

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 middle-aged man is sitting at a desk in the office - RICHARD CRENSHAW. We can't help but sense that HE 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 an attractive one nonetheless.

For now, CRENSHAW is lying back in a chair in front of the desk and staring at the office door like a panther lying in wait for HIS prey. A pause ensues, as HE waits for something. Suddenly, a large smile lights on HIS 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.

CRENSHAW

(Shooting up from HIS chair.)  
I suppose I should stand in the presence of a lady.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY looks CRENshaw  
over coldly.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

You must be Richard Crenshaw.

CRENSHAW

You must be Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

At 4am, I'm not so sure. You must be insane to schedule a  
meeting with me at this goddamn hour - insane or stupid. My  
money's on both - and I love my money.

CRENSHAW smiles broadly and indicates  
the chair - "care to sit?" MRS.  
PAMBECK-O'MALLEY cautiously sits and  
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

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

In point of fact, 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  
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. It must be the humanitarian in me to care so deeply for the most deficient among us. Fifty-eight percent of our residents suffer from a severe form of dementia.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Congratulations.

CRENSHAW

You came alone, I trust.

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

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, well, I trust I can convince you otherwise, as I'm really quite a nice fellow. I'm not the sort of person who would abandon his father at an old people's home and never visit him - not even on Thanksgiving. I believe you fit snugly into that particular category of persons. I was quite saddened last year - we all were - by the sight of your father sitting alone in his wheelchair with no one to spoon out his pecan pie.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

My father doesn't like pecan pie.

CRENSHAW

(Cheekily.)

I see you do remember some things about him... how gratifying! Alas, the staff and I felt very sorry for your dear daddy and spoke at length about the kind of daughter who would leave her

CRENSHAW (CONT)

father to rot in an underfunded nursing 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, it seems.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

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

I don't see why that's your business.

CRENSHAW

I only mention it 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... three years? Long enough for, let me see... Three Christmases. Three Easters. Three 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

Are you trying to make me feel guilty?

CRENSHAW is about to protest...

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 while I struck out on my own and made it big.

CRENSHAW

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 two years ago on our fourth wedding anniversary. He was the most obliging of the three.

CRENSHAW

One of the best, eh?

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

(Showing off HER jewelry.)

One of the brightest.

CRENSHAW

(Picking up and examining a newspaper.)

Alas, though, I fear even the brightest jewels will fade if you haven't money to polish them. I see that complications have arisen following your last husband's departure from this Earth. Your stepchildren are challenging his will rather fiercely. 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 silk kimonos? 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 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, abounding in a suffocating confidence.

CRENSHAW

I have a proposition for you.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Then you should damn well propose it.

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

Screw you.

CRENSHAW

Ah, you see, you were born into poverty - I was right! You still act like the little Irish urchin with fists poised for a back-alley brawl. I bet you even had a boy-fondling priest who extorted you to be a better person in the eyes of God. 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?

(A beat.)

I trust you want to keep it that way?

CRENSHAW pauses for dramatic effect.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY impatiently gestures for 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 up those houses with his lifeline around your neck.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Is this your way of announcing a rise in prices?

CRENSHAW

Hardly - I'm already overcharging you.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

Damn straight.

CRENSHAW

But there is hope.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY

About your prices?

CRENSHAW

About your future - and your houses.

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

You're trying to bullshit me.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

CRENSHAW

(Gesturing to the conference room door.)  
Keep your ear to the door and listen.

MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY slowly rises and exits into the conference room.

CRENSHAW goes to the office door and unlocks it.

CRENSHAW

Good morning, Mr. Masterson.

A marble tower of a man - FENNO MASTERSON - is standing in the doorframe. HE is aged around 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.

MASTERSON

(Barely a nod at HIM.)  
Crenshaw.

CRENSHAW

Please - my friends call me "Richard."

MASTERSON

I am not a friend.

CRENSHAW

That's most distressing.

MASTERSON

I am a business partner.

CRENSHAW

Well, 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 your dear wife?

MASTERSON

Illyria is doing as well as can be expected.

CRENSHAW

Alas, she must be so 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 intelligent conversation.

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.

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

Indeed, yes - that old winged chariot.

MASTERSON

You assured me he was in adequate health.

CRENSHAW

Ah, well, when it comes to the elderly, I fear that assurance is only as sure as the fickleness of fate. I cannot put a lifetime warranty on our little arrangements - though, if I could, I would have them live forever. I'm not Oreck and these...

