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WELCOME TO PARADISE

THE TIME: NOW

THE PLACE: A COMFORTABLE BEACH HOUSE ON THE FICTIONAL CARIBBEAN ISLAND OF ST. SEBASTIAN

THE CHARACTERS:

RORY: 25-ISH, A TRAVELER WITH NO PARTICULAR PLACE TO GO

EVELYN: 75-80, THE OWNER OF THE BEACH HOUSE

GREG: 45-50, EVELYN'S SON

TRISH: 45-50, GREG'S WIFE

SYDNEY: 20-ISH, GREG AND TRISH'S DAUGHTER

ACT I SCENE 1

Lights up on the living/dining/kitchen area of a tropical-style house. It is night. Stage left is the front door. Stage right is a hallway door that leads to the bedrooms. A veranda sits downstage.

The front door opens. Evelyn enters, followed closely by Rory. Evelyn is in her late 70s, erect and graceful, but at the moment slightly discombobulated. Rory is about 25, done up in generic global hipster nomad style.

Rory holds Evelyn's elbow firmly with one hand and drags a suitcase with the other. He has a backpack slung over his shoulder. It's a crowded, clumsy entrance and it's not immediately clear what is happening. Once inside, Evelyn gently shakes her arm.

EVELYN

Okay, you can let go.

He doesn't. She shakes again, a little harder.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I said, you can let go now.

He releases her arm. He lets go of the suitcase and drops his backpack, then shuts the door. He points to a chair.

RORY

Sit down.

EVELYN

I'm okay, really.

RORY

Please, sit down.

She sits. Car tires CRUNCH on gravel outside. Evelyn turns, surprised, as she hears the sound.

EVELYN

You let him go? Why didn't you tell him to wait?

RORY

I wanted to be sure you were okay.

EVELYN

They're notoriously slow, especially this late. It could take an hour to get him back. We'd better call now.

She gets up and Rory jumps up to assist. She waves him off. He hovers as she walks to the phone.

RORY

Are you sure you're all right? Do you want to call someone?

EVELYN

I'm quite fine, thank you. And yes, I want to call a cab for you.

Evelyn picks up the phone, putting the handset to her ear, but quickly hangs up, annoyed.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I asked Desmond to turn on the phone service today. Obviously, he forgot! See? That's why we ask cabs to wait around here.

Rory opens his backpack, fishes out his cell phone and turns it on.

RORY

I have a phone.

EVELYN

Reception is pretty spotty this far from town.

He shakes his head as he sees he can't get a signal.

RORY

That's all right. I'll hitch a ride back to town. Believe me, I've been in plenty sketchier places than this.

EVELYN

I'm quite sure you have. (beat) I feel bad, you coming all the way out here, although I don't know why you did. It really wasn't necessary.

RORY

It isn't every day I get to help a lady in distress.

EVELYN

I'd hardly call it distress. As I said, I was just a little bit light-headed.

RORY

No, it was distress. You were about to collapse at the baggage claim.

EVELYN

I think you're being overly dramatic, but thank you again anyway.

RORY

You're welcome.

EVELYN

And now, as a reward, you're stuck several miles out of town with no ride back.

RORY

Like I said...

EVELYN

I know, I know. Sketchier places than this. (beat) Well, I don't know about you, but I could use a drink.

RORY

Are you sure that's a good idea? Maybe you shouldn't.

EVELYN

I'm in my own house. If I can't booze it up here, where can I?

She goes to the kitchen, opens a cabinet, revealing its near-empty innards. She gives out a little grunt of disappointment.

Have to make do with bourbon, I guess.

She holds the bottle out towards Rory questioningly.

RORY

Sure, okay.

Evelyn brings the bottle and two glasses to the table.

EVELYN

As a toast to your cockeyed chivalry.

She sits at the table and motions him over. He sits across from her. She pours some into each glass and holds hers up in a toast.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Well, welcome to paradise.

Rory takes a sip and surveys the surroundings. Evelyn watches him.

EVELYN (cont'd)

So, what brings you to our sleepy little island?, It doesn't exactly seem like the destination of choice for someone like, well...you. No offense.

RORY

None taken. I was in Berlin, and I was sick of being cold and damp. Plus, my girlfriend broke up with me and I had to move out. A friend had a bunch of air miles due to expire and she couldn't use them. This was the first thing available.

She nods. He fidgets, then stands.

RORY (cont'd)

If you're sure you're okay, I should probably get going.

EVELYN

How old are you, if you don't mind me asking?

RORY

25. I told you on the plane.

EVELYN

Did you? My hearing's not so great these days. I have a grandson your age, Drew. He did his vagabond thing a couple of years ago. The grand tour. Amsterdam, Turkey, Morocco. Came this close to an extended stay in a Thai prison along with the rest of the would-be drug smugglers. Cost his father a fortune in bribes and lawyer's fees. You've been to Thailand, I imagine? It seems to be a popular port of call these days for you lot. And were you one of those stupid enough to try and bring drugs through the airport? Never mind, you don't have to answer that.

RORY

No. Like you said, it's a stupid thing to do.

Rory starts to collect his things. He repacks his phone and zips up his pack.

EVELYN

You're obviously smarter than Drew. He left mostly to put as much distance between him and his father as possible. Can't say as I blame him actually.

Sigh of relief from Rory. He hoists his pack on his shoulder.

RORY

So, thanks for the drink. (beat) You sure you're okay?

EVELYN

Yes! You can stop asking. Sometimes the pressure on the plane makes *my* pressure go a little screwy and it makes me light-headed, that's all. But now I'm back on terra firma and all's well with the world.

RORY

Good, then.

EVELYN

Can I at least give you money for a cab, in case you encounter one on the road? I feel like I owe you more than just a drink.

RORY

Nah, I'm okay.

EVELYN

You sure? Let me give you \$20.

RORY

Fine, if it will make you happy. But actually you could help me with something else. Recommend a place to stay. I mean you obviously know the island pretty well.

EVELYN

I'm not sure. I don't keep up...

He drops the pack off his shoulder, unzips one of the pockets and pulls out his tablet. He looks around dubiously.

RORY

I don't suppose you have wi-fi here?

EVELYN

No fi at all, wi or otherwise.

RORY

Hmm. Well, I've got a book, too. Here.

As he digs around in his pack, a book falls out. It's not the guidebook he was looking for, but the noir novel *Double Indemnity*.

EVELYN

Hah! What do you know!

She delves into her purse and pulls out a worn paperback, which she shows to him with a flourish. It's the same book.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Double Indemnity! We're reading the same book!

RORY

Wow, that's weird.

EVELYN

You like it?

RORY

I haven't started it yet.

EVELYN

Do you know anything about it?

RORY

I saw the movie.

EVELYN

The book's better.

RORY

Usually is.

EVELYN

The ending especially. It's much creepier in the book. Really wonderful.

RORY

I'll take your word for it.

EVELYN

You don't strike me as a hard-boiled detective fiction kind of guy.

RORY

And you don't strike me as someone who would like creepy. But let me get...

He fishes around in his pack and finally pulls out the guidebook he was looking for. He flips it open and shows Evelyn the page.

RORY (cont'd)

Anything promising?

EVELYN

You want cheap, I suppose.

RORY

As cheap as possible. Free is always best. How are they here about sleeping on the beach?

EVELYN

I don't know. I've never heard of it being a problem, but I'm not really tuned into the daily scoop. It's been almost a year since I was here last. Maybe I'll stay a couple of months this time. I've got nothing pressing to get back to. And I think I could use an extended break from listening to my friends' stories about their doctors' appointments and their latest ailments and maladies. Not that I don't have a bumper crop of my own.

She stops, realizing she's taken the conversation in another direction.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Cheap accommodations, you said.

RORY

Right.

She scans the page.

EVELYN

Well, this one's been turned into condos. This one I don't know but the neighborhood certainly isn't cheap. This one had a fire last year. I don't think they've re-opened yet. Honestly, I don't see anything here that meets your criteria. There used to be something that passed as a hostel but it closed about 20 years ago. Now it's part of one of those all-inclusive family resorts.

Rory takes the book back.

RORY

Who comes to this island anyway?

EVELYN

St. Sebastian isn't exactly a main stop on the global hipster highway. We get mostly bourgeois families and bland suburban honeymooners here. And then there's always a crew of assorted scientists and grad students up at the nature preserve. They're probably the rowdiest bunch on the island. Then again, I don't hang out in bars much these days so I really don't know.

RORY

I'll just look around when I get to town. I'll find something, I always do. I've gotten pretty good at this.

EVELYN

Yes, of course.

Rory packs up and zips up again. Bag on shoulder, he turns toward the door.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Well, good luck getting a ride. I hope you enjoy your time on the island. It's really quite beautiful. And you certainly won't be cold and damp. (beat) What did you say your name was?

RORY

Rory.

EVELYN

Yes, of course. Now I remember. I'm Evelyn.

RORY

Yes, you told me. (beat) I sat next to you on the plane. You do remember that?

EVELYN

Of course! I was dizzy, not demented.

RORY

No, of course not. So, again, thanks for the drink. Maybe I'll see you in town.

He opens the door to find that it's started to rain. It grows steadier and harder.

RORY (cont'd)

Is this common?

She shrugs.

EVELYN

It's a seasonal thing. It's probably going to go on for a while. You might as well wait it out here.

RORY

That's okay, I don't mind a little rain. At least it's warm.

EVELYN

Don't be ridiculous. Why get wet if you don't have to? Relax, take a load off.

Uncertain, Rory drops his pack again. His shoulders droop and he yawns deeply.

RORY

Sorry. I think my jet lag is catching up with me. I've been in transit for about 20 hours.

Evelyn studies him for a few moments.

EVELYN

I'm not usually in the habit of taking in strange men, but why don't you just stay here tonight. I have the room.

RORY

Um...

EVELYN

This could go on for an hour or more. I don't think you can.

He hesitates, then nods wearily.

RORY

Thank you. I just...it just...kinda hit me all at once.

EVELYN

Tomorrow we'll catch a ride into town. You'll be able to find something then. But don't expect too much. If you're hoping to find a Club Med scene here, you're going to be deeply disappointed.

RORY

Hey, I'm just happy to be somewhere warm and sunny for a change. It *will* be sunny tomorrow, right?

EVELYN

Yes, it will. Now come on, I'll show you the room. You look like you're about to drop.

They gather their things up. She starts toward the hall door, then stops and turns to Rory.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Don't make me regret this. I don't want to wake up dead tomorrow morning.

