

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

TIME: 4:00AM

PLACE: The Office of Richard Crenshaw
Shady Gables Nursing Home

The office is relatively dark - dark and mysterious - eerily silhouetted by the early morning blackness. We sense that a rising sun over some distant horizon is timidly shining an opaque light into the room from some unseen window.

A 50-year-old man is sitting at a desk in the office - RICHARD CRENSHAW. We can't help but sense that Mr. Crenshaw might have once served as a stand-in for the mustachioed villain in one of the "Perils of Pauline" films. HE has a certain sleazy nature about him that does not broadcast morality or sincerity - yet the man's smile is a winning one. A con artist, perhaps - but a most attractive one.

For now, CRENSHAW is lying back in his chair in front of the desk and staring at the office door like a panther lying in wait for his prey. A pause ensues. Another pause follows. A large smile lights on CRENSHAW's face.

CRENSHAW

Come in, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

A woman aged about 40-50 enters like a child forced to attend a family outing - ELOISE OLYMPIA PAMBECK-O'MALLEY. SHE is a striking-looking woman with permed hair and manicured nails - and really manicured everything - to the extent one believes every inch of her body has been lacquered in some as-yet-unknown substance. We will nevertheless soon notice that a crusty ethnic vulgarity

lies just under the lacquered exterior of this gilded personality. You can take the girl out of the Irish, but not the Irish out of the girl - although the girl has tried.

Right now, though, MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY has entered and freezes upon confronting the oily smile from CRENSHAW. The two duelists stare at each other for a century or two - but then CRENSHAW suddenly (if absent-mindedly) rockets up from his chair.

CRENSHAW

I suppose I should stand in the presence of a lady.

CRENSHAW bows slightly... mockingly? No matter - MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY would treat either version with disdain - which SHE does:

PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

You must be Richard Crenshaw.

CRENSHAW

You must be Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Am I? I'm not so sure. This meeting is out of my time zone. I never get up before noon.

CRENSHAW

It's you all right, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley. I can provide a positive identification. I remember seeing you at our Thanksgiving party last year.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I didn't attend the Thanksgiving party.

CRENSHAW

No. You didn't... but I remember seeing you all the same.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

You need your eyes checked. Your eyes or your mind. My money's on both - and I have a lot of money.

CRENSHAW

You look like Tiffany's on legs.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I prefer to think of Tiffany's as me without legs.

CRENSHAW gives his oily smile and gestures to a chair in front of his desk.

CRENSHAW

Would you like to sit down?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

No - I'll be leaving soon.

CRENSHAW

Then I'm sure you don't mind if I sit?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY shrugs.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I'm used to people looking up when they have to talk to me.

CRENSHAW

Suit yourself - but I'm sure your feet would beg to differ.

CRENSHAW smiles broadly and indicates the chair again. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY thinks for a moment and then goes to the chair and sits. SHE removes a packet of cigarettes from her jacket.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Do you mind if I smoke?

CRENSHAW

Actually - yes, I do.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Good.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY takes out a lighter and lights the cigarette. SHE takes a giant puff on it and exhales the smoke in CRENSHAW's direction. CRENSHAW can't help but smile in response.

CRENSHAW

Welcome to Shady Gables, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I would say it's a pleasure to be here, but it isn't.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, you see, I'm used to people entering my office with that attitude. Their spouse dies. Their daughter tricks them. Their nephew stops sending checks. Very few people come to Shady

CRENSHAW (CONT)

Gables with the desire to stay here. It is my goal to make everyone feel comfortable and welcome.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

It isn't working.

CRENSHAW

Not on you, perhaps - but, then again, you have a sharp mind. The residents at Shady Gables suffer from the most serious dementia disorders. Do you know how many of our residents are serious sufferers of Alzheimer's?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

No - how many?

CRENSHAW

I can't remember.

CRENSHAW broadcasts a huge smile.

CRENSHAW

That's nursing home humor.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY just glares - so CRENSHAW continues:

CRENSHAW

The figure is fifty percent - or fifty-one-point-three, if you care for decimals.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I'm wealthy. I don't worry about decimals.

CRENSHAW smiles again. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY continues HER glare. A pause ensues as the two people before us size up their opponent - then:

CRENSHAW

I trust you came alone, as I requested?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I had someone drive me.

CRENSHAW

A taxi?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

A chauffeur.