CRENSHAW (CONT)

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

MASTERSON glares at CRENshaw in evident frustration. An uncomfortable silence descends upon the room.

CRENSHAW

(Rising from HIS chair.)  
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 in 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 three 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 opted to be frozen as well.

(Reading.)  
Mr. O'Malley has been suffering from the advanced stages of Alzheimer's 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.

CRENSHAW (CONT)

(To MASTERSON.)

In fact, he is not unlike my cocker spaniel.

MASTERSON

(Bristling.)

You call this man here "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

Alas, it is an occasional result of Alzheimer's, for those with a serious diagnosis.

MASTERSON

Are you serious?

CRENSHAW

Yes - completely.

MASTERSON

Illyria wouldn't even be able to talk to him.

CRENSHAW

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

MASTERSON

Give me another option.

CRENSHAW

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

MASTERSON

There are no more?

CRENSHAW

There are - but not with "understanding" relatives. I'm sure you can appreciate that I pull from a rather limited sourcing pool. It tends to be a bit of a challenge finding someone willing to part with their elderly father for a handsome cash prize. I'm afraid that Mr. O'Malley is the only option I have for you right now and likely will remain so for some time.

(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.

MASTERSON

What are we talking about - price-wise?

CRENSHAW

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

(Catching a glare from MASTERSON.)  
...but, then again, I do so 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

I expect the same arrangement in regards to medical payment.

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

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

MASTERSON

And this gentleman's appearance?

CRENSHAW

He has white hair, thin - receding hairline, stage three - about 130 pounds. He's a little shorter than your late 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're sure Mr. O'Malley's daughter would be discrete.

CRENSHAW

She would be if she wanted her checks - which she would.

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 - Mr. 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 testimony.

MASTERSON makes to retort, but then retreats into a momentary silence.

MASTERSON

I need to think about it.

MASTERSON rises, as does CRENshaw.

CRENSHAW

Let me show you out.

MASTERSON

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

MASTERSON opens the office door and exits swiftly.

CRENSHAW

Give my regards to your darling wife.

CRENSHAW waits a moment ("Is he gone?") and then closes the office door.

CRENSHAW

(Calling to the conference room.)  
Come out, Mrs. Pambeck-O'Malley.

The conference room door opens. MRS. PAMBECK-O'MALLEY enters. CRENshaw smiles at HER and asks for an opinion with HIS eyes. SHE responds with a smile that evidently answers the question.

The LIGHTS fall.

END of ACT ONE, SCENE ONE.

ACT ONE  
SCENE TWO

TIME: 8:00PM  
One Month Later

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

The house before us is a very pristine and elegant-looking place. The room itself is dusky in lighting, reflective of the cold night outside. We notice most prominently a large number of movie posters on the back wall with the stage name "Illyria Swan" generously advertised on them. The posters brandish the pretty face of an ingénue from some 20 years past.

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 as if the man himself 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, expecting someone to enter.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

MASTERSON

Come in.

The front door opens and 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.

JAYSEN

You damn idiot.

MASTERSON

Hello to you, too.

JAYSEN

"Come in?" You didn't even ask me who I am.

MASTERSON

I know who you are, and it's frightening enough.

JAYSEN

Wrong, Fenno - you never know who anyone is. Damn it, you haven't learned a goddamn thing from me. You're still a little virgin prancing around Sunnybrook Farm with your pigtails. 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

Fortunately for you, I've never known better.

JAYSEN

Exactly, so you need to trust me on this - on everything. You trust me on the career bullshit, but not on this. I've hardly even met this Crenshaw creep, but I tell you, it's all no bueno. You're going to wind up fucking yourself in the end - and, no, that's not as kinky as it sounds. Listen, back when I was in the police force...

MASTERSON

You should be the one running for office - you like the speeches.

JAYSEN

Fine then - I'll shut up.

MASTERSON

Yes, that would be preferred.

JAYSEN

(Mockingly?)

Besides, you must be anxious to see your new father-in-law.

MASTERSON

("Shut up.")

Just bring him in.

JAYSEN

(Looking around.)

Where's Illy?

MASTERSON

Upstairs.

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

JAYSEN

Heeeeeeeere's Johnny.