RORY

Hah! No worries. I'm going to be out cold the minute I hit the pillow.

EVELYN

Okay, then. Come on, the bedrooms are down here. You can take my son's room at the end of the hall.

She exits through the door and he follows her.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I SCENE 2

Morning. The doors are open, leading out to the veranda. The sun is shining brilliantly. We can hear the faint sound of the surf.

Evelyn enters from the veranda, barefoot, carrying a basket full of fresh-cut flowers. She walks slowly with a hint of stiffness. She sets the basket down on the table and, then crosses to a shelf and retrieves a couple of empty vases, which she brings to the table.

She starts separating the flowers and clipping the stems with a pair of scissors. She measures a few against one vase, then another. She puts them in, then pulls them out. Rory wanders in from the hallway, looking very surprised that he's awake. He glances toward the open veranda door and stops, stunned. Evelyn sizes him up as she works.

EVELYN

And here we are, both still alive. How are you?

RORY

Still in some other time zone, I think.

EVELYN

There's coffee in the kitchen if you want.

A grunt in response.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Don't worry, there's always the midday nap.

Rory continues to gaze out the door.

RORY

When you said welcome to paradise, you really meant it!

EVELYN

It is quite lovely, isn't it? Of course it looked a little different when we bought it. More like a squatter's paradise back then. Just a little cinder block hut with a rusty tin roof. No plumbing, no garden, nothing. But we could see. We could see what it could become, what we could make it.

RORY

When was that?

EVELYN

Must have been around '62. Joe was doing post-doc work at the preserve. I was between teaching jobs so I came with him. Very spartan accommodations but like you, at that age we didn't care.

She drifts to the open door and gazes out. She turns back and walks to the kitchen.

EVELYN (cont'd)

An awful lot of hours went into this place. A lot of really hard work. Can you imagine me cutting two-by-fours and laying tile? I did, you know.

She pats the kitchen counter.

EVELYN (cont'd)

This is some of my handiwork right here.

She stops and looks closely at the counter.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Starting to show its age, though. Kind of like me. It's not the most elegant or luxurious, but it's quite sufficient.

RORY

Looks like paradise to me.

EVELYN

Well, you make your own paradise, I guess. (beat) Go, get some coffee.

Rory wanders toward the kitchen. She returns to the flowers.

RORY

So you lived here full-time?

EVELYN

For about three or four years. My oldest, Parker, was born here. St. Sebastian was my home. It's still a very important place to me.

RORY

So...what do you do here all day?

EVELYN

What would you do here all day?

RORY

Well...uh...I don't think...

EVELYN

Apart from the pot smoking, I mean, or whatever they call it these days. And the sex. (beat) Although I've been thinking now might be a good time to start.

On his way to the kitchen, he stops and looks at her.

RORY

Uh...

EVELYN

The sex thing, well that's a little more problematic. Finding guys my age who can still...although if you're interested...

He stops again.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Just kidding.

Rory continues to the kitchen and returns to the table with a cup of coffee. As Evelyn continues to trim and arrange the flowers, Rory idly picks up one, then another, sniffing and examining them. The flower arranging gradually becomes a cooperative task. They work easily together.

RORY

So, thanks for letting me stay here. I didn't realize how tired I was. It really just hit me all at once.

EVELYN

Well, lucky for you *I* was there. We helped each other out.

Rory takes a flower from her hand and replaces it with another. She puts in the vase and admires it.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Very nice! You've got quite an eye for this.

RORY

I had a job in high school doing deliveries for a flower shop. There was a girl I liked who worked there so I used to hang around. Eventually I got beat up by her jealous boyfriend but I did learn a lot about flowers. (beat) So why *did* you let me stay?

EVELYN

Why didn't you just let me collapse at the baggage claim?

RORY

I could be a serial killer, for all you know.

EVELYN

So could I. And wouldn't that be a neat twist!

RORY

You have to admit, it's a pretty risky move.

EVELYN

I'd like to think I picked up a few things over the years. Like being able to read people, get a sense of them. Vibes, you know? You have good vibes. And we're both reading the same book!

RORY

Yeah, a book about a murder!

EVELYN

I think it was just the moment, you know? We happened to cross paths at a moment when I realized I hadn't taken any chances for a very long time, and that my window of opportunity was probably going to slam shut very soon.

They continue choosing and arranging until both vases are filled. They survey the result.

EVELYN (cont'd)

When I was younger, I used to say that I didn't want to become an old woman full of "if only's." You know, if only I'd done this or that, taken the chance, not been so hesitant. I didn't want that to happen to me.

RORY

Did you? Take the chance, I mean.

EVELYN

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. It's hard to tell now, though, looking back, if any one of them really changed the course of my life that much. But you took a chance too. And it seems to have worked out all right so far.

RORY

So far. But getting back to what I asked. What do you do, say, on a typical day here?

EVELYN

Well, this morning I got up early. When you don't stay up all night, it makes it easier.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Anyway, I had some coffee and picked a mango from the tree outside and ate it, did a little reading, worked in the garden. I've been busy for hours already.

RORY

Hours? What time is it?

EVELYN

Time to take a break and have another cup of coffee. Then I'll tidy up and we can get ready to go into town.

RORY

Looks pretty tidy to me already.

EVELYN

I've mellowed considerably in recent years. Used to be, I couldn't stand when things were out of order.

RORY

Must've driven your kids crazy.

EVELYN

Probably. I don't think I damaged them permanently, though. Of course, they might have a very different opinion. And I'm not saying they all turned out to be lovely people.

Evelyn takes her mug to the kitchen.
She talks, almost to herself as she goes.

EVELYN (cont'd)

They say your kids are who they are from the minute they're born. But I'm not so sure that's true. Susan, for instance, was such a motormouth when she was little. Wouldn't shut up. Now? Completely the opposite! And Parker...

Evelyn stops abruptly and looks at Rory.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I'm doing it again, aren't I?

RORY

Doing what?

EVELYN

Launching into one of my 'monologues.'

Rory shrugs.

EVELYN (cont'd)

That's what happens when you spend most of your time alone. You end up talking to yourself a lot. Greg is convinced it's a sign I'm going daft.

EVELYN (cont'd)

(beat) Anyhoo, as long as you're accompanying me to town, perhaps you could come to the market with me and help me load the bags into the taxi before we part ways.

RORY

I suppose I could do that.

EVELYN

Good. Let's enjoy our coffee on the veranda before we go.

They take their mugs and stretch out on the chaises, gaze out towards the water.

EVELYN (cont'd)

So, where was this flower shop you worked at?

RORY

Oak Park, Illinois. My father taught at U. Chicago.

EVELYN

And you decided the world of academia was not for you, I take it.

RORY

You could say that.

EVELYN

Care to elaborate?

RORY

Not really.

EVELYN

Okay, fair enough. So how long have you been traveling?

RORY

A while.

EVELYN

You're going to have to be a little more forthcoming than that.

RORY

I just don't like talking about myself very much.

EVELYN

I'm not asking for your innermost thoughts. I was just wondering where you've been. Did you go to India?

RORY

Yeah.

EVELYN

Me too, but quite a while ago. I imagine it's changed a lot.

RORY

Depends where you go, I guess.

EVELYN

What did you think of it?

RORY

I liked it okay.

EVELYN

You "liked it okay?" If that was what you took away from it, either you were sleepwalking the whole time or you shouldn't be a traveler. You can't just pass through India without it affecting you. You absorb it through your pores. You inhale it.

RORY

If you try and inhale it now, you'll choke. In the cities, the pollution's so bad, you go outside and after a while, you can feel the grit between your teeth. That whole romance of travel to exotic places thing, forget it. It's not "Heat and Dust" anymore.

EVELYN

No, I suppose not.

RORY

Now it's more like heat and toxic particulate matter. And for your information, I pretty much immerse myself wherever I go. Live where the locals live, hang out where they hang out.

EVELYN

No hotels with clean sheets for you.

RORY

Even the hostels, they're just full of well-fed middle-class kids doing the "summer abroad" thing.

EVELYN

You're more the "sleeping in the ditch" kind of guy?

RORY

I like knowing that I can survive wherever I am, no matter what happens. You never know where you're going to find yourself.

EVELYN

Or lose yourself, apparently. (beat) Well, let me get ready and then we'll go to go to the market.

RORY

How do we get there?

EVELYN

If Desmond's home, he'll be happy to run us into town.
Otherwise we'll take the bus.

RORY

They *do* have wi-fi in town, right?

EVELYN

I'm certain they do.

RORY

Excellent.

They exit.

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 3

Evening. The sunset view from the veranda is spectacular. Rory tries in vain to get a signal on his phone. Evelyn reclines on a chaise, wine glass in hand.

RORY

Normally it's not so hard for me to find a place.

EVELYN

I warned you.

RORY

I know. And I promise I won't stay long. Just another night, two at most. I'm supposed to meet up with some friends in the Caymans at the end of the month. They're coming up from Brazil. Surfers, you know, chasing waves around the world. Anyway I figured, as long as I'm here, why not stay and look around while I'm waiting. Stay on St. Sebastian, I mean. Not specifically in your house. I'm sure I'll be able to find something else.

EVELYN

Frankly you'd have a much easier time finding a place to stay on the Caymans. But I have to admit, I'm quite enjoying your being here. I don't usually have anyone to keep me company.

RORY

I thought you said your kids come down here.

EVELYN

My son Greg does, with his family. The others live farther away. Unfortunately their visits are the ones I enjoy least. I always feel like I need a vacation when they leave.

RORY

Dinner was great, by the way. What d'you call that dish?

EVELYN

It doesn't really have a name. I guess we could call it Crab Evelyn. I invented it a long time ago. Haven't made it for quite a while, though. It's not something you cook just for yourself. So thank you also for giving me the opportunity to make something fun.

RORY

Well, like I said, it was great. (beat) So, do you ever do anything? At night, I mean.

EVELYN

I'm old, remember? My evening's entertainment is a book, maybe a glass of wine, and Coltrane on the stereo.

RORY

So you don't spend any time online? Check e-mail even?

EVELYN

There's not really a lot of bandwidth to go around down here, and honestly I never even thought about bringing a computer. This is where I go to get away. If you feel the need for some age-appropriate entertainment, by all means go into town. I've got a spare key you can use.

RORY

I should at least check to see if my friends sent me any messages, find out when they're coming.

EVELYN

As I said, go right ahead.

Rory gestures to the bookcases.