CRENSHAW

Of course.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

He is at the 7-Eleven up the street, waiting for my call.

CRENSHAW

I appreciate your following instructions.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

It had better be worth my while.

CRENSHAW

Of course - you can trust me.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

That remains to be seen.

CRENSHAW

Ah, yes - the "vision" issue again. I was talking before about the Thanksgiving party. I should perhaps explain that my eyes can see many different things depending on what is most appropriate. I call it a gift. I saw you at our Thanksgiving party because that is where my conscience would have liked to see you. I was quite saddened - we all were - by the sight of your father sitting in his wheelchair all alone with no one to spoon out his marmalade.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

He doesn't like marmalade.

CRENSHAW

Ah, so you do remember some things about him.

(A great smile.)

How encouraging.

CRENSHAW waits for some reaction. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY doesn't flinch - so HE continues:

CRENSHAW

The staff and I felt very sorry for your father and spoke at length about the kind of daughter who would leave her father to rot in an underfunded old people's home. The head nurse was especially distressed by your father's abandonment and had some choice words to say about you.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Whatever they were, I've been called worse.

CRENSHAW

You say that with a kind of... pride, is it?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I do. Insults are like diamonds. They give you character.

CRENSHAW

I understand that you are the only living relation of your father... is that accurate?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY just stares: -
why is this man asking so many
questions?

CRENSHAW

I only mention that because I've never actually seen anyone come here to Shady Gables and visit with him. Not you. Not a son. Not a cousin. Not a niece. Not a nephew. How long has it been now... five years? Long enough for, let me see... Five Christmases. Five Easters. Five Thanksgivings. The list goes on and on - and on. Mr. Spinner from the Lutheran Church is the only real visitor - but he doesn't count because he's ninety-three and thinks your father is someone else.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY looks at CRENSHAW
for a moment - then:

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Are you trying to make me feel guilty, Mr. Crenshaw?

CRENSHAW

Oh, come now, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley, I would never want...

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I don't feel guilt, Mr. Crenshaw, so you can save us time and ditch the Stradivarius. Guilt is a cowardly emotion - and I'm not a coward... but my father always was. I'm not at all surprised that he's stuck around for so long. The bravest thing that he could ever done in life is die.

CRENSHAW

Your words move me deeply.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Breathing for my father, even before Alzheimer's, was merely a way to connect one day to the next. He was content to wear a baseball cap to his grave and sink into the furniture. Well, I wasn't. I wasn't and he knew that. I let him be consumed by his overalls and I struck out on my own.

CRENSHAW

And the rest is history?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

No - her-story.

CRENSHAW

So I see. It seems to have a happy ending as well. You worked hard?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I married hard.

CRENSHAW

That's what I meant.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I married three times - all ended in a death. My last husband died a year ago on our first wedding anniversary.

(A beat.)

He was the most obliging of the three.

CRENSHAW

One of the best, eh?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

(Showing her jewelry.)

One of the brightest.

CRENSHAW

So I can see. You are a sentimentalist.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

No - but my husband was. He loved weddings. It was the only time he had a chance to be the best man.

CRENSHAW

(Picking up and examining a newspaper.)

Yes, well, it seems he was the "best" for quite a while - but I see that complications have arisen following his demise. Your stepchildren are challenging your late husband's will. The government is investigating his software company for tax evasion. Then there's the report in yesterday's *Times* about company layoffs in California and Texas.

(Looking up.)

You must be nervous about your future?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

(Prickling up.)

"Nervous?"

CRENSHAW

The big houses you own in Malibu and Nassau. They must be very expensive to keep up. Then there was that expose from the former housemaid who alleged you owned... What was it now? Two hundred pairs of shoes? Three hundred sets of earrings and pendants? A hundred or so mink coats? I recall something about a \$500 hair-do, as well, if I'm not mistaken...

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

(Scorching fury.)

Listen, Mr. Crenshaw, you had better give me a damn good reason why you asked me to visit this human glue factory at 4am in the

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY (CONT)

morning - or I shall promptly leave and take my father and his monthly internment fee with me.

CRENSHAW

I was hoping for a smoother segue, but failing that...

CRENSHAW rises. HE abounds with a suffocating confidence.

CRENSHAW

I have a proposition for you.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

As long as it doesn't involve sex, I'm listening.

CRENSHAW

You are a woman who likes money and people - especially people who like money. I'm not judging, far from it, because, you see, I'm the same way. We have both lived too close to the railroad tracks and we're not interested in going back there. That's why we get along so well together.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Do we now?