JAYSEN exits and re-enters again pushing a wheelchair in front of HIM. The wheelchair contains an emaciated skeleton of skin and bones and two holes that appear to resemble eyes. This skeleton is apparently living and is named PATRICK O'MALLEY (the OLD MAN). 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.

JAYSEN

(Indicating the OLD MAN.)  
He's all yours now.

MASTERSON approaches the OLD MAN and tenderly takes HIS hand.

MASTERSON

Hello, Mr. O'Malley. My name is Fenno Masterson. You may remember we met briefly a few weeks back at Shady Gables.

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

MASTERSON

I know this must be very confusing for you. My associate, 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 Hollywood. 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 - speechless, but at least coherent. This man can't even process anything I'm saying!

JAYSEN hurriedly gestures behind MASTERSON towards the staircase. ILLYRIA SWAN (ILLY) 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.

JAYSEN

Evening, Mrs. Masterson.

MASTERSON

Why, Illy, you're up.

ILLY

Yes... I think.

MASTERSON

I thought you were asleep.

ILLY

The sleeping pills don't work anymore. I've used them so often that my nerves barely notice them at all. All I want to do is sleep now. I don't like being awake when everything is so empty. I'm used to his being there in the room 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, awkward pause hangs in the air. 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

He looks like my father.

MASTERSON

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, Illy, 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.

MASTERSON

("Explaining.")

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

ILLY nods carefully - 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

Is there anything I could get you?

The OLD MAN looks back at ILLY. She searches HIS face for some sign of life. We sense a storm brewing up inside of HER.

ILLY

(To MASTERSON, with hushed franticness.)  
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...

MASTERSON

Didn't say what?

ILLY

You didn't say he couldn't understand.

MASTERSON

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

ILLY

He can't understand what I'm saying.

MASTERSON

You don't know that's true.

ILLY

(Getting very agitated.)

I can tell by his eyes. They don't say anything to me.

MASTERSON

Yes, but...

ILLY

I want Papa back.

MASTERSON

What do you mean?

ILLY

The six weeks have been unbearable.

MASTERSON

That man was Mr. Dominguez, not your father.

ILLY

He was my father to me and I want him back.

MASTERSON

You know that's not possible.

ILLY

I want him back. I want Mr. Grayson. I want Mr. Stervansky. I want... I want...

MASTERSON

Please, Illy, try to be calm.

ILLY

It seems everyone I touch dies!

MASTERSON moves towards HER, but ILLY backs away.

ILLY

Don't, Fenn - don't - or you may die, too! I should just sit on my bed all day and stare out the window. At least that way I won't be able to murder anything.

MASTERSON

For God's sake, Illy, stop it!

ILLY

You'd all be better off if I were dead!

MASTERSON

I shouldn't have brought him here.

ILLY

I didn't say that I didn't want him.

MASTERSON

Then you need to give him a chance to adjust and then...

ILLY

Then he'll die, too.

MASTERSON

You shouldn't say that.

ILLY

He'll die and I'll be all alone again.

MASTERSON

You're never "all alone," Illy.

ILLY

I can't handle this right now.

MASTERSON

Then maybe you should rest.

ILLY

Rest? All I ever do now is... is...

MASTERSON

Have you taken your medicine?

ILLY

That, too!

MASTERSON

You're too upset right now.

ILLY

That's what you always say!

MASTERSON

We should talk about this later.

ILLY

(Shrilly.)

Because I can't deal with this?!

MASTERSON

(Bursting out - having had enough.)  
No, Illy - because I can't!

A pin-drop pause descends upon the room. MASTERSON registers a certain desperate fierceness in HIS eyes. ILLY notices this and immediately backs down in regret.

ILLY

You're right, Fenn - I shouldn't be so upset... and so selfish.  
I know you do so much for me.

MASTERSON

I'll put Mr. O'Malley to bed.

ILLY slowly and uncertainly nods HER head. MASTERSON moves to take HER by the arm, but ILLY pulls away.

ILLY

I can get upstairs myself... thank you.

MASTERSON

I'll be up soon, then.

ILLY unsteadily walks to the stairs and begins to climb... but then turns again. SHE stares at the OLD MAN for a moment. SHE then sighs heavily and exits up the stairs. We can sense both MASTERSON and JAYSEN exhale loudly in relief. MASTERSON turns and notices that the OLD MAN is lying back in the wheelchair with HIS eyes closed.