RORY

Awesome collection of books, by the way. (beat) I read a lot. I always have a book with me. And whenever I finish it, wherever I am, I trade with whoever I meet who's looking for something to read. That copy of *Double Indemnity*, I got it from this girl in a coffee shop in Berlin. Traded my copy of *The Dharma Bums* for it. Before that I had *The Guns of August*.

EVELYN

You certainly have eclectic taste.

RORY

It pretty much depends on what's available, which is neat because I end up reading things I never would have thought to pick up. (beat) So are there any other culinary masterpieces you've been waiting to whip up?

EVELYN

Looking forward to tomorrow night's dinner?

RORY

Just curious.

EVELYN

Well, if you're still here, perhaps you can help me with a stuffed tilefish. You know how to cook?

RORY

I know which end of the knife to cut with.

EVELYN

Well, that's a start.

RORY

Your family must appreciate your cooking.

EVELYN

When Greg and his wife come down, she muscled me out of the kitchen and takes over. Between you and me, she's a very boring cook. But she means well and I don't say anything.

RORY

Why not?

EVELYN

Because it's really not worth it. I've learned to pick my battles. Eating mediocre meals for a week or two is a small price to pay for a little less tension in the house.

Rory stands up.

RORY

So listen, I think I'm going to take your advice and head into town. Catch the bus in, see what's happening.

EVELYN

I told you, don't expect much.

RORY

Trust me, I know how to sniff out the local action.

EVELYN

I'm sure you do. Here, let me give you the key.

She stands unsteadily, grabbing the back of the chair for balance.

RORY

You okay?

EVELYN

Just a little too much wine, I think. I can't put it away like I used to.

She walks carefully to a small desk. She opens a drawer and pulls out a key, which she hands to Rory.

EVELYN (cont'd)

The bus doesn't run after about 11. And even before then it's iffy.

RORY

That's okay. I'll walk. Or hitch a ride. (beat) And I, uh, might end up staying in town if...

EVELYN

If you find more agreeable company?

He hesitates.

EVELYN (cont'd)

That's fine. Just bring the key back to me, please.

RORY

No probs.

He heads across the kitchen, then stops and looks back at Evelyn.

RORY (cont'd)

You sure you're okay?

EVELYN

Yes, of course! I'm just going to relax here and admire my view for a while. Go have fun. Get laid. At least one of us should be getting some.

She laughs and waves him away. He exits.

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 4

Lights up. It's morning. Evelyn enters from the hallway to find Rory sleeping on one of the chaises on the veranda. She wakes him.

EVELYN

Why are you sleeping here?

RORY

I was just gonna relax for a minute before I went to bed, but I guess I fell asleep. Still not totally on local time.

EVELYN

What time did you get in?

RORY

Not that late.

EVELYN

The action in town not up to your standards?

Rory stands up and wanders blearily to the kitchen. He finds something to drink.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Can't say I didn't warn you. Where did you end up?

RORY

Place called Jack's. Around the other side...

EVELYN

I know it. Used to be called The Bungalow. Before that it was Marlon's, and before that, well...

RORY

Not a bad little dive, actually. And I met this girl. But...

EVELYN

But what? What was the problem?

RORY

Well, you! You were the problem.

EVELYN

Beg your pardon?

RORY

Yeah. I was worried about you. How's that for irony?

EVELYN

Me? That's ridiculous. What about the girl?

RORY

Her name's Kira. One of those grad students.

EVELYN

Bird girl?

RORY

Bird girl. *Hot* bird girl.

EVELYN

I'm happy for you.

RORY

You should be. I mean you should have been. *I* should have been.

EVELYN

What went wrong? I would have thought you had your pickup lines pretty much down by this point.

RORY

We hit it off right away! I bought her a beer and then she bought me one. We're drinking, we're dancing. Pretty soon it's five or six beers later. By the way, you wouldn't believe the stuff they have on the jukebox there. Vinyl, of course. From back in the day. Couldn't believe the thing still worked. But it was great. That's why I like to hang out with the locals.

EVELYN

I'm still waiting to hear how I managed to ruin this for you.

RORY

I'm getting to it. So she invites me back to her place and I'm all set to go but then I start thinking, it's all the way out at the nature preserve, and I don't have a car, and what if something happens. You weren't looking so good when I left, you know. What if you get up in the middle of the night to get a glass of water, say, and you have an attack or something?

EVELYN

Attack? What sort of attack?

RORY

I don't know! Whatever kind you have!

EVELYN

I don't have any kind of attacks.

RORY

But you could!

EVELYN

So could you! I don't see what this has to do with...

RORY

What it has to do with is that now I can't just go and live my own life, because I'm thinking about you and what might happen to you!

EVELYN

Well stop it right now. I already have a son who does that. And I wish *he'd* stop it.

RORY

It's like I've had my life hijacked.

EVELYN

I think it's more like you're using me as an excuse for not scoring with bird girl. And that's just lame.

RORY

Don't you see? I have to leave but now I can't leave because then I'll be the one who kills you. People have seen me with you. Desmond! Desmond knows I'm here. He'll tell everyone.

EVELYN

Oh, please!

RORY

That's right! I'll go. And then, say, next week they'll find your body and they'll blame me. And *I'll* blame me. I'll be known forever as the guy who killed the nice old lady who took him in! I'll probably end up in prison or something.

EVELYN

It is much too early in the day to get this worked up.

RORY

It's like an old Twilight Zone episode. Some guy is hitchhiking and gets picked up by some harmless-looking old lady who takes him to her place and then he's imprisoned. Or no matter which road he takes when he leaves, he always ends up back at her place!

EVELYN

This is not the Twilight Zone. Or Hotel California. You can leave any time you want.

RORY

That was really unfair of you. Manipulative, even! Like Sunset Boulevard, only without the creepy German butler. (beat) Or the chimpanzee.

EVELYN

See? You should have gone on to the Caymans when I mentioned it, and avoided this whole drama.

RORY

Somehow there's always drama where women and I are concerned. It's like I'm cursed.

EVELYN

Maybe you *should* go. I wouldn't want your curse hanging over me. And I certainly don't want you ruining what could be my last pleasant time here.

RORY

Last? What do you mean last? Something's wrong, isn't it?

EVELYN

No! All I mean is, I've only got a little time...

RORY

I knew it!

EVELYN

...to enjoy the place by myself before Greg and his family show up. At least that was the plan. But then you showed up and that plan changed. For the better, at least until a few minutes ago.

RORY

But you're fine?

EVELYN

As fine as I was last week.

RORY

That doesn't answer my question.

EVELYN

I still think you're trying to blame me for your obvious inability to pick up girls.

RORY

My girl-picking-up skills are well-honed and highly successful.

EVELYN

Until last night.

RORY

I told you what happened.

EVELYN

Sorry. Your failure to launch lies squarely on your shoulders. I'm not taking the fall for this one.

He sulks. She thinks.

EVELYN (cont'd)

You've got, what, a week or so until your friends show up?

RORY

Give or take. They still aren't sure.

EVELYN

So how about this. Until then, if you so choose, you are welcome to stay here as my guest. With the proviso that it is not your job to prevent, or hasten, my demise, untimely or otherwise. *And*, we agree that I am not the cause of your utter hopelessness with women.

RORY

I'll ignore that last part. But other than that, it seems like an acceptable solution. But, I need to do something while I'm here. I always pay my way.

EVELYN

All right. In exchange for room and board, you can do work around the house for me. Odd jobs like, say, plumbing.

RORY

Do you actually have any plumbing problems?

EVELYN

None that I'm aware of, but I can probably find a few without much effort. Most of the pipes are pretty old and there are bound to be a few leaks. Kind of like me.

RORY

Fine.

EVELYN

Fine.

An emphatic silence.

RORY

So, where do you keep your tools?

END OF SCENE.

ACT I SCENE 5

Late afternoon. Evelyn enters from the hall to find Rory standing in the living area.

EVELYN

I was thinking for dinner, we've got all kinds of leftovers in the fridge. We can just graze, finish everything up.

She watches Rory as he looks intently at the furniture. He turns walks around the pieces, assessing each one from various angles.

EVELYN (cont'd)

What are you doing?

RORY

Y'know, if you move the sofa over here,
(he indicates a spot in the floor)

...you could see the sunsets from inside, too. And then you could move the comfy chair over here.

(again, he points to show what he means)

Here, I'll show you.

He repositions the sofa so it's facing toward the veranda.

RORY (cont'd)

It's a much better use of space, plus the light for reading will be better. Here, take a look.

He sits on the sofa and pats the cushion next to him. Evelyn sits. He gestures toward the veranda.

RORY (cont'd)

See what I mean? Perfect view.

EVELYN

Huh! I don't know why we never thought of that. I got this sofa a few years ago; the old one finally gave out. But I just put it right in the same old spot.

They stay seated side by side, gazing out to the now-reddening sky.

RORY

If I was ever going to want a home, a place to come back to, this is about as close as I can imagine to what it would be.

RORY (cont'd)

(beat) I'm just saying. (beat) So you've been here since, what, '62, '63 you said?

EVELYN

That's right.

RORY

So you've seen a lot of these.

EVELYN

Sunsets? Oh yes.

RORY

Any of them stand out as really memorable?

EVELYN

Not any particular one, but there have been years that stand out. In 1979, a volcano on St. Vincent blew its top and spewed a lot of dust and ash into the air. It stayed up there for weeks, all over the whole region. That year there were some really glorious evening skies -- mornings too.

RORY

I saw some incredible sunsets in the Indian Ocean. (beat) Although I think they may have been helped along by what we were smoking.

EVELYN

Funny you should mention that. I've been thinking lately that as I begin my inevitable coast into irrelevance, this would probably be an appropriate time to get stoned.

RORY

Yeah, I suppose so.

EVELYN

Too bad.

RORY

Too bad what?

EVELYN

Too bad you don't have any pot, or whatever they're calling it now. As you said, you're not dumb enough to try and bring it through customs.

RORY

True, (beat) but...

EVELYN

But what?

RORY

When I was in town last night I picked up some of the local product. Wasn't that hard to find. Even bland suburban honeymooners like to get a little toasted now and then.

EVELYN

You clever boy! Well, break it out and let's enjoy some.

RORY

What?

EVELYN

Sure! Come on, let's do it.

RORY

Uh, I don't think that's really a good idea.

EVELYN

Why not?

RORY

Um...

He flails, looking for a reason not to.

EVELYN

Come on, it'll be fun!

RORY

I'm not so sure. It just feels wrong.

EVELYN

In what way?

RORY

In every way that I can think of. First of all, it's illegal.