CRENSHAW

(Meaningfully.)

Yes, we do.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY considers HIM quizzically. His conviction is most convincing.

CRENSHAW

You were born into poverty, weren't you?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

People aren't born into poverty - poverty is born into them.

CRENSHAW

The answer, then, is "yes" - you were. I can tell. You still act like the little Irish urchin with fists poised for a backalley brawl. I bet you even had a boy-fondling priest who extorted you to be a better person in the eyes of God.

(A beat.)

How many children were in your family - eight?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Nine.

CRENSHAW

One of nine - and now? One of a kind. A woman of stature. A woman of wealth. A woman of... power.

CRENSHAW (CONT)

(A beat.)

I trust you want to keep it that way?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY considers CRENSHAW for a moment and then gestures HIM to continue.

CRENSHAW

It's a pity, really, that other people can get in the way of our progress - like your father. The medical bills, the insurance costs, the personal debts. It must be harder to keep those two houses with his lifeline around your neck.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Is this your subtle way of raising prices?

CRENSHAW

Hardly - I'm already overcharging you.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I knew it.

CRENSHAW

But there is hope.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

About your prices?

CRENSHAW

About your future - and your houses.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY looks at HIM intently.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

I'm listening.

CRENSHAW

I am proposing, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley, a perfect arrangement for you - for me - even for your father. You could remove him from your legal and financial responsibility and spend your hard-married money on your houses. You wouldn't have to write another check - ever - to Shady Gables.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

What's the catch?

CRENSHAW

Only that you give up any connection to your father.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY just stares.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

You're trying to bullshit me.

CRENSHAW

Perish the thought! I am businessman, this is my business - and everything I said is true.

(A beat.)

If it were, what would you do?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Wake up.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

CRENSHAW

(Gesturing to a side door.)

If you please. Keep your ear to the door and listen.

CRENSHAW gestures again to the side door. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY slowly rises and exits into the adjoining room. CRENSHAW smiles and turns towards the office door:

CRENSHAW

Come in, Mr. Masterson.

The office door opens and RIORDAN MASTERSON walks in. HE is aged about 50 - silvery all over: his hair, his suit, his rings - and yet HE doesn't broadcast any of the coolness associated with the metal. HE looks not unlike a lion that once bore a certain majesty and is now tired after too much running and too much hunting. There is a gilded nobility about the man before us that elicits an indeterminate sympathy and an even more indeterminate respect. These feelings are elicited despite the fact that our friend has evidently done very well for himself in the business world. Something about his bearing broadcasts stock options.

At first, MASTERSON enters tentatively - like a child embarrassed to be in certain surroundings. CRENSHAW immediately brandishes a winning smile.

CRENSHAW

(Emphasizing the name for a certain someone.)

Ah. Mr. Masterson. Riordan Masterson.

CRENSHAW (CONT)

(Extending HIS hand.)

It is, as always, a pleasure.

MASTERSON shakes CRENSHAW's hand very warily.

MASTERSON

Crenshaw.

CRENSHAW

Come now. "Richard." My friends call me "Richard."

MASTERSON

I am not a friend.

CRENSHAW

That's most distressing.

MASTERSON

I am a business partner.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, you see, I always mix business with pleasure.

CRENSHAW gestures to the chair.
MASTERSON looks at the chair as if there were a spike intruding out of it. HE nevertheless manages enough faith to go to the chair and sit. A worried look crosses over HIS face.

MASTERSON

This chair is warm.

CRENSHAW

I sat it in... just for you.

CRENSHAW smiles broadly and sits behind the desk.

CRENSHAW

How is the little woman? Still... little?

MASTERSON

My wife is doing as well as can be expected.

CRENSHAW

Of course; she must be distraught.

MASTERSON

A death within the family is always distressing.

CRENSHAW

Or, indeed, a death outside of it.

MASTERSON

(Suddenly - turning around and looking.)
Was there anyone else here?

CRENSHAW

No - why would you say that?

MASTERSON

I thought I heard voices.

CRENSHAW

Just me. I talk to myself. It's the only way I can be sure of an intelligent conversation.

CRENSHAW smiles broadly at his joke.
MASTERSON does not smile back.

