*The neckless? . . . Where is it?*

MANNY

*I gave it back to Silvio.* See, that's what clinched it, honey. It's what convinced him I was for real.



RITA

And now that we've come to it, what exactly did he instruct you to do?

MANNY

I got twenty-four hours, sister. Twenty years has brought you this far. You can hold out for one lousy day, can't you?

BOBBIE

And what are we supposed to do until then?

MANNY

Play around a little. Get some exercise.

BOBBIE

I don't understand.

MANNY

Come with me.

BOBBIE

Where?

MANNY

Your place.

BOBBIE

No.

(He points his gun at her)

MANNY

Get up.

(She rises)

Now we're going to your place. And this time, we're gonna enjoy ourselves.

JESS

Leave her alone, Manny.

MANNY

This is between me and the girls. Now if you wanna blow, be my guest. If not, you'll be as much a part of it as these two cunts. Ergo, if I was you, I'd plug it.

JESS

Or, what, Manny? WHAT?

MANNY

Don't take it there, bro. Please. It'd kill me.

(Manny grabs Bobbie and exits. Fade out)

(Very early morning, yet still dark. Rita's backyard. She enters from the house. Jess is restless)

RITA

A few minutes ago, I saw Bobbie on her porch. Smoking.

JESS

It figures. The son of a bitch probably passed out on her.

RITA

What do we do, Jess?

JESS

Kill him.

RITA

Your own brother?

JESS

He ain't fit to live.

RITA

I suppose it's not like it's never happened.

JESS

I'm sparing his ass 'cause I'm scared for you and Bobbie

RITA

Why can't I feel grateful?

JESS

What was Manny talking about when he said Silvio had the situation "in hand"?

RITA

He's thrown a net over us. And Manny was too stupid to know it means Silvio had someone follow him out here.

JESS

You're sure?

RITA

Come on, Jess. Who with an eighth inch of a brain would trust Manny with a nickel for the gum machine? Most likely, there's someone parked at the end of the street. Waiting. Trust me.

JESS

If anyone's out there, why not drop protocol and break the front door down themselves? Why play this out?

RITA

Nothing's being played out. This account will be settled tonight. By Manny's hand, or Silvio's. One way, or another.

JESS

We should just grab Bobbie and –

RITA

No! We wouldn't get far. And I know that.

JESS

But Rita –

RITA

I know it, Jess!

JESS

So, we just sit on our thumbs and wait to die? Is that it?

RITA

You gotta go sometime.

JESS

You think this is funny?

RITA

Right now, I try to think as little as possible.

JESS

You're not even scared?

RITA

I'm afraid for Bobbie.

JESS  
What about you?

RITA  
I knew what I was doing.

JESS  
Don't you give a shit?

RITA  
It's my life.

JESS  
Why can't I believe you?

RITA  
Jess, you don't understand –

JESS  
No, I don't. How am I supposed to care for someone who doesn't . . .

RITA  
You still care?

JESS  
I don't know what happened, Rita. And I'm not sure I want to. All I can say is that I know what I want now. And what I care about. Now.

RITA  
I'm not apologizing for any of this.

JESS  
Did I ask for that?

RITA  
Fine. What's next?

JESS  
Getting out of this.

RITA  
You think there's a way?

JESS  
I'm not giving up on you, Rita.

RITA

Honey, you'd be better off if you left. While you still have that option. It's what I would do.

JESS

Bullshit.

RITA

Alright, what if I told you I almost did? It's true – in a few weeks, we were planning on leaving for Mexico. It's been set in stone for twenty years. And I was weighing as to whether I should tell you, or not bother – to hug and kiss and engage in a sloppy goodbye, or have you wake one morning not knowing if I'd been kidnapped or sucked up in the rapture. And to be forthright, I was leaning toward the second option to avoid the pain and the mess.

JESS

And the danger.

RITA

I don't like being hurt any more than the next person, but . . .