MASTERSON

Oh, my God... is he... is he...?

JAYSEN

(Feeling the OLD MAN'S pulse.)  
You guessed it.

MASTERSON

Dead?

JAYSEN

Asleep.

MASTERSON glares.

MASTERSON

We have to get him up to bed.

JAYSEN

No need - the chairback can be relaxed.

JAYSEN releases the chairback slowly,  
until the OLD MAN is reclining. HE  
snores loudly, as JAYSEN and MASTERSON  
look on.

JAYSEN

(Mockingly.)  
"To sleep, perchance to dream."

MASTERSON

That seems like a damn good idea to me.

JAYSEN

Yeah, well, whose fault is that exactly?

MASTERSON

It's mine - all mine - is that what you want me to say?

JAYSEN

It's a start. I'm just thrilled you've made a doctor out of me.  
My mother would have been so proud.

MASTERSON

(Wanting HIM to leave.)  
I need to go to bed. I was up all night.

JAYSEN

Sweet dreams - but I need to know what time to be here tomorrow.  
We have to go over the speech you're giving on Capitol Hill. You  
flopped like a fish during the last run-through. If I questioned  
you, I'd have had you confessing to Caesar's murder.

MASTERSON

Come after noon, but you need to leave by four. Those people  
from the Governor's office are coming over to discuss the zoning  
issues at our new Springfield office. I don't think your  
presence would help to promote my case for legality.

JAYSEN

Now I know how the other woman feels.

MASTERSON

I think we call that "poetic justice."

JAYSEN

Speaking of justice, when is this whole thing with your wife and  
the old men going to end?

MASTERSON

How can I tell Illy "no more?"

JAYSEN

You start by opening your mouth.

MASTERSON

It's not that easy and you know it.

JAYSEN

I know you, Feno - too goddamn well. You're a good guy and I like that. That's why I've been with you all these years. I'm not as much of a whore as you think I am. I do have standards. It's that old policeman who still lives inside me. I know you're worried about your wife after the breakdown - but you know what? This isn't helping. This is screwed up. It'll blow up in your face one day - and hers to boot - and...

MASTERSON

I'm not going to send Illy away to some institution where she'll be put in a cell and patted on the head like a life-sized doll!

JAYSEN

Got it, so you'll just wait until this newest papa dies and your wife spirals into yet another mental crisis.

MASTERSON

Believe me, I'll buy a rainforest to keep him breathing.

JAYSEN

You would, too, you son of a bitch - but, damn it, he's still going to die and she's still going to feel it.

(Pointing in the direction of ILLYRIA's exit.)  
One of these days, you'll cause her to crack!

MASTERSON opens the front door and gestures JAYSEN out.

MASTERSON

Goodnight.

JAYSEN

That's your opinion.

JAYSEN exits, leaving a loud pause behind HIM. MASTERSON sighs and shakes HIS head as if trying to throw unwanted thoughts out of HIS mind. HE walks back into the room and freezes upon seeing the OLD MAN. MASTERSON ponders HIM for a moment and then walks to the side of the room... CLICK! HE turns off the lights and the room goes black.

MASTERSON walks to the couch and sits down for a moment. HE grabs a remote control from the coffee table and

clicks it in our direction. A LIGHT from a TV glares on HIS face and a CACOPHONY sounds - some news program. Perhaps the noise will drown out any unwanted thoughts. MASTERSON watches the screen for a moment and then loosens his collar. HE rises and exits into the kitchen.

A long pause descends.

We notice a small head peek out from the upstairs area - ILLY. SHE examines the scene briefly and notices that MASTERSON is nowhere to be found. It appears that ILLY weighs options in HER mind initially - but then reaches a conclusion. SHE slowly tiptoes down the stairs - very carefully, very softly. SHE reaches the end of the staircase and looks again towards the kitchen. SHE then tiptoes over to the OLD MAN in the wheelchair. MASTERSON enters from the kitchen with a glass of wine in hand and freezes.

ILLY takes a moment to stare at the OLD MAN. HE appears to be sleeping peacefully in the wheelchair. MASTERSON sees the moment is "private" and diplomatically exits back into the kitchen. ILLY turns towards the kitchen (a feeling SHE is being watched?) but MASTERSON has already disappeared. SHE stares back at the OLD MAN as if afraid to touch HIM or even to register HIS presence. SHE stares... and stares... and stares... for a seeming eternity. The OLD MAN twitches slightly. ILLY backs away from HIM in fright - but no matter. The OLD MAN doesn't wake up. HE is still fast asleep. ILLY ponders HIM again and slowly reaches out to touch HIM lightly on the shoulder. SHE keeps her hand positioned on HIS shoulder and does not take it off.