MASTERSON

I do not consider this a laughing matter, Mr. Crenshaw - nor should you. I'm sorry to say that my wife has taken the death of Mr. Dominguez especially hard. She has been in the hospital this time for almost two months.

CRENSHAW

I'm very sorry to hear that.

MASTERSON

I don't know how much more she can take.

CRENSHAW

Then I say we work together with due speed.

CRENSHAW smiles broadly again.
MASTERSON examines the room
uncertainly.

CRENSHAW

Oh, now - you don't have to worry. I hardly have an incentive to let anyone overhear our conversations. I don't think it would be to either of our benefits... do you?

CRENSHAW looks at MASTERSON knowingly.
MASTERSON nods guiltily in response.

CRENSHAW

Shall we get down to business?

MASTERSON

Perhaps, but...

CRENSHAW

But, be no buts!
 (A beat.)
 That's Shakespeare.

MASTERSON

This whole thing is starting to feel like Shakespeare.

CRENSHAW

Ah, yes, I've always fancied myself to be a young Hotspur.

MASTERSON

About Mr. Dominguez...

CRENSHAW

I was so sorry to hear about his passing - sorry and shocked. He was in such good health while he was here. I was starting to think he would live forever.

MASTERSON

His death came very suddenly.

CRENSHAW

Ah, yes - that old winged chariot.

MASTERSON glares.

CRENSHAW

Regardless, Mr. Dominquez - may he rest in peace - belongs to the past. I believe what we are looking towards now is the future. I cannot put a lifetime warranty on our little arrangements. I'm not Oreck and these...

(Raising up some files on the desk.)
 ..aren't vacuum cleaners.

MASTERSON glares at HIM in evident frustration. An uncomfortable silence descends upon the room. CRENSHAW abruptly rises from his chair.

CRENSHAW

Perhaps we should not proceed any further, if you have doubts.

MASTERSON

(With sudden desperation.)
 No, it's all right - we can proceed.

CRENSHAW

(Playfully.)
 Ah, well, I wouldn't want to...

MASTERSON

But I do... want to.

MASTERSON looks at CRENSHAW with eyes that command HIM to sit. CRENSHAW smiles inwardly at this little victory and sits again.

CRENSHAW

Down to business, then.

CRENSHAW opens the envelope slowly (almost seductively) and reads:

CRENSHAW

(Reading.)

Patrick Jameson O'Malley - aged seventy-five.

(To MASTERSON.)

That's always such a good age, I think - old, but not too old.

(Reading.)

Mr. O'Malley came to us five years ago. His only living relative is a daughter - Eloise Olympia Pambeck-O'Malley.

(To MASTERSON.)

You may perhaps have heard about her husband - the software magnate? Stephen Christopher Pambeck? He died recently and his estate has been frozen by the government. That's funny, really, because he wanted to be frozen as well.

(Reading.)

Mr. O'Malley has been suffering from the advanced stages of Alzheimers for the past four years. He is in good health - with the exception that he has been mute for three years. He also suffers from some seizures, but not enough to ruin Christmas dinner. He is generally quiet, simple, almost child-like. Feed him, help him bathe, and he will love you forever.

(To MASTERSON.)

Not unlike my cocker spaniel.

MASTERSON

(Bristling.)

You call this situation "healthy?"

CRENSHAW

That depends how you define "healthy."

MASTERSON

How do you define it?

CRENSHAW

"Not dead."

MASTERSON

Or, I hope, likely soon to die.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, I again reference Oreck.

MASTERSON

And I again reference Mr. Dominguez.

CRENSHAW

You are concerned about Mr. O'Malley's health?

MASTERSON

No - his voice. You said that he wasn't able to talk.

CRENSHAW

An occasional result of Alzheimer's, I fear, for those with a serious diagnosis. The disease can sometimes impact the brain to the point of removing speech ability.

MASTERSON

Are you serious?

CRENSHAW

Yes - completely.

MASTERSON

I mean about even proposing this man?

CRENSHAW

Yes - completely.

MASTERSON

My wife wouldn't even be able to talk to him.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, she could talk all she wanted. She just wouldn't want to wait around for an answer.

MASTERSON stares at CRENSHAW with horror in his eyes. CRENSHAW continues to smile back without any pinprick of shame. A long pause. MASTERSON is about to say something - but what's the use? HE sighs and sits back in HIS chair.

MASTERSON

What other options are there?

CRENSHAW

(Closing the file.)
This is the only option.

MASTERSON

There are no more?