JESS

You were right – you're not as tough as you think you are.

RITA

What does it take to dump a man like you?

JESS

Try murder.

RITA

Which isn't so hard.

JESS

You really believe that?

RITA

No.

(He takes her in his arms and embraces her. She immediately falls apart and returns the embrace, releasing her emotions. Grasping one another with desperation, they look into each other's eyes, then kiss passionately for a moment until Rita breaks the kiss)

Marry me.

(He laughs)

I mean it.

JESS

I don't doubt it.

RITA

Well?

JESS

When this is over we'll –

RITA

No. I want to know now.

JESS

What's the rush?

RITA

Honey, this could be it for me.

JESS

Well, I ain't having that.

(Silence)

RITA

I'm so worried about Bobbie.

JESS

I think she'll be okay.

RITA

Sure. Nothing like whiskey-dick to take the steam out of a man.

JESS

Sounds like you know what you're talking about.

RITA

Is that a problem?

JESS

I'd be a hypocrite if I said it was.

RITA

You're getting tarnished goods, pal.

JESS

And I'll take those tarnished goods.

RITA

Careful, Jess. Be sure you understand what I was. And everything that came with it.

JESS

In case you forgot, I ain't a plaster saint, either.

RITA

In other words, we're even?

JESS

Damn right. Now live with it. Besides, I've never made it with a big-time call girl until now.

RITA

Well, I hate to disillusion you, but it wasn't like anything in the movies. At least, not for me and Bobbie. When our beloved madam decided to get married, she brought in her dirt-faced brother, Teddy, to run the show. And everything went to shit. Even with Bobbie and me sharing rent, plus holding down full-time day jobs, we were still broke.

Then, whenever we'd go down to the agency office to pick up a check, or what-not, we'd hear Teddy yapping with whoever about who Big Roy was involved with. Teddy happened to be tight with the manager of that restaurant. He was told to keep quiet, but – true to form – Teddy had a big mouth. In bits and pieces, we were able to put together the whole organization. Right down to Big Roy's drop times. He would also mention – oh, so casually – how he'd sack that place across the street if he ever needed to. If he could only find someone he trusted well enough to go in on it with him. With everything else, Teddy had a record. And this kind of thing wasn't exactly foreign to him.

JESS

Manny said you knew Silvio.

RITA

He was a client. So, yeah, I fucked him. On a regular basis. He'd rent an executive suite from time to time and he'd have me up. One night, he was talking

on the phone as I walked in. And I saw the necklace on the coffee table. He told me later he'd gotten it for his cousin who wanted it for a special lady friend.

(Silence. Jess kisses her)

JESS

I'll get you out of this. I swear.

RITA

Sure.

I think I'll check on Bobbie.

(She exits. Fade out)

(Lights rise in Bobbie's bedroom. She is sitting across the room from the bed wearing a bathrobe and bedroom slippers. Manny is asleep. After a moment, he stirs, then suddenly awakens)

MANNY

Shit! Where's my gun?

BOBBIE

I have no idea.

MANNY

Bullshit! Where is it?

BOBBIE

I'm telling you I never touched it –

MANNY

Where the fuck did you put it?

BOBBIE

I didn't put it anywhere. Which means you'll have to look for it.

(He begins looking under the bed and through the room, finally discovering the gun beside the empty liquor bottle)

MANNY

What time is it?



Six AM.

BOBBIE

You ain't slept?

MANNY

I couldn't bring myself to sleep.

BOBBIE

I won't too rough on you last night, was I?

MANNY

(She laughs)

What?

BOBBIE

Nothing.

MANNY

Quit yankin' me around. Tell me – what did we do last night?

BOBBIE

*Nothing.* You tried, but it wouldn't happen. The hooch got to you. I had to get myself off with a zucchini.

MANNY

Well, good for you.

BOBBIE

It was!

MANNY

How 'bout some breakfast?