EVELYN

That's doesn't seem to be much of a deterrent for you.

RORY

Yeah, but...

EVELYN

Quit stalling! If you're worried about using it all up, I'll reimburse you for what I smoke.

RORY

It's not the money. It's just wrong, I'm telling you.

EVELYN

You're still not getting any traction with that line.

RORY

Okay! Fine. I'll be right back. Just remember, whatever happens, it's not my fault.

EVELYN

Just out of curiosity, where are you keeping it?

RORY

Not a chance.

He exits. She is full of anticipation. He returns with a small baggie filled with weed. He pulls rolling papers out of his shirt pocket and sits down. She watches with interest. He finishes the joint and pauses.

RORY (cont'd)

Now you're really sure about this? You know you have to inhale the smoke.

EVELYN

I'm familiar with the process. (beat) I was a cigarette smoker for years.

RORY

It's different though. You have to hold the smoke in. It's going to burn. You're going to cough.

EVELYN

Fine, I'll cough. I'm not an invalid, you know. Not yet, anyway. And who knows, it might be the cure for all my ills. You can't put this off any longer.

He's still unsure, uneasy. He looks around, hems and haws, finally gives up. He pulls out a lighter and lights the joint. He takes a pull on the joint, holds it for a minute, then exhales. He hands it to her. She carefully, almost reverentially takes the joint and imitates what he did. Almost immediately she coughs violently, expelling the smoke.

RORY

See what I mean? I don't think...

He reaches to take the joint back. Still coughing, she gently pushes his hand away. Finally she catches her breath.

EVELYN
Did you cough the first time?

RORY
Yes.

EVELYN
But you kept doing it.

RORY
Yes.

EVELYN
So shut up.

She takes another drag. This one she manages to hold in a little longer.

RORY
Okay, gimme.

He takes the joint from her, she lets it go without looking. As they pass the joint back and forth, Rory begins to notice that Evelyn seems very familiar with the activity. A jolt of realization hits him.

RORY (cont'd)
Wait a minute...you've done this before, haven't you?

She gives a guilty little shrug and smiles.

RORY (cont'd)
You fraud!

EVELYN
I never said I didn't.

RORY
Still!

EVELYN
We all have our little secrets.

RORY
I feel like I've been had.

They sit silently, enjoying the buzz.

EVELYN
 (suddenly, breaking the
 stillness)

Coltrane.

RORY

Huh?

EVELYN
 Getting high and listening to John Coltrane. They're two things that go together really well. At least that's what I remember from the old days.

RORY
 There is a whole other side to you I never suspected.

EVELYN
 You guys didn't invent hip, you know. (beat) Coltrane, you know who he is, right?

RORY
 I'm not a cultural moron.

EVELYN
 But you never saw him.

RORY
 Kind of impossible, don't you think? Considering he died before I was born.

EVELYN
 Of course. What was I thinking? I saw him. Many times. At divey little places in the Village and uptown. The Five Spot. And Minton's, up in Harlem. What a great place! Guys would go there after their own gigs were done. They'd sit around and just jam for hours. Coltrane, Miles, Monk...

She trails off, quite stoned. Rory watches her, very amused.

EVELYN (cont'd)
 We need music.

She wobbles over to the stereo, thumbs through the records, stops, thumbs some more, stops again.

RORY
 You know, if you did have internet access here, I could find all kinds of incredible jazz to listen to.

EVELYN

I've got plenty to listen to. (beat) Wow, I'm really hungry.

RORY

Yeah, that happens.

EVELYN

I'd forgotten that part.

RORY

But like I was saying, with the internet, we would have the whole universe of jazz to choose from.

EVELYN

A whole universe of choices? Who wants that? Especially in this frame of mind! I can't even decide between...

(she turns back to her record selection)

Maybe Miles. Yes!

She pulls out *Kind of Blue* and puts it on the stereo. "So What" begins to play. Evelyn sighs with pleasure.

RORY

The internet's not a bad thing, you know.

EVELYN

Unless you're allergic to cat videos.

(her attention snaps back to the music)

Listen to this! This changed everything.

She goes to him and grabs him by the arm. He's mostly amused, but a little taken aback. She closes her eyes and finds her groove.

EVELYN (cont'd)

He invented this totally new way to play. Not bound by conventional structure. Nobody'd ever heard anything like it. He called it modal jazz. You can go on forever, that's what Miles said about it. You don't let the music define where you go or how long you can keep playing. You just fly and fly.

Rory watches her for a few more moments, then holds out his hand to her.

RORY

Dance with me.

EVELYN

What? Right now? This isn't really dancing music. Anyway, I was just thinking, do we have any of those little fruity pastry things left?

RORY

We finished them yesterday. Come on. I won't let you fall.

Annoyed sigh from Evelyn.

EVELYN

Well how about the rice pudding? I know we still...

RORY

In a minute. First, let's dance.

She gives in and they start to dance. Some stumbling stepping on toes and giggling on Evelyn's part, but they find a rhythm. Then there's a charged moment, they both sense something is happening. They're surprised, a little embarrassed. Looking to break the tension, Rory sweeps Evelyn into a very exaggerated dip. She loses her balance, they fumble together, laughing, as Rory tries to keep her from falling. At that moment, the door opens. Greg, Trish and Sydney enter. They all freeze in surprise and begin talking and yelling over one another.

GREG

What the hell! Mother!

TRISH

What on earth! Evelyn! Are you okay?

Greg hurries to Evelyn, pushes Rory roughly away.

EVELYN

(struggling to regain her footing)

Yes, yes! I'm fine. Just a little clumsy right now.

Rory tries to help Evelyn but Greg pushes him again.

GREG

Stay away from her! I'm warning you! I've got a gun!

SYDNEY

No you don't!

GREG
What did you...did you break in here?

RORY
No, of course not!

Trish goes to the phone and picks it up.

TRISH
I'll call 911! (beat) Do they even have 911 here?

RORY
No, no. It's okay!

Rory moves toward Trish. Greg rushes over and tries to wrestle him to the ground, as Evelyn collects herself.

RORY (cont'd)
Hey!

EVELYN
Trish, put the phone down!

GREG
Is he holding you hostage?

RORY
What? Are you crazy?

TRISH
Greg, be careful!

Evelyn whistles sharply. Everyone is quiet. Rory shakes loose from Greg.

EVELYN
Everybody just calm down! (beat) Wow, do you guys know how to break a mood!

GREG
What? Mother, are you okay?

EVELYN
I'm more than okay. I'm great, actually. We were just dancing.

Sydney sniffs the air, looks from Rory to Evelyn with a slight smirk but says nothing.

GREG
Dancing!

EVELYN

Yes, dancing!

(looking over to Rory)

That was fun, wasn't it? And you know what, my arthritis isn't bothering me at all!

TRISH

Evelyn, what is going on?

GREG

Who is this vagrant?

RORY

Vagrant?

Evelyn puts her hand on Rory's shoulder.

EVELYN

Greg, Trish, Sydney, This is Rory, my house guest, new friend and all-around handyman.

Evelyn giggles. Sydney takes it all in.

TRISH

What?

SYDNEY

Whoa!

TRISH

Sydney, be quiet!

EVELYN

Rory and I met on the flight down. I offered him a place to stay for a couple of nights in return for doing some odd jobs around the place. Like fixing the leak under the sink in the bathroom. (to Rory) Great job, by the way.

RORY

No problem.

GREG

Mother...

EVELYN

What? He's got a way with a wrench, I'm telling you.

Evelyn laughs again. She keeps eyeing the kitchen and begins to edge toward it.

GREG

What the hell? This is just unacceptable.

EVELYN

What's unacceptable? (under her breath) God, I'm starving!

GREG

Mother, you can't just invite in any stranger.

EVELYN

Yes, I can. It's my house. And he's not just any stranger. He's my interior decorator.

GREG

I thought he was your plumber.

EVELYN

That too. And my dance partner. And my...

GREG

Don't even!

Trish intervenes.

TRISH

Greg honey...

GREG

Trish, no! You always do this.

As Greg and Trish start to argue,
Evelyn wanders towards the kitchen.

TRISH

Do what?

Evelyn forages for goodies. She takes a
paper bag out of a cabinet and fishes
inside.

GREG

Try and make it all nice again. Pretend like nothing's wrong. But this is wrong. This is what I'm talking about! She can't be here by herself any more.

EVELYN

Don't you think maybe you're overreacting? ~~And what do you mean, what you're talking about?~~

GREG

Clearly she's not in control of her powers of reason right now.

EVELYN

Anybody want a cookie? There's a new bakery in town.

She fishes one from the bag and holds it out. She wanders back from the kitchen.

GREG

No!

TRISH

No, thank you.

EVELYN

Suit yourself. They're really good.

She munches away with gusto.

GREG

Excuse me for pointing out the obvious, but this whole situation here is really strange. And creepy!

EVELYN

What about it is creepy?

GREG

For starters, he's young!

EVELYN

We're not sleeping together! But even if we were, that's none of your business.

SYDNEY

Eww, eww, eww! Gram!

Greg picks up the phone.

GREG

Okay, I'm...

EVELYN

What? Calling the police? Remember the last time you did that here? You ended up getting arrested for causing a disturbance!

RORY

Ev, look, if this is going to be a problem...

He stands up.

EVELYN

Rory, sit!

He sits quickly.

EVELYN (cont'd)

(to Greg)

You said you weren't coming until next week.

GREG

Our plans changed. Sydney needs to get back early because...

He glares at her.

SYDNEY

I need to retake a midterm.

TRISH

I would love it if one of my children could get through college in four years. Without the drama!

SYDNEY

Hey! I'm not the one who was caught cheating! Everyone has to retake it!

EVELYN

(to Greg) And you didn't think to let me know? Don't you think that would have been a good idea?

GREG

What difference should it make? You're down here by yourself, or should have been...

EVELYN

Excuse me!

GREG

Okay, that came out wrong. But seriously, mother, why would I ever expect you to have company?

TRISH

Evelyn, you know what he meant.

Sydney and Rory are eyeing each other.
Evelyn pulls a different cookie from the bag and begins to eat it.

EVELYN

What? (beat) You should really try this.

GREG

I'm sorry! I meant to call. But this is our house, our *family* house. And we weren't expecting anyone else to be here.

EVELYN

Again, if you *had* called... (beat) You know what? I am really not in the mood to have you all here right now. So this is what you should do. Go have dinner in town. I hear there's a new chef at the Stone Crab. Go eat there.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Order yourselves a bottle of that overpriced chardonnay you like so much, and chill out.