CRENSHAW

There are - but not with "understanding" relatives. People are becoming too caring these days. I'm afraid that Mr. O'Malley is the only option I have for you.

CRENSHAW (CONT)

(Handing HIM the file.)

Would you like to review our new prospect?

MASTERSON looks at the file tentatively and takes it from CRENSHAW. HE begins to look it over in silence.

MASTERSON

He couldn't be made to speak?

CRENSHAW

He hasn't spoken in three years.

MASTERSON

Yes, but... not even with therapy?

CRENSHAW

I doubt it. I wouldn't want to oversell you. This isn't Obamacare.

MASTERSON

What are we talking about - price-wise?

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, considering the scarcity in the market...

MASTERSON glares at HIM. CRENSHAW registers this disapproval and changes course:

CRENSHAW

...but, then again, I do love repeat customers. I'm sure we can keep the figure the same as it was last time. I will work my Errol Flynn charm on the lady in question.

MASTERSON

The same arrangement as before in regards to medical payments?

CRENSHAW

Yes - you would be responsible for those and for a few debts.

MASTERSON

Debts?

CRENSHAW

For you, a drop in the bucket.

MASTERSON

The bucket is getting smaller.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well - but a drop nonetheless.

CRENSHAW (CONT)

(A beat.)

I will provide a financial breakdown, should it come to that.

MASTERSON

And this gentleman's appearance?

CRENSHAW

White hair - thin. Receding hairline - stage three. About 130 pounds. A little shorter than your father-in-law, but that doesn't matter in a wheelchair. I'm sure your wife will be quite at home with him as her companion.

MASTERSON nods uncertainly. HE returns to examining the file in greater detail. CRENSHAW watches HIM for another minute or so.

MASTERSON

You believe Mr. O'Malley's daughter would be discrete?

CRENSHAW

(Loud enough for a certain someone to hear.)
Extremely, yes - "Discretia" is her middle name.

MASTERSON nods again and ponders the situation. HE seems to be teetering on some moral cliff and looking into the abyss beneath it. MASTERSON hands back the file.

MASTERSON

I want an independent doctor's evaluation.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, I want a blonde Asian stripper for a wife.

MASTERSON

Mr. Dominguez was sicker than you led me to believe. The same was true of the one before him - Stervansky.

CRENSHAW

You're worried about your money?

MASTERSON

I am worried about my wife.

CRENSHAW

How romantic.

MASTERSON

I insist on a doctor's evaluation.

CRENSHAW

I really don't think we should be involving any unnecessary third parties in this affair. It is best to keep Mr. O'Malley as isolated as possible from here on out. I'm sure you agree that discretion is the greater part of valor... especially in light of your upcoming Congressional hearing.

MASTERSON makes to say something, but stops. HE pauses and then slowly nods at CRENSHAW wearily.

MASTERSON

I need to think about it.

CRENSHAW

Take all the time you need.

(A big smile.)

I'll be here.

MASTERSON

Yes. I know you will. You always are.

MASTERSON rises. CRENSHAW rises, too.

CRENSHAW

Let me show you out.

MASTERSON

(Snippily.)

I know the way out...or wish I did.

MASTERSON opens the office door.

CRENSHAW

Give my regards to the little woman.

MASTERSON turns and smiles curtly. HE then exits. A long pause - then:

CRENSHAW

Come out, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

The side door opens. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY enters.

CRENSHAW

Well, now, what do you say to that?

CRENSHAW smiles at HER. SHE smiles back at HIM.

The LIGHTS fall.

END of ACT ONE, SCENE ONE.

ACT ONE
SCENE TWO

TIME: 10:00AM
A Few Weeks Later

PLACE: The Living Room and Entrance Hall
The Home of Riordan and Illyria.

The house before us is a very pristine and elegant-looking place. Peaceful morning light shines through some (seen or unseen) windows. The light indicates old movie and theater posters on the wall with the name "Illyria Swan" on them. The posters brandish the pretty face of an ingénue of old from some 20 years past.

We notice that MASTERSON is pacing back and forth uneasily in-between a couch and some chairs. HE is dressed (as always) in his silvery gray and appears even more unsure than HE did in the previous scene. The constant pacing quickly becomes rather hypnotic for us almost as if the man before us were a watch being dangled in front of our faces by some magician. Our hypnosis is nevertheless interrupted every now and then when MASTERSON abruptly stops and looks at the front door toward the back of the set. HE is clearly waiting for some momentous happening to cross the portal.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

MASTERSON freezes. HE stares at the door with trepidation. It seems for a moment HE cannot move.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

MASTERSON remains frozen - until:

MASTERSON

Come in.