BOBBIE

Are you serious?

MANNY

As a heart attack. I'm hungry, it's six AM, and I'm the one's holdin' the heater. Now take your ass in the kitchen and start warming up them pans.

BOBBIE

Help yourself. Surely you know your way around a kitchen.

MANNY

Lady, it's just you and me here. You got nobody – no audience. Now quit showing off.

BOBBIE

This is my house.

MANNY

And I'm the fuckin' guest of honor. Now move it!

BOBBIE

Go fuck yourself! And if you want to use that thing – use it and stop playing with it like you played with your little boys' dick last night!

(He aims the gun, relents, then slaps her)

God! You're pathetic.

MANNY

Keep asking for it.

BOBBIE

It makes me wonder what brought you to this.

MANNY

You ain't no shrink, so don't worry yourself.

BOBBIE

Did mommy not change your diaper as often as she should have when you were a baby? Did some mean old bully call you a bad name and make you cry? . . . Did your father –

MANNY

Fuck my father! And fuck you. And for your information, my father is serving his second prison sentence for second degree murder, where the motherfucker will probably croak.

BOBBIE

This shit runs in the family, doesn't it?

MANNY

Damn straight.

BOBBIE

Well, Manny, for what it's worth, it's not like it had to be this way.

It suits me. MANNY

Now that's stupid. BOBBIE

Maybe. But I'm accustomed to it. I'm my own man. MANNY

No, you're not. BOBBIE

Says you. MANNY

Manny, you're a slave. A fucking dog. You wouldn't account for shit in this world if it weren't for that hunk of steel you're jacking in your hand. BOBBIE

Keep blowing that horn in your face and I'll give myself something to account for. MANNY

Yet another threat. BOBBIE

You're pushin' it. MANNY

And another. BOBBIE

Soon, lady. MANNY

We can do this all day. BOBBIE

Do you want to die? MANNY

Do I need permission? BOBBIE

Fuck you!

MANNY

You tried that.

BOBBIE

Do you know what's gonna happen to you tonight?

MANNY

Whatever it is, why can't it happen now?

BOBBIE

I've killed before, y' know.

MANNY

Then, it won't bother you to kill again.

BOBBIE

Dirty bitch.

MANNY

I thought that was your name.

BOBBIE

AAGGHHHH!! . . .

MANNY

(He aims the gun at her, relents again, then suddenly takes her head in his hands and kisses her with full throttled lust. After a few moments, he breaks)

BOBBIE

I certainly wasn't expecting that –

MANNY

You asked for it.

BOBBIE

I did?

MANNY

Quit pushing me.

BOBBIE

Or, what? *A fuck* next time?

MANNY

Worse.

BOBBIE

Okay. And while we're on the subject, what *do* you have planned for us tonight?

MANNY

Silvio . . . Silvio said he wants me to get you and your girlfriend to tell me where the loot is. All he's worried about are the rocks. As for the cash, he figures you've already spent it. He's got a line, though, on just about every diamond fence on this half of the planet. And his guess is you're still sittin' on 'em. And waiting for the right moment. He says you girls gotta answer for jackin' him and for taking out his cousin. And my instructions are to make you answer with your lives.

BOBBIE

Whether we give you the diamonds willingly, or not?

MANNY

He's got his rep to keep up too, y' know. As a matter of fact, I'm supposed to show him some kind of token of proof, something to tell him the deed was done.

BOBBIE

What does he want, our heads?

MANNY

Or, perhaps a finger, an ear. You know how he is.

BOBBIE

Can you do all this?

MANNY

I better. And I'm under the gun, too. Which means, he will knock me if I don't pull through.

BOBBIE

And you were honest with him when you said you've killed before?

MANNY

I've killed plenty.

BOBBIE

I think you're full of shit.

MANNY

Hey! We took care of that guard back at the heist in Diego –

BOBBIE

*We?*

MANNY

The motherfucker got knocked, alright?