GREG

What??

EVELYN

In fact, why don't you just book a couple of rooms and stay the night.

GREG

I apologize for not calling, okay? If you'd get a damn internet connection here...

TRISH

Greg, don't even go there.

GREG

Okay, you didn't expect us for dinner, fair enough. We'll go eat in town. But then we are coming right back! And we are sleeping here tonight, in this house!

EVELYN

Rory, you wouldn't mind sleeping on the veranda, would you?

RORY

No, it's fine. I like it out there anyway.

EVELYN

Okay, so there we are. Accommodations for everyone. Now go!

Greg, Trish and Sydney exit the front door. Rory and Evelyn are alone again. Big sighs from both.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Well, that ruined a perfectly good high. Anyway, I'm still starving. Let's have the rest of that lobster salad! What else is in there?

Evelyn and Rory head to the kitchen in search of dinner.

END OF ACT I

ACT IIACT II SCENE 1

Lights up, late morning, the following day. We hear the sound of gentle, steady rain. Rory's backpack and belongings are on the veranda. He is in the kitchen, sipping from a mug of coffee. Greg enters from the hallway. Rory holds out the pot.

RORY

There's coffee if you want it.

GREG

You've certainly made yourself at home.

He looks around the living room with increased attention.

GREG (cont'd)

What happened in here?

RORY

We re-arranged the furniture. Ev and I tried it out and we decided we like it more. Look, you can see the sunsets from here. And the flow is much better.

GREG

We still haven't gotten a good explanation of who you are or what you're doing here. Never mind why you're re-arranging my furniture.

RORY

You're one of those guys who doesn't deal very well with change, aren't you?

Sydney enters from the bedroom hallway, carrying a towel. She stands looking out toward the beach and peels off her t-shirt and shorts to reveal a very skimpy bikini. Rory gives her an appreciative but indifferent look. Greg glares at her. She merely shrugs.

GREG

It's raining! Didn't you notice?

SYDNEY

I'm willing it to stop. It'll be over very soon.

She waits a moment, then drops her towel and plops down in a chair, one leg over the arm.

GREG

Don't sit like that!

With an annoyed sigh, she stands and sits again with exaggerated care.

GREG (cont'd)

Where's my mother?

RORY

Still napping. She'll be up in another half hour or so.

Greg turns toward the bedroom hallway.

RORY (cont'd)

I wouldn't wake her if I were you. Makes her really cranky.

Greg scowls and exits to the hallway.

RORY (cont'd)

Suit yourself.

Sydney and Rory size each other up.

SYDNEY

So what's the deal with you and Gram, anyway?

RORY

There's no "deal."

SYDNEY

I can't imagine her doing something like this, you know? Invite a total stranger to sleep here? And okay, I get that you would take her up on a free place to crash for a night, maybe two. But beyond that? It's kind of creepy, right?

RORY

This is not a permanent arrangement, you know. I'm meeting up with some friends in the Caymans but they're not there yet. Ev and I met on the flight down, and this, well, let's just say it suits both our needs right now.

Sydney cocks her head toward the bedrooms. Rory moves to the living area and sits on the back of the sofa.

SYDNEY

You should've heard him at the restaurant last night. He was ready to call in the Marines. But whatever, I'm just glad to have an ally here.

RORY

What do you mean?

SYDNEY

Yeah, you know, a partner in crime? For instance, does Gram know you've been lighting up? The rents may not have noticed, but I sure as hell did.

RORY

Yeah, she knows.

SYDNEY

And she's okay with it? I never realized she was so cool. So maybe she wouldn't mind if you and I...

RORY

Uh uh! I'm not about to piss off your dad any more than I already have just by being here.

SYDNEY

Oh, come on! I need somebody on my side here! You know, shift the whole power dynamic. I didn't even want to come, but as long as I'm here...

RORY

I left my own family drama at home. I'm not about to get in the middle of someone else's.

SYDNEY

Just lookin' to share the misery, as long as you're here.

RORY

I got my own miseries, thanks.

SYDNEY

I really wonder why some people get married in the first place, when it's obvious to everyone else that they can't stand each other.

RORY

I doubt it's that obvious at the wedding.

Sydney shrugs.

SYDNEY

I've seen pictures of my dad as a kid and he didn't smile even back then. (beat So what's your family drama about?)

RORY

My situation is somewhat different.

SYDNEY

Different how?

RORY

Different in that there were legal charges involved.

SYDNEY

No way! What happened? Somebody beat up on somebody? Who hit who?

RORY

Nobody hit anybody. They were civil charges. Although honestly there was nothing civil about it.

SYDNEY

So...what, then?

RORY

Plagiarism. Well, technically copyright infringement. Alleged. My father was - is - a professor of medieval lit at University of Chicago. Which is where I went. I got accused of stealing from somebody's doctoral thesis for this paper I was writing in my junior year. I didn't do it but my dad wouldn't defend me.

SYDNEY

Seriously? Why not?

RORY

It may also have had something to do with the fact that I was sleeping with the dean's daughter. (beat) And her fiancé found out.

Sydney snorts with laughter.

RORY (cont'd)

Go ahead, laugh! Everyone else did. (beat) Except her fiancé. And her dad. And my dad. I seem to have a knack for disastrous relationships. Anyway, that kind of made me persona non grata around there. Dad wouldn't step up. They threw me out of school. And I threw myself out of the house.

SYDNEY

When was that?

RORY

About six years ago.

SYDNEY

You haven't been home in six years?

RORY

Nope.

SYDNEY

Wow, I envy you. I don't know about six years, but I could really use an extended vacation from Greg and Trish. So, what do you live on? Do you just bum off people? Like Gram?

RORY

Ever hear of work? It's this really cool thing that helps you get money when you need it. You do stuff for people and they pay you.

SYDNEY

I'm not a spoiled rich kid, you know.

RORY

And I'm not a bum.

SYDNEY

So is that what you're doing now? Are you working for Gram?

RORY

It kind of started out that way, sort of. But it seems to have evolved into something else.

SYDNEY

What?

RORY

I'm not entirely sure.

Evelyn enters from the hallway,
grumbling.

EVELYN

Rory sweetie, why did you let him do that?

RORY

I warned him. But I didn't want to physically restrain him, especially after last night.

EVELYN

I suppose you're right.

Evelyn crosses to Sydney and gives her
a kiss on the head.

SYDNEY

Hey, Gram.

EVELYN

Hey, Syd. How are you, sweetheart?

SYDNEY

I'm good. I was on my way to the beach, but...

She gestures towards outside.

EVELYN

Yes, I see. Nice bathing suit.

SYDNEY

Thanks. Dad's totally freaked out by all this, you know.

EVELYN

It takes so little to make that happen.

SYDNEY

Don't I know it. (beat) Why does he get so mad at you?

EVELYN

I wish I knew. Even when he was younger, we always had a prickly sort of relationship. Usually it's mothers and daughters who have a hard time. The boys are supposed to be easier. But actually I always got along better with your aunt Susan than with either your dad or Uncle Parker. Susan and I had a very close relationship, until she became a Buddhist.

RORY

You have something against Buddhism?

EVELYN

No, not at all. I was very supportive when she started. A little spiritual searching can be a good thing. But she got deeper and deeper into it and eventually became a nun. Now she spends most of her time in a monastery in California, meditating. I barely speak to her and almost never see her. I feel vaguely responsible for something I did or didn't do, even though I have no idea what. She's assured me that it's not the case, but I don't really believe her.

Greg enters from the hallway. He begins to look through the kitchen cabinets and in the fridge.

GREG

Mother, how are you feeding yourself? There's no milk and you only have two eggs left.

EVELYN

That's because we made a soufflé for breakfast. Rory is turning out to be quite the chef! We were planning on going to the market a little later. Make a list of what you want.

GREG

No, I'll go. What do you need?

EVELYN

Just get what you want now. We'll do the big shop later.

GREG

Why go twice? I'll get it all now. You need some food here. Anyway, I have a car.

EVELYN

So we'll borrow it.

GREG

Nobody can drive it but me and Trish. It's on the rental agreement.

EVELYN

Then we'll take the bus or a taxi as we always do.

GREG

Mother, don't be obstinate.

EVELYN

You just woke me up! I'm not prepared to sit down and put together a whole grocery list right now. If you want something, go get it!

Greg grumbles and exits out the front door.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Being around him for any length of time is like wearing an itchy sweater that you can't take off. You're not exactly miserable, but you can never relax and get comfortable.

SYDNEY

I thought mothers were always supposed to love their children.

EVELYN

Just because I don't like him very much, doesn't mean I don't love him.

Greg re-enters.

GREG

Where the hell's the car?

RORY

Don't look at me.

Car tires CRUNCH on gravel O.S. A car door SLAMS. A moment later Trish enters the front door, carrying a small grocery bag. She places it on the table.

TRISH

I hope you don't mind. I made a quick run to the market.

She unpacks eggs, milk, some other things.

TRISH (cont'd)

I figure we can do a big shop later once we've made a list.

Greg lets out a groan of exasperation. Trish looks questioningly to the others, who shrug their shoulders. Trish eyes Sydney and then Rory.

TRISH (cont'd)

Honey, it's not exactly beach weather. Why don't you put some clothes on.

SYDNEY

Mom, you know these showers. It'll stop any minute. Any minute now...

Sydney holds her hand up expectantly. Off the veranda, the sun emerges and the garden is now bathed in sunshine. She bows with a flourish.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

Behold my awesome powers! Ciao!

Sydney stands, picks up her towel and exits through the veranda. Rory joins Trish in the kitchen and puts away the groceries. Trish watches, bemused.

TRISH

So how long has this been going on?

EVELYN

Has *what* been going on?

TRISH

Him, here.

EVELYN

I don't know.

(she and Rory confer)

What is it, about ten days?

RORY

Something like that.

Trish pulls Evelyn to the side. Greg is pacing around, looking very uncomfortable.

TRISH

Evelyn, I personally am very pleased you found someone to keep you company, however unexpected. But you know Greg, whatever he doesn't understand, he needs to find a way to beat it into submission.

EVELYN

Sometimes our loved ones do things we don't understand. But if we're smart about it, we learn to keep our mouths shut.

TRISH

Well, Greg's not too smart in that area. Plus, he's been coming here all his life, and he really feels like this place is his -- well, his family's -- private retreat.

EVELYN

More like his private source of revenue, judging by what I've been hearing over the past couple of years. He's just itching to rent it out, isn't he?