The DOOR opens. A rugged-looking man enters - AUGUST JAYSEN. HE is about 40 and resembles the kind of self-promoting glory-hunter you see on police crime dramas or nature-based reality TV series. One gets the distinct sense that JAYSEN would simply love to find a criminal to arrest or a drug ring to bust - more for the glory than for the justice. The man himself is free of subtlety - loud, abrasive, crude, straightforward - but there is something oddly attractive in his blunt and no-nonsense nature. Our ultimate feeling, though, is that JAYSEN is a dangerous man without a distinct moral compass and without any real interest in having one. HE has fallen somehow in life and apparently isn't interested in getting back up again - but whether that's due to a lack of interest or a lack of resources is unclear.

For now, though, JAYSEN has entered and proceeds to hector, as is his pattern:

JAYSEN

Aren't you going to ask who it is?

MASTERSON

I know who it is.

JAYSEN

Wrong - you never know who anyone is. Shit, Riordan, you haven't learned a goddamn thing from me. You're still a little virgin prancing around Sunnybrook Farm with your pigtails and your lollipop. It's a miracle you don't have six kids from six different fathers by now. You wouldn't be able to run for office with those twelve bastards dangling around your neck.

MASTERSON

Who says I want to run for office?

JAYSEN

I do - because someone has to keep you ambitious. You're sagging like the ass of an old horse.

(A beat - considering HIM intently.)

How long have I been with you again?

MASTERSON

Too long.

JAYSEN
Fourteen years? Thirteen years?

MASTERSON
Ten years.

JAYSEN
Show off - but long enough to know better.

MASTERSON
I've never known better.

JAYSEN
You need to trust me on this - on everyone. You trust me on the career shit, but not on this. You're going to wind up fucking yourself in the end.

(A beat.)
...and, no, that's not as kinky as it sounds.

MASTERSON
You should be the one running for office. You like the speeches.

JAYSEN
When I was on the force...

MASTERSON
Men were men?

JAYSEN
You're being an asshole.

MASTERSON
That would be an upgrade.

JAYSEN
You said it, not me.

MASTERSON
(Correcting HIM.)
Not I.
(A beat.)
I don't need a nanny.

JAYSEN
You sure about that?

MASTERSON shrugs.

JAYSEN
(Mockingly.)
I've brought your new father-in-law.

MASTERSON
So where is he?

He's in the car.

JAYSEN

MASTERSON is about to protest:

Don't worry. I rolled down the windows.

JAYSEN

Get him in here. I want to get this over with.

MASTERSON

Where's Illy?

JAYSEN

Upstairs.

MASTERSON

JAYSEN nods and exits through the front door. MASTERSON turns and is about to call upstairs - but stops. HE thinks for a moment. JAYSEN enters.

Heeeeeeeere's Johnny.

JAYSEN

JAYSEN exits and re-enters again pushing a wheelchair in front of HIM. The wheelchair contains an emaciated skeleton of skins and bones and two holes that appear to resemble eyes. This skeleton is apparently living and is named PATRICK O'MALLEY. HE barely looks alive - barely even looks functioning - but we can tell that consciousness is there by some basic movements of his head. The skeletal mass appears to examine his new surroundings with a superficial and absent-minded curiosity. We can't even tell if HE is examining the premises or simply registering that they are indeed there. We can only sense that the wrinkled body before us is perhaps less than alive.

MASTERSON approaches the old man and tenderly takes HIS hand.

MASTERSON

Hello, Mr. O'Malley. My name is Riordan Masterson. We met briefly the other day at Shady Gables. Do you remember me?

The OLD MAN looks up at MASTERSON's face with a blank expression.

MASTERSON

I know this must be very confusing for you. My friend, August Jaysen, has brought you to my house. I live here with my wife, Illyria, who will be taking care of you.

The OLD MAN looks around the premises again with the same blank expression as before.

MASTERSON

(A little more tense now.)

I hope you like your new home. I have lived here with my wife for twenty years. It was originally her house when she was active in the movie industry. That was long before I made a name for myself in finance. I promise you that my wife will take care of you as if you were her own father.