BOBBIE

Who knocked him?

MANNY

What's it to you? He's dead. He got knocked. End of story.

BOBBIE

When you worked for that black hood, the one who hired you to knock some rat walking out of a liquor store –

MANNY

Oh, you remember that . . .

BOBBIE

Did you plug the guy, or did someone else do it?

MANNY

Alright, I drove the car for the guy what clipped him.

BOBBIE

Jesus, Manny! Do you know how much shit you're in?

MANNY

That's it! Not another word. I'm warning you.

BOBBIE

More threats –

MANNY

ENOUGH! Now whether the jury's still out as to if I've killed legitimately is one thing. But rest certain, baby doll, that I won't miss a step when I go to kick your smug ass up and down every one of these goddamn walls! Just as sure as I'm a man and you're a bitch! AND THAT AIN'T NO THREAT! Got it?

BOBBIE

And having made that point, just tell me: when the time comes, will you be able

to take care of business and kill us? Both of us? *All by yourself?*

MANNY

That's the deal, lady. No bullshit. My life depends on it. You're right – I did get myself in deep with that guinea in L.A. If this don't go down, I'll go, and Jess will go. And he'll do it piece by piece.

BOBBIE

But, since we all know our fate, why should we tell you anything if there aren't any options?

MANNY

Silvio's willing to put aside the sadism and go easy if you're forthcoming with the loot.

BOBBIE

Go easy?

MANNY

He gave me instructions on how to make it quick and clean, where there's not a lot of pain or mess.

BOBBIE

Look, let's say you get the diamonds and bring them to him and sort of . . . forget to knock us off?

MANNY

Didn't you hear me? He'll chop off my head and hunt you down. You know that.

BOBBIE

Well, what if you get the diamonds and, say, killed only one of us?

MANNY

I'd still – hold it: what are you gettin' at?

BOBBIE

Say, you show him the two ears, or two fingers, or – whatever – from two different women, one of whom will be Rita. And the other *could* be me, but . . . how would he know?

MANNY

You asking me to bullshit him?

BOBBIE

I'm not asking anything, honey . . .

MANNY

What's in it for me?

(She strikes a subtle, tempting pose in the chair. Manny laughs)

Good God! You're a dirty bitch, after all!

BOBBIE

I want to live, Manny.

MANNY

And you'd let your girlfriend go down without you?

BOBBIE

Rita knew what she was getting into.

MANNY

And you didn't?

BOBBIE

I played along.

MANNY

And where, or from whom, are we supposed to get this second ear, or finger . . .

BOBBIE

I'm sure you'll think of something.

MANNY

Oh, you want me to clip any old broad marching to the beauty parlor, or steppin' out of the supermarket –

BOBBIE

That will be your department.

MANNY

No, I think you oughta do the deed.

BOBBIE

Here's the deal, Manny: you get me – the whole package. And, as an added bonus, half a million in cash. Plus, the goddamned rocks. That's right. We didn't want to take any chances. So, we decided to bury the loot until we were ready to resurrect it. You get all this on the condition you take care of the dirty work.



MANNY

You trying to make a killer out of me?

BOBBIE

It's a man's job. And you've got to lose your cherry sometime.

MANNY

Let me think about it.

BOBBIE

No! You don't get to play with me anymore.

MANNY

You're forgetting I still got leverage, baby.

BOBBIE

You wanna fuck around? Fine! I'll go across the street and plug Rita, your brother, then myself.

MANNY

With that little cap gun you got?

BOBBIE

It might be a cap gun, but it's enough to blow a good-sized hole in a motherfuckers head. Which leaves you to deal with Silvio and his wrath.

MANNY

Who are you? The fucking devil?

BOBBIE

Am I making my point?

MANNY

ALRIGHT! Sure. Point taken.