TRISH

Greg can be abrasive, we all know that. Believe me, I get a lot more of it than you do.

EVELYN

It probably leaves you with quite a rash, I would think. But really Trish, it's none of his business -- or yours -- what I do here and who I entertain. He may feel like the house is his but I bought it and I built it, partly anyway. It's my name on the deed and he's going to have to wait a while to turn it into his time-share bonanza.

TRISH

It will be our business sooner than you'd like if your health keeps deteriorating and your judgment is in question. Greg's been talking about power of attorney.

Rory snaps to attention.

RORY

Deteriorating? What does she mean?

Evelyn silences him with a look and a finger.

EVELYN

I'm a long way from the nursing home, and you bloody well know it.

TRISH

I'm not the one whose decision matters, though. (beat) I'm on your side, more than you know! But you have to start thinking ahead. Greg is so afraid that things will end up like they did with Joe.

EVELYN

Does he actually care or is he just looking to park me somewhere and avoid the unpleasant details?

TRISH

Greg is the only one of your children who does care! Parker's off living in France, we hardly hear from him. And Susan? She removed herself from the picture a long time ago. The point is, we've been the only ones you have who are willing to take on...

EVELYN

Take on what? The burden? Is that what you were going to say?

Evelyn faces Greg.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I'm not about to be parked anywhere, much as you might wish it, Greg. And you may not hear from Parker but I do. In fact, he and Celeste keep asking me to move to France and live with them.

GREG

I didn't know that. You never told me.

EVELYN

What makes you think I tell you everything? (beat) You know the French provide all sorts of great benefits for seniors, and I'm seriously considering it. But even so, I'm not ready to relocate just yet.

GREG

I'm starting to feel like I'm the stranger here, not him.

Greg exits to the veranda, pushes Rory's belongings out of the way and stands at the railing. Evelyn and Trish move toward the kitchen.

EVELYN

I like you, Trish, or I used to anyway. And I appreciate the shit you have to put up with being married to Greg.

TRISH

Maybe not for much longer. (beat) I was hoping to find a time to talk to you alone, but that doesn't seem possible now.

Evelyn draws Trish further away from the veranda.

EVELYN

Trish, honey, you go through this every few years -- should you stay, should you go.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I'm not counseling you to do one thing or the other, and I would certainly understand if you decided to leave, but you're driving yourself crazy going back and forth like this. Either make peace with the situation or change it.

TRISH

I didn't want to feel that I acted impulsively. And there were the kids.

EVELYN

The kids don't really need you any more. And Greg? (she shrugs) You need to think about what you need. And by the way, acting impulsively isn't always a bad thing.

Evelyn gestures toward Rory.

TRISH

He's a kid! A drifter! Even if I were comfortable with the idea -- and I can guarantee you Greg is not -- how long do you think he's going to stick around? You're not doing yourself any favors choosing him as your champion.

EVELYN

I didn't choose him as a champion, I chose him as a companion. And actually it was more like we chose each other.

Greg enters and overhears Evelyn.

GREG

Good god, mother! You're talking like you're in love with him!

EVELYN

Don't be absurd!

GREG

I'm not the one who's being absurd, you are! You're behaving like a silly teenage girl, swooning over your new steady boyfriend.

EVELYN

Nobody uses the word "steady" any more. Even I know that. These days, we'd be hooking up, isn't that it?

She looks to Rory, who shakes his head.
He starts to explain, they laugh.

GREG

(to Rory)

So is that it? You two an item now?

RORY

Oh man, you are so far off base.

GREG

Then explain it to me. Get me back on base.

RORY

You really need to expand your notion of "relationship."
There's an infinite number of ways that two people can
interact with each other. It's like modal jazz, you know?

(turns to Evelyn)

It's like you said, not bound by conventional structure. Once
you find your common language, you can just fly and fly.

GREG

What?

RORY

Yeah, Ev's been getting me into it. Coltrane, Miles. I think
it's very applicable in this situation.

GREG

What the hell are you talking about!

RORY

You're too linear, Greg. Relationships exist both inside and
outside linear time and space.

GREG

You're just as nutty as she is. Maybe she's catching it from
you, or vice versa. It's not enough that I have to deal with
my own slacker son, now I have someone else's too!

Trish exits out of the veranda. Evelyn
watches her go. Greg does not notice.

EVELYN

There is nothing here that you "have to deal" with. And Rory
is nothing like Drew. You'd know that if you'd taken a minute
to talk to him.

GREG

Oh spare me, mother. I have no interest in getting to know
your "friend."

EVELYN

Well, he's not leaving, so if you want to stay, you'd better
figure out a way to coexist...peacefully!

GREG

Trish! Help me out here!

He turns toward where she was standing.
Moments later we hear the car driving
away.

Lights out.

ACT II SCENE 2

Lights up. Night on the veranda. The house is dark and quiet. Night insect noises, soft surf in the background. Rory is standing at the railing, gazing out. Sydney enters from the hallway.

SYDNEY

Hey.

RORY

Hey.

SYDNEY

Another crazy day, huh?

RORY

Tell me about it.

SYDNEY

Glad I was down on the beach for most of it. That's my dad's default state of being, angry at the world. Imagine living with that full time.

RORY

I'd rather not.

SYDNEY

Seriously, I can't wait to finish school. Two more semesters and then I am so gone. As much distance as possible.

RORY

I know what that's like.

SYDNEY

Yeah, you told me.

RORY

You been abroad before?

SYDNEY

I spent a semester at Oxford.

RORY

Rough gig.

SYDNEY

I know, but somebody's gotta do it, right?

RORY

So you gonna travel after graduation? On your own, I mean.

SYDNEY

That's my plan. But I'm pretty sure my dad will refuse to fund an expedition like that. Especially after what happened to my brother.

RORY

Go without his money. Fund it yourself.

SYDNEY

I still gotta come up with the money somewhere.

RORY

Just go. You'll figure it out.

SYDNEY

I'm not sure I'm that brave. And it's a lot easier for boys, you know, still. Plus I don't have quite the incentive to leave home that you do. I haven't been thrown out.

RORY

Neither was I. I just left. You wouldn't believe how liberating it is to get out from under all that shit. It's like you didn't realize how you were suffocating, and then suddenly you can breathe.

SYDNEY

You want to light up? Nice night to get a little toasted.

RORY

With them just down the hall? I haven't got a death wish.

SYDNEY

Then what about a beer or something?

RORY

Yeah, sure.

She goes to get beers.

SYDNEY

There's not much here. What have you guys been drinking?

RORY

Wine, mostly. And crazy tropical drinks that we made up. Like the Sandy Claws.

SYDNEY

What's that?

RORY

A vodka and seltzer with mango juice, garnished with a crab claw.

SYDNEY

I'll stick with the beer if it's okay with you.

She returns with two beers and hands one to Rory. She chugs hers in a couple of long gulps, then fetches another and starts in on that one.

RORY

Whoa, slow down.

SYDNEY

Don't worry, I'm not driving.

RORY

Just saying.

SYDNEY

So back to you and Gram. I mean, I've heard of May-December romances, but this is beyond that.

RORY

It's not a romance! How many times do I have to say that? Ev and I are just friends, good friends. Period.

SYDNEY

Yeah, but even so.

RORY

Sometimes relationships don't follow the usual pattern. I can't explain it. We just clicked.

SYDNEY

I dunno. Sounds like romance to me. But hey, at least you don't have to worry about getting her pregnant!

RORY

Ha ha. But no! It's different, on some other level somewhere. Most of the time, I don't even feel the age difference. She has this wealth of personal experience, so far outside my own frame of reference. Spending time with her, it's like adding an extra layer into my life. It just feels deeper, like there's more to it. Know what I mean?

SYDNEY

Not really.

RORY

And jazz! I mean, I always knew there was a lot to it but I didn't know how to get into it. But Ev, she's turned me on to this whole universe of creative exploration. It's unbelievable.

SYDNEY

I'm telling you, it sounds like you're describing this amazing chick you met and you're totally into her.

Rory shakes his head.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

Well, then maybe you wouldn't mind...

She inches over to him and starts coming on to him. He resists, she continues.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

I'm plenty over 16, so don't worry about that. And...

She digs her hand into her pocket and pulls out a couple of condoms. She waves them in front of him.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

100% effective.

RORY

Stop.

SYDNEY

I've seen you checking me out.

She teases him.

RORY

That hardly counts as checking you out...

Sydney strokes him playfully.

SYDNEY

Come on! At least we can have a little fun, even if nobody else is.

He gently pushes her hand away.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

Come on!

RORY

I'm flattered, but no thanks. Like I said, I don't have a death wish.

Sydney looks around, frustrated.

SYDNEY

At least let's put on some tunes.

She goes to the stereo and carelessly pulls out a record at random.

RORY

Be careful! These things are...you're gonna get fingerprints all over it! Do you even know how to do this?

He goes and takes the record from her hand and carefully puts it away.

SYDNEY

You know so much, pick something good out.

Rory thumbs through the albums and pulls out a record of samba music. Sydney starts to dance suggestively around Rory. She draws him reluctantly into the dance. Greg enters. They don't see him.

SYDNEY (cont'd)

Come on! Loosen up!

GREG

What the hell is going on?

They both jump.

RORY

Nothing!

Greg goes to grab the tone arm off the record. Rory intercedes and carefully removes it.

GREG

It doesn't look like nothing to me!

SYDNEY

Dad, forget it. We were just fooling around.

GREG

Yes, I can see that. (to Rory) First my mother, now my daughter?

SYDNEY

Dad, you are such a jerk!

RORY

Hey, you gotta admire the symmetry. (beat) Just kidding! You know, try to defuse the tension?

GREG

Defuse the tension? You're the one who's creating it!

RORY

I have to disagree on that one. There was no tension in this house until you showed up.

GREG

Okay, that's it. Mother!

Greg stalks out to the bedroom. We hear Greg's voice and Evelyn's voice OS, gradually getting louder and more argumentative.

RORY

(quietly, to himself) Again you want to wake her up? Again? Oh, man. What is wrong with you?

Evelyn enters, sleepily, wrapping her robe around her. Greg follows her.

EVELYN

Rory, tell me you weren't doing what he said you were doing.

SYDNEY

It's my fault, Gram. I started it. We were just having couple of beers and goofing around. Rory put on some music and I tried to get him to dance with me.

(she glares at Greg)

Just *dance*. I was just trying to have some fun! You know, Dad, fun?

Evelyn turns on Greg, irate.