The OLD MAN looks back at MASTERSON. There seems to be a slight trace of understanding on HIS face. MASTERSON notices this and tries to foster it.

MASTERSON

Do you... do you like the movies?

The OLD MAN stares at MASTERSON for a moment. It appears HE is about to say something - but no. HE shifts HIS head off to the side again and examines the room. MASTERSON stares at HIM for a moment in submerged fury. HIS face quickly crystallizes in anger.

MASTERSON

Son of a bitch.

JAYSEN

How do you know?

MASTERSON

No - the other one.

JAYSEN

You mean Creepshaw?

MASTERSON

He told me he was healthy. This man here isn't healthy mentally or physically. He can't even process anything I'm saying.

JAYSEN

(Looking up and out.)

Illy.

MASTERSON

That's what I mean. She's going to be devastated by...

JAYSEN

(Nodding towards the stairs.)

No. Illy.

MASTERSON understands this message and turns. ILLYRIA SWAN is standing on the stairwell leading to the second floor of the house. SHE is a very beautiful woman dressed daintily like some movie star from the 1920's - an intriguing cross between crystal and papier-mâché. Every single segment of HER appears to be tidy and in place - and, indeed, based on physical appearance, one would assume the woman could romance the world and all its inhabitants. The only thing preventing her from doing this is a subtle, but telling, even disturbing, jitteriness and fragility in her nature. ILLYRIA is not of the soundest of minds. SHE has a face that perennially mimics a frightened fawn in front of some fast-approaching truck and a voice that shakes and quivers uncertainly like an old violin. Something in the woman's fragility is attractive, even sensual, but SHE ultimately appears more of a phantom than SHE does a person.

At first, ILLY just stares at MASTERSON and JAYSEN - almost as if SHE doesn't quite register their presence - until:

MASTERSON

Illy. You're up. I thought you were asleep.

ILLY

The pills don't work anymore.

MASTERSON

You mean... the sleeping pills?

ILLY

I've used them so often that my nerves only wink at them. All I want to do is sleep now. I don't like being awake when everything is so empty. I'm used to him being there in the room

ILLY (CONT)

with me. I look over and I expect to see him there. It doesn't feel like the room is mine without him in it.

(A beat.)

I miss him so much.

ILLY glances at the OLD MAN in the wheelchair. HE turns HIS head and glances up at HER as well. A long pause follows. ILLY slowly points at the OLD MAN.

ILLY

Is that... Mr. O'Malley?

MASTERSON

Yes - August just brought him.

ILLY stares at MASTERSON curiously for a moment. SHE then turns again to look at the OLD MAN in the wheelchair.

ILLY

It's funny. He looks like my father.

MASTERSON smiles lightly.

MASTERSON

Yes, he does. I thought the same thing.

ILLY begins to descend from the stairwell. SHE moves not unlike an uncertain breeze.

MASTERSON

(To the OLD MAN.)

This is my wife, Illyria, Mr. O'Malley.

The OLD MAN looks up absent-mindedly and scans the room. ILLY is now standing some 10 feet in front of HIM. It appears, however, that the OLD MAN doesn't register her presence. MASTERSON can sense that ILLY detects something is wrong and quickly rushes to offer an explanation:

MASTERSON

He's a little groggy right now. August only just gave him some medication. He takes a sedative called Tamerol that is designed to calm his mind and limit agitation.

ILLY nods slowly - trying to take in everything - and then looks again at

the OLD MAN. SHE slowly (if awkwardly) extends HER hand towards HIM.

ILLY

Hello, Mr. O'Malley. It's a pleasure to meet you.

The OLD MAN looks at the hand.

ILLY

Was your journey here comfortable?

The OLD MAN looks back at MASTERSON.

ILLY

(Lamely - looking for something to say.)
Is there anything I could get you?

The OLD MAN looks back at ILLY. She searches HIS face for some sign of life. SHE then turns to MASTERSON with a hushed franticness in her voice:

ILLY

Why... why won't he speak to me?

MASTERSON

Don't you remember, Illy? I told you the other day. He doesn't speak.

ILLY

You mean he won't?

MASTERSON

I mean he can't.

ILLY

But you didn't say...

HER voice trails off into silence.

MASTERSON

Didn't say what?

ILLY starts to shake a little.

ILLY

You didn't say he couldn't understand.

MASTERSON

I'm sure he can understand. He seemed much more alert when I saw him last at Shady Gables. It's probably just the medication he's taking or maybe even...