(She acknowledges, then takes him in her arms and embraces him. They kiss)

BOBBIE

Now, Manny . . . you fuck with me on this . . . and hell will eat you alive.

MANNY

Grown woman. Believing in hell.

BOBBIE

Of course, I believe in it. We've been in it since birth.

(Fade out)

(Lights rise again in Bobbies bedroom. Rita enters to find her alone and smoking a cigarette)

Nothing happened.

RITA

Let me guess – whiskey dick?

BOBBIE

I didn't have the heart to tell him he passed out and missed the whole thing.

(They laugh. Silence)

He told me the plan was to let us go "easily" once we give him the loot. If there is such a thing.

RITA

And if not, what will he do? Torture us?

BOBBIE

If he doesn't, you know who will.

RITA

There're out there. And you know that, right?

BOBBIE

If they are . . . I wish they'd get it over with.

RITA

I'm so sorry about this, Bobbie.

BOBBIE

Hey, I went along with it.

RITA

If there were only something I could do to get you out of this.

BOBBIE

Rita, don't.

RITA

Baby, I can handle it.

BOBBIE

No, you can't. And I won't listen to another word. Now stop.

RITA

I guess we ought to be thinking of who we should call.

BOBBIE

I've got a brother in Alaska whom I haven't spoken to in years.

RITA

I don't have anybody. Pop died just after I left home.

BOBBIE

No one to remember us.

RITA

And, come to think of it . . . it's probably better this way 'cause I might have found a way of getting out of this. Only . . . it's pretty extreme.

BOBBIE

Right now, I'll listen to anything.

RITA

Okay: we're cornered. There's no question about that. And whether it's by Manny's hand or Silvio's, we're dead. So . . . after we give up the loot, what's our best chance of going easy? Think about it.

(Bobbie ponders. Then —)

BOBBIE

Oh, boy . . .

RITA

It's just a thought.

BOBBIE

We're that desperate?

RITA

If we have to go, shouldn't it be on our own terms?

BOBBIE  
But . . . well, how would we do it?

RITA  
The easy way.

BOBBIE  
Is there such a thing?

RITA  
For this, yes.

BOBBIE  
Who would know that?

RITA  
I guess there's only one way to find out.

BOBBIE  
Oh, sure!

RITA  
If you don't think it's a good idea . . .

BOBBIE  
It's not that, I . . . Oh, shit, Rita!

RITA  
Only as a last resort –

BOBBIE  
What about Jess?

RITA  
I don't know.

BOBBIE  
You're sure you want to go through this?

RITA  
I – I don't know.

BOBBIE  
Well . . . we've got until nightfall to figure everything out.

RITA

Yeah. Sure. Nightfall.

BOBBIE

I'm just . . . I'm so afraid, Rita.

(Silence. Rita embraces her)

(Fade out)

(Night. Lights rise on Rita's backyard. Jess and Manny are arguing)

JESS

After they give up the loot, what's next? Do they get to dig their own graves, then get popped execution style? The way they do it in the movies?

MANNY

They're women. I'll be gentle.

JESS

What happened to you, Manny? What turned you so bad?

MANNY

Ask pa next time you see him.

JESS

Manny, you're a lot of things, but don't punk out and drop this in his lap. We all have choices.

MANNY

There you go – talking like some goddamned shrink.

JESS

Is there no way to get out of this?

MANNY

Bro, I'm in over my head, alright? It's either them, or me. Simple as that. Nobody walks away from this shit, man. And your ass is included. Yeah! If I don't make good, you go, too.

JESS

Wait a minute – you told me last night . . .

MANNY

You can skip, but that don't mean they ain't gonna find you if they have to.

JESS

Son of a bitch!

MANNY

Sorry, little brother. I gotta get all I can while I can get it.

JESS

Even if it means fucking up everything and everybody around us. It's the story of your life.

MANNY

Right! I'm a bad apple. Incurrigible. You ain't telling me nothin' new.