EVELYN

This is what you woke me out of a sound sleep for? You ignoramus! You're not seven any more, Greg! Stop throwing a tantrum every time things don't go your way!

GREG

How is it I always come out being the bad guy in these things?

EVELYN

And what the hell do you have against dancing?

Evelyn turns to go back to bed, then turns back. Rory motions to Sydney that they should leave. Sydney follows him out to the veranda, then exits.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Yes, I'm getting old. But I'm not an invalid, I'm not a cripple, and I'm not demented. Stop trying to "manage" me!

GREG

Remember what happened with Dad? Or have you chosen not to? How you kept making excuses for him? "He's just forgetful. He's having a senior moment." And by the time we got you to come to grips with the Alzheimer's, he was already past the point of reason. I don't want to have to go through all of the that again.

EVELYN

Again? As I remember, you didn't go through a whole lot of it. Trish did most of the heavy lifting, as I remember. You were MIA a lot of the time. Traveling for work, you said. Me, I think you were hiding out.

GREG

I did a lot more than you care to remember.

EVELYN

Remind me, when were you there trying to make sure he ate, or chasing him down the street when he wandered away, or cleaning him up after yet another "accident?" Even when we got the caregivers in, it was still me and Trish handling most of it.

GREG

And who do you think was paying for those caregivers? And the doctor's visits? And everything else that went with it?

EVELYN

You think just because you whipped out your checkbook every so often, that *that* constituted "dealing with it?"

GREG

Dad had pretty much lost control of everything. I'm trying to make sure that doesn't happen again.

EVELYN

You can't "get control" and "make sure!" Life's not like that. Or death, for that matter.

GREG

This isn't about life and death. This is about that... interloper!

EVELYN

I should think you'd be happy. Relieved, even! A young, strong, intelligent, trustworthy guy who enjoys my company, who's willing to "deal with it" and isn't asking for anything in return. I'd think you would want to put him on your payroll.

GREG

I'm not happy. I don't trust him. And I don't like him.

EVELYN

I don't care. I do.

GREG

He's taking advantage of you, why can't you see that? Let's face it, Mother. You're not as sharp as you used to be, no matter what you think.

EVELYN

You think I've taken leave of my senses?

GREG

The fact that you invited a perfect stranger in here is proof enough for me.

EVELYN

What do you see when you look at me?

GREG

I don't know what you mean.

EVELYN

What do you see? Your mother? An old woman? An accident waiting to happen? You don't see *me*, do you?

GREG

I didn't mean...

EVELYN

I'm not a person to you, am I? I'm a symbol, a reminder of everything you think is wrong with your life. To Rory, I'm still a person. I don't represent anything. I just am.

GREG

(fumbling for a response) Oh, this is pointless!

EVELYN

At last we agree on something. Now, I am going back to sleep and I strongly recommend you do too. And tomorrow you will go home. I don't want you here any more.

Greg opens his mouth to speak; she silences him. Scowling, he walks to the veranda.

GREG

Sydney! Get in here! (beat) Sydney, where are you?

Rory enters from the veranda.

RORY

She took a walk down the beach. Said she'd be back in a while.

Greg exits angrily to the hallway. Rory moves towards Evelyn. She sighs.

EVELYN

Do you think I was a bad mother?

Rory shrugs.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Maybe I really did screw up. I know I wasn't perfect.

RORY

Nobody is.

EVELYN

I know. But I'm realizing that all of my children have distanced themselves from me in one way or another. Geographically, emotionally, spiritually. I wanted to nurture their independence, but maybe all I really did was push them away.

RORY

I'm sure that's not true. (beat) You know what we need? A little Coltrane. That always works. Or maybe Ellington. You know, 'Stompin' at the Savoy?'

He turns to go put on a record. Evelyn puts her hand gently on his arm and stops him.

EVELYN

Why are you staying, really? You were supposed to be in the Caymans by now. Your friends must be wondering where you are.

RORY

They're not friends, really, just some people I met traveling. They won't care if I don't show up. I'm not even sure *they're* going to show up. (beat) After being rootless for so long, I feel like I've come home, like I'm fitting into a space that's only for me. But it's more than that. I can't explain it. I feel like I'm *supposed* to be here.

EVELYN

It doesn't bother you, spending all your time with a creaky old lady? Greg may be a bombastic jerk but he's not entirely off the mark. Not a burden maybe, but an imposition?

RORY

It doesn't feel that way! It just feels like life. It feels like everything's in sync. Like this is the way it's supposed to be.

EVELYN
(almost to herself)
The way it's supposed to be.

They sit together at the table.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Not long after we had bought the house, Joe and I came down to do some work, just the two of us. We'd been hammering and sawing all day and we decided to go into town and have a couple of beers. There was this woman who use to hang around the beachfront bars and tell fortunes for a quarter. That night she came over to our table. She looked at my palm a long time.

She reaches out and takes his hand and turns it palm up, imitating the fortune teller.

EVELYN (cont'd)
She told me that I would find my soulmate on this island. We laughed, because there we were together, obviously a couple. She was telling us what had already happened. But now I'm wondering, what if it wasn't Joe she was talking about?

She looks again at his palm, then up at him. He looks back questioningly.

EVELYN (cont'd)
It never occurred to me that it might not be him. You said it yourself earlier, relationships don't always obey the laws of time.

RORY
That was just some silly bullshit I was...

EVELYN
What if you were right? What if it was you? She never said *when* it would happen.

He draws his hand back slowly and looks at his palm as if searching for clues.

RORY
I don't know what this means.

EVELYN
I'm not sure I do either.

RORY
So what do we do now?

A few more silent moments. Then Evelyn, having crossed some unseen boundary, stands purposefully.

EVELYN

I know what I'm doing. I'm going back to my room and going to sleep. We'll see what happens tomorrow.

RORY

Okay. I'm going to stay up for a bit.

EVELYN

Don't worry. Everything is going to be fine. Trust me.

She exits to the hall. Rory walks to the veranda and stands very still, staring at the sea. The surf whooshes gently for a few moments until the quiet is interrupted by Greg and Trish entering from the hallway, in the midst of a discussion/argument.

TRISH

Just once, just once I would like to be able to enjoy a nice quiet time here. But once again, you had to come in and blow things up.

GREG

Me? Why is it always my fault? You're not seriously condoning this ridiculous, embarrassing and quite possibly dangerous situation!

TRISH

Ridiculous, maybe. Embarrassing? To whom? But dangerous? I think you're getting yourself way out on a very skinny limb there. Just because you don't like it...

GREG

And you do?

TRISH

It doesn't matter whether I like it or not! She's not asking for our approval. And frankly I don't see why she should.

GREG

So you're taking her side now?

TRISH

I'm taking my side! I don't want to be put in the middle of this any more. I'm sick of it. (beat) I need a cup of tea.

She moves toward the kitchen, Greg follows. They see Rory on the veranda and stop.

GREG

So you're okay with this?

TRISH

I don't know. But you acting like a bully...

GREG

A bully??

TRISH

...is only making a difficult situation worse! If he *is* going to be here...

GREG

I do not want him to be here! I want him gone!

TRISH

Your method doesn't seem to be working very well, though, does it?

Greg fumes.

TRISH (cont'd)

You've been carrying on about her being alone, I'm not so sure this isn't a good solution, at least in the short term. Let him stay with her while we all figure out something more permanent.

GREG

So you think I should leave my mother here like this?

TRISH

She's not a child, Greg.

GREG

She seems to be acting like one. There is something very wrong with this. I don't trust him. And I don't like him.

TRISH

But apparently Evelyn does. And if you want to know the truth, I think she looks really well. Better than she has in quite a while.

GREG

That's not the point!

TRISH

What is the point? (beat) You want to know what's going on? Ask him, right now. Either it'll reassure you that everything's okay, or you can figure out some arrangement to get him to leave. If that's what you really want.

GREG

It's what I really want.

TRISH

Then talk to him. Calmly and rationally. He's a bright kid, that's obvious. Make your case. Without yelling. For once, try it my way. Please?

They look over at Rory, who is coming in from the veranda. He sees them, looks away and begins to putter around, tidying up the room. Trish pushes Greg towards him. She watches attentively. Greg waves her away. She retreats but stays in the room.

Greg approaches Rory. Rory notices him but says nothing.

GREG

Listen, maybe we got off on the wrong foot. You have to admit, it was a pretty strange scene to walk in on. You can see how it was possible to, well, misinterpret.

(no response from Rory)

And in retrospect, I can see that I probably overreacted.

(again, waits for a response,
gets none)

Anyway, now that I've got a better understanding of the situation, I can see that you obviously have my mother's best interests at heart. So we actually have something in common.

RORY

I think we have very different definitions of what those "best interests" might be.

Greg fumbles, looks back at Trish, then continues.

GREG

That's okay. That's okay. At least we have a common goal. We can start from there and work towards a resolution.

RORY

What exactly do you think needs to be resolved?

GREG

Look, I'm not the villain in this story. Help me out here, okay? I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt.

RORY

Gee, thanks!

GREG

Can we lose the sarcasm for just a brief minute? I am making an effort here. The least you can do is reciprocate.

RORY

Okay, fine.

GREG

It's just, I don't understand why you're doing this, and frankly I'm not sure you do either.

He waits, no response from Rory.

GREG (cont'd)

I mean, look at you! You're young, you're free. You can go anywhere, do anything you want. (beat) I kind of envy you, you know. Here I am, weighed down with all these grown-up responsibilities. Don't think I haven't dreamed once or twice of just picking up and taking off like you did. So help me understand why you would want to encumber yourself with the care of a sick old woman? You know? When you could be out chasing hot *young* women.

RORY

That *your* fantasy?

GREG

Then out chasing whatever your dream is.

RORY

Whatever my dream is, is my business. And as for going anywhere and doing anything, I've been doing that. Trust me, it's not all it's cracked up to be.

GREG

That still doesn't answer my question. Why would you want to be here with my mother?

RORY

I don't feel like I'm being encumbered. It's more like I'm being embraced.

GREG

What?

RORY

In the metaphorical sense! And why do you refer to her as a sick old woman? She's not sick...

GREG

You don't know everything about her. That's one of the...

RORY

...and she's not that old, not to me, anyway. Okay, she's older...

GREG

By about five decades!

RORY

...but that's not the same thing. Age is just a number, okay? Doesn't mean anything.

Greg looks over to Trish. She motions for him to continue.

GREG

So, okay, so maybe after kicking around the world for a while, you're a little burned out, you find yourself here, it's a cushy place to crash. Port in the storm, I get that. But like the kid that you are, you're only thinking about your own needs. And you can't see the harm you're doing. Even if you don't mean it.