(Jess pulls a gun and aims it at Manny)

JESS

It's for the women. I can't let it happen.

MANNY

Where'd you get that?

JESS

I keep it handy in the car.

MANNY

Smart. And are you planning on using it?

JESS

If it comes to it, we all die. Nobody walks away. Like you said.

MANNY

You think you got the stuff? Think you can pop a cap in me – straight through my heart? You could live with that?

JESS

I've grown up with the smell of shit in my nose. Breathing in a little more won't rattle me.

MANNY

You'd take out your own blood over a couple of miserable cunts? You'd do that?

JESS

Looks that way.

MANNY

Where's the love between us, Jess?

JESS

We're burying it. Right now. You and me.

MANNY

You know what your problem is? No gratitude. No appreciation for what you got. Like a brother who'd throw himself at a hungry bear for you.

JESS

The thing is, Manny . . . we don't have that anymore.

MANNY

Pity.

JESS

Here's how it goes down: you're gonna go inside and call Silvio. Right now. Tell him to call off his dogs. Then, you're gonna take the diamonds and go back to L.A., deliver them to him, and go on with your life.

MANNY

During which, you and the girls make your break and fly off into the wind.

JESS

Go and make the call.

MANNY

What you seem to have missed is that there are further instructions.

JESS

Well, that's just too damn bad. If there's anything else, it's between you and that wop-hood in L.A. The diamonds are all you get. Now go and make the call.

MANNY

I'm a dead man, bro.

JESS

It could always be worse.

MANNY

You're pa's golden boy, ain't you?

JESS

Shut up and make the goddamn call.

(Manny turns slowly, then suddenly reels and hits Jess over the head. Jess staggers. Manny grabs Jess, wrests the gun from him, then shoots him in the stomach. Jess falls to the ground)

MANNY

It's okay, bro. It's okay. I got you in the belly, in a place where you won't bleed too much. Those broads, they'll have heard the shot and will be rolling through the door any second. You ain't hurt bad. You'll live.

(Bobbie and Rita rush out. Rita immediately moves toward Jess. Manny stops her)

No – you, come here. I said come here!

(Rita goes to him)

Here's what's gonna go down: you'll give me the rocks. Right?

(She nods)

I figure they'll be fairly close to home. Am I correct?

RITA

They're here. Under the birdbath.

MANNY

Good. Anything else under this birdbath I oughta know about – no bullshit. Let me hear it from your mouth . . . and I'll let your girlfriend go.

BOBBIE

Rita, I . . .

MANNY

Shh! Well?

RITA

There's cash. Five hundred grand.

MANNY

Splendid!



(Manny kisses Rita on the cheek)

Now, let's you and me visit this birdbath.

BOBBIE

Manny let me. You said if we co-operated . . . you'd go easy. And I . . . I can do her easy.

MANNY

Uh uh. I handle the dirty stuff. Men's work. Like we agreed, or don't you remember no more?

BOBBIE

I won't let her go like a dog.

MANNY

Excuse me?

BOBBIE

I can take care of it.

MANNY

I ain't so sure, baby doll –

BOBBIE

Manny, will you give me the goddamn gun!

(He slaps her)

MANNY

Run at me like that again and it's your life.

(He hands her the piece taken from Jess)

Don't fuck around.

(He draws his own gun from his belt and aims it at Bobbie)

I'll be right behind ya.

(Bobbie takes the gun, then moves further DS with Rita with Manny following, still aiming the gun at Bobbie. They reach the birdbath)

RITA

You think you can stomach this guy?

MANNY

Sure, she can. I'll be the gentleman she always dreamed of.

(Rita moves the birdbath, then pulls a gym bag and a suitcase from out of the ground)

RITA

I know why you did it. And I can't hold it against you.

BOBBIE

I'm . . . I'm so sorry.

RITA

Hey, we got ourselves into this. We asked for it.

BOBBIE

Oh, God!