RORY

What harm would that be?

GREG

Oh, come on! She gets used to having you around, doing things for her -- some of which by the way I find questionable, but never mind. The upshot is, sooner or later -- and it's probably going to be sooner -- she's going to need more care than you care to give. And you decide you've had enough R&R, and you take off.

RORY

Why do you keep thinking I'm going to suddenly take off? Is that what you'd do?

GREG

This isn't about me. And you can't do this indefinitely!

RORY

Says who? Okay, you're a businessman, right?. Let's be businesslike about it. You want me to sign a contract, says I'll stay? I can do that.

GREG

No, that's not what I mean.

RORY

Then *what*? You seem to want to be relieved of this "encumbrance," but when I offer to do that, you refuse.

GREG

Don't turn this around and make it my problem.

RORY

The problem is, Greg, you keep thinking this is a problem.

GREG

It is a problem!

RORY

No, it's not! Not to me. It's just life. And not for nothing, you're the one who already seems encumbered!

GREG

Yes! And that's appropriate for me! That's what happens when one becomes an adult. Which you haven't seemed to do yet.

RORY

You don't know anything about me. But like I said, if this is all so burdensome to you, why not hand it off to someone who is glad to do it?

GREG

First of all, because I don't trust you to do the right thing, and second, because it's not your responsibility to take care of my mother. It's mine.

RORY

But you don't want it! You don't want the responsibility! But you won't let anyone else take it. That's just fucked up.

Anger, hostility is escalating. They both realize it and try to pull back.

GREG

Look, I know what your life is like. My son went through the same thing...

RORY

Don't for a minute think I'm anything like him.

GREG

All I'm saying is you still think life is all fun and games. You have no obligations, no bills to pay. It's like you're on permanent vacation.

RORY

For your information, I've been supporting myself for the last six years.

GREG

That's very admirable, but you still only have yourself to look out for. Having to think about someone else is a whole different story.

RORY

I'm sorry if you think your life is so miserable and your burdens are so heavy that you want to run away from it all. Take it from one who did it, don't. I am not the spoiled slacker that your son is. If I have a problem, I figure it out for myself.

GREG

This is not about my son.

RORY

No, it's about me and Ev. You want to know why I'm here? Because she makes me feel wanted and welcome. She treats me with respect and she doesn't judge me. And it seems to me she deserves to be treated just the same. And frankly no one else seems to be doing that.

GREG

She's my mother, not yours! She shouldn't be depending on you, expecting you to...looking to you...

RORY

Oh shit! You're jealous!

He laughs in astonishment at the realization.

RORY (cont'd)

You're jealous that we get along and you don't.

GREG

That's ridiculous!

RORY

Oh geez, I'm sorry, Greg. Sometimes life just does not follow the script, does it? (to himself) Oh man! How did I not see that?

GREG

You don't know what you're talking about!

RORY

Ev told me how you two always had a hard time, even when you were a kid. You were never comfortable, she said.

GREG

She has no business telling you that!

RORY

Well, we're totally comfortable together. There's no drama, no tension. We have no expectations, we just let the other one be themselves and enjoy it for that. I know she needs help sometimes. And I'm happy to do it. And I can see myself being happy to do it for as long as she needs it.

GREG

All I can see is her ending up in the hospital or dead. Or you both getting arrested for god knows what. And I'm not about to let that happen!

(he turns back to Trish)

I tried your way, and see what happens? You satisfied now?

TRISH

Well done! You're a regular Bishop Tutu.

She turns abruptly and exits to the hallway.

GREG

(yelling towards the hallway door)

Don't you put this back on me.

(turning back to Rory)

I'm going home tomorrow, talking to my lawyer, having power of attorney drawn up. I'm taking charge of this mess before we have a real disaster on our hands.

RORY

Ev is not going to like it.

GREG

That's totally beside the point now. She can put up all the fuss she wants, but my mother is obviously not competent to make her own decisions any more.

He exits to the hallway.

Lights out.

ACT II SCENE 3

Lights up, mid-afternoon. Rory is pacing nervously. We hear sounds of a car in the driveway. The front door opens and Evelyn enters, carrying a large envelope. She turns back to the outside and waves.

EVELYN

Thanks for the ride! You and Patrice come by later for a beer!

She puts the envelope down on the table and looks slowly around, savoring her surroundings.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I do so love this place!

RORY

Where the hell have you been? I was worried!

EVELYN

And it's so peaceful now that we've got the place to ourselves again.

RORY

I woke up and you were gone! No note or anything. Where've you been?

EVELYN

Calm down! I was in town, taking care of some errands.

RORY

Listen, I think I may have done something bad. Really, really bad. I think I screwed everything up. I had a fight with Greg last night, after you went back to bed. I said everything I promised myself I wouldn't say. I think I'm responsible for...

EVELYN

For what?

RORY

They left this morning.

EVELYN

I know. I was up when they left.

RORY

Greg said he was going to talk to his lawyer about getting power of attorney. I'm really worried that...

EVELYN

Don't be! Everything's fine. Everything is just perfect.

She gives Rory a pat on the cheek and strolls onto the veranda. Rory follows her.

RORY

Listen to me!

Ignoring his panic, she takes his hand. She examines it, almost absent-mindedly, and strokes it gently, calming him down.

EVELYN

When Joe died, I felt like my life went on Pause. The way I knew myself before had completely changed and I wasn't sure what came next. I didn't know what kinds of choices or decisions I should make.

RORY

Please listen!

EVELYN

(not listening) So, I drifted along, like a leaf on a stream, letting the current take me. It was easy, even comforting in a way. And maybe that's what I needed then.

RORY

Ev, please...

EVELYN

But over time, without my even noticing it, I became a reflection of other people's expectations. Doing what everyone else thought was "appropriate for a woman of my age." The last couple of weeks have showed me just how much I have ceded control of my life to others. And I realized just how different their ideas are from mine about how I should live that life.

She holds his hand firmly, suddenly serious.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Well, that phase is over. It's time for *me* to be making the decisions about how I'm going to live my life. There's not that much of it left...

RORY

Don't say that!

EVELYN

...and I want to make sure I use all of it before it's gone. (beat) It's true, as I said, that I'm not "sick." But, I'm not entirely well, either. And even if you don't want to believe it, I am getting old.

RORY

You're only as old as you feel inside.

EVELYN

Well, my insides aren't feeling so hot these days. A lifetime's worth of wear and tear takes its toll. It slows me down and makes everything just a little harder.

RORY

You don't have to give in to it. I'll help you.

EVELYN

Great! What's your plan?

RORY

Um, we'll improvise. Like jazz. That's what it is. Like jazz.

She smiles and kisses him on the head.

EVELYN

That's a lovely idea. A little short on details, though.

RORY

I know, I'm still working on that part. Like what to do about Greg and his lawyer.

EVELYN

That part I've taken care of. I know how to deal with Greg. I know how his mind works and I'm one step ahead of him. About three steps, actually. This is what I've been trying to tell you.

RORY

What do you mean?

EVELYN

That business in town I mentioned? I was at *my* lawyer's office. Eustis Morgan, Jr. The son of the attorney who worked on the closing for this place. He took over his father's practice. I've known him since he was a kid, he's kind of like family. He's Parker's godfather, in fact. And like family *should*, he's been looking out for my interests over the years. And now he's helped me make some changes. Overdue changes, that I had been contemplating for some time.

She goes to the table and picks up the envelope, from which she pulls out a thick folder of legal-looking documents. She beckons Rory to sit next to her, which he does. She opens the folder and starts leafing slowly through the pages, pointing out things as she goes.

EVELYN (cont'd)

I moved my accounts, such as they are, to local banks, where Greg can't get at them. One thing St. Sebastian is very good at is helping people keep their assets out of other people's hands. And I put this property in trust and I made you the sole trustee and beneficiary. If Greg tries to dissolve the trust, the property goes to the nature preserve. The upshot of it all is, I get to live here for the rest of my life, unmolested -- more or less -- by Greg. And when I die, the house becomes yours. The rest of what I have goes to my grandkids.

RORY

What?? That's crazy! You've only known me a few weeks!

EVELYN

I thought you liked the place.

RORY

I love it! Right now I can't think of anywhere in the world I would rather be. But that's not the point! You have three kids, and I'm not one of them. All of them have a right to it ahead of me.

EVELYN

Two of them aren't the least bit interested, and the third one wants it for all the wrong reasons. And anyway, it's mine. I built this house and it will go to whomever I say.

Rory stands and paces, agitated and confused.

RORY

This is a crazy thing to do. You're giving Greg exactly the kind of ammunition he's looking for. He's going to fight this.

EVELYN

He might. But he won't win. And eventually he'll figure that out. Even after I'm gone, he won't be able to snatch the house back from you.

RORY

So, now what?

Evelyn stands and walks around the room, surveying it from various angles.

EVELYN

I think it's time paradise got a makeover, don't you? Now that we've moved the sofa, I can see that the rug's wearing out. And if we get a new rug, then we should probably paint. And then, well, the kitchen is in desperate need of an update. To be brutally honest, it's getting pretty shabby in there.

She walks to the sofa and leans on it.

EVELYN (cont'd)

And that internet thing -- don't fight me on this -- we should take care of that, too. That's what happens, you know.
(she pats the sofa)
You make one small change and it just cascades from there.

Rory looks slowly around the room.

RORY

So, what colors were you thinking of?

EVELYN

Not just me! This is a joint decision. After all, it's going to be yours pretty soon.

RORY

No! Not soon!

EVELYN

Okay, not soon. We can argue about colors tomorrow. Right now I feel like celebrating! Let's make ourselves a blowout feast tonight! We need to do a serious shop. First, Bob's Liquors, then we'll hit the stalls at the harbor. You want crabs? I'm thinking crabs. All the best ones are usually gone by now but if we go to Henry's, he usually keeps a few aside for favorite customers.

She gets herself together to go out.
Rory hesitates. "So What" begins to play softly.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Come on! Desmond was about to do the lawn, he can run us into town. I invited him and Patrice over for a beer later. He likes you, you know. He's very glad you're here.

Evelyn heads for the door. Rory follows slowly.

RORY

But what about Greg?

EVELYN

Fuck him! Come on, let's go. I hear some crabs calling our names.

She pulls him out the door. As she exits.

EVELYN (cont'd)

(as she exits)

How do you feel about spending Christmas in France?

He closes it behind him. "So What" builds and fades out.

THE END

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