(They hug)

RITA

Be careful, baby. Promise me.

BOBBIE

I . . . I promise – I promise!

RITA

Remember, this is what I wanted. I had to get you out of it.

BOBBIE

I can't . . . do this – Rita, I . . . I don't . . .

MANNY

Come on! Get with it! I ain't got all night.

(Rita breaks the embrace, moves away from Bobbie, then turns her back to her. Bobbie aims, then fires into the back of Rita's head. She topples to the ground. Bobbie screams and futilely attempts to control her sobbing. She carries on for a few moments, then pulls herself together)

Nicely done! Nicely done!

(He takes the gun from Bobbie and returns US with the bags. Bobbie follows. Once there, Manny opens the bags and examines the loot)

Shit! Damned if I ain't a little tempted to –

BOBBIE

Call him.

MANNY

Right now?

BOBBIE

No, how 'bout next week?

MANNY

You want another pop in the mouth?

BOBBIE

Call him, Manny!

(He enters the house. We hear Manny speaking on the phone from offstage. At the same time, Bobbie closes the suitcase with the money and slowly takes it up)

MANNY

Hello? . . . Yo, Lance! Hey, it's Manny! . . . Manny! . . . Oh, he's expecting me? Well, put him on . . . Hey, Silvio! What's up, bro? . . . Mission accomplished! . . . Oh, that ain't no problem . . . I'll see ya tomorrow night . . . What? . . . No, listen . . . Aw, c'mon! What is this? . . . I'm tellin' you, baby – I got the shit. And I'm bringin' it to ya! . . . What? You're kiddin'! All this time – But – Okay! Alright. I know the car. If they're out there, I'll see 'em.

(He hangs up, then re-enters)

Honest to God, that guinea motherfucker is one throbbing hard on. I mean . . . Would you believe that all this time them dick-licking assholes was –

(Bobbie suddenly swings the suitcase around and hits Manny hard on his head, knocking him down. She quickly grabs a

gun which had fallen from his hand and shoots him twice, killing him)

BOBBIE

Bastard.

JESS

What happened? Did your life with Manny suddenly flash before your eyes?

BOBBIE

I haven't the stomach to plan a thing like this. I wanted to live. You've got to believe me.

JESS

Why give a shit about what I believe?

(She gathers the loot)

What are you gonna do?

BOBBIE

I'm going to Mexico. As planned.

(The bags fastened, she's ready to exit)

Give me twenty minutes. Then, just before I split, I'll call 9-1-1. Okay?

(He nods)

What will you tell the police?

JESS

You ain't gotta worry about me. I won't say nothing. Besides, the police are the least of your problems. Just . . . what are you gonna do when –

BOBBIE

If I see them . . .

(She holds up the gun)

. . . I'll take care of them.

(Jess laughs)

And don't laugh at me.

(In pain, he continues to laugh. After a moment, Bobbie exits with the gun and the loot. Jess is still laughing)

(Black out)

(Lights rise on father in US limbo)

FATHER

Hey, Jess? You still doing okay? How are things with that woman? You get on even keel with her? I'm sure you'll do okay, my son. Not like that shit head brother.

Those bastards, they turn down my parole. Again. This time they say it's final. They won't let me ask no more. Which means your pa, he's gonna die here for sure.

I dreamt I saw your ma. Riding a horse. No, it won't no white horse. Just a horse, you know? She came to me on this horse and reached down and touched my head. She said all is forgiven. I wake up. And I cry 'cause I feel like I been kissed . . . like I been kissed. You know?

I don't want you to see me no more. You got that? Stay away. Don't come back. Let me go, son. If I catch you here . . . I'll kick your ass all the way out. You listening to me?

You're a good boy, Jess. Always . . . good. A good boy. And please for your pa . . . stay good. And stay out of the joint. And away from your pa. You hear?  
Good.

(Lights fade as he weeps. End of play)