A FAINT SOUND of VOICES begins to be heard from the distance. ILLY looks up from her concentration and hears the VOICES. SHE seems confused by them at first and even looks at the OLD MAN as if HE himself were causing the sounds - but no. The VOICES grow and grow and

grow in volume. THEY are echoic and distant - a vague memory.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

You're crazy - crazy and stupid.

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

You need to really think this through.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE

I have thought it through and I'm leaving next Thursday!

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

Like hell you are, you damn stupid girl! Do you know what's goin' to happen to you out there? Nothin'! Nothin' is going to happen to you! You're living in a fairytale land if you think it ain't so. I don't give a damn what that snake oil salesman is tellin' you about the movies. You'll go out to California and you'll become a waitress or a bagger or some third-rate slut doin' tricks on the corner! Just don't think you'll be comin' back here to do your beggin'!

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

Listen, Illy - listen to your mama.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't beg, Stan! You're not the one who's seventeen!

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE

You're both wrong! You don't have a damn clue what I need!

The SOUND of a SLAP.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't you talk to your mama like that!

The SOUND of more SLAPS - SLAP, SLAP, SLAP!

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE

Mama, stop!

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

Stop it, Phyllis!

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

No daughter of mine is goin' to talk like that!

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

I think she just needs some... some...

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

Spit it out.

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

Some encouragement.

OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

You're as much of an idiot as she is!

The YOUNG GIRL begins to cry.

OLDER MAN'S VOICE

Don't cry, Illy. Your mother didn't mean to hit you. She's just scared for you. She wants to make sure you'll be all right.

(A beat.)

Did you hear me, Illy? Did you?

ILLY can take no more and covers HER ears. The VOICES die a sudden death. Silence. A dead pause descends upon the stage. ILLY returns to looking back at the OLD MAN. SHE has a kind of loving sorrow in HER eyes. SHE then bends down and kisses HIM on the forehead.

ILLY

Goodnight, Mr. O'Malley.

ILLY sighs forlornly and begins to walk towards the staircase, when...

OLD MAN

Goodnight.

The VOICE is eerily raspy - raspy and husky. ILLY immediately freezes in mid-step and turns. The OLD MAN is sitting upright in the wheelchair and staring at HER brightly and fiercely like an eagle on a perch. ILLY looks at HIM for a moment in shock. The OLD MAN looks back at HER just as stalwartly.

ILLY

M... Mr. O'Malley?

The OLD MAN stares and doesn't respond.

ILLY

You... you're speaking.

The OLD MAN recoils away from HER in fear.

OLD MAN

Who are you?

ILLY

Who am I?

OLD MAN

I don't know who you are.

ILLY

I'm... I'm Fenn's wife.

OLD MAN

Who's Fenn?

ILLY

He's the man who took you away from Shady Gables.

OLD MAN

(Searching HIS mind for a memory.)  
Shady Gables?

ILLY

The nursing home.

OLD MAN

You mean... Crenshaw?

ILLY

Mr. Crenshaw is the owner.

OLD MAN

(Looking around.)  
Where am I now?

ILLY

You're in our house.

OLD MAN

"Our?"

ILLY

Yes - Fenn and me. You're here so we can take care of you.

OLD MAN

You're lying to me.

ILLY

I'm... I'm what?

OLD MAN

You're lying to me.

ILLY

I'm not lying.

OLD MAN  
(Searching frantically.)  
Where is she?!

ILLY  
Where is who?

OLD MAN  
My daughter!

ILLY  
I... I don't know, but...

OLD MAN  
(Desperately.)  
I don't ever want to see her again!

ILLY  
(Flabbergasted.)  
Oh, but... but...

OLD MAN  
(Starting to cry.)  
I feel so... so lost!

ILLY  
Mr. O'Malley, what's wrong?!

OLD MAN  
She's gone!

ILLY  
Your daughter?

OLD MAN  
My wife!

ILLY  
Your wife?

OLD MAN  
She's dead!

ILLY  
Oh, dear...

OLD MAN  
She's dead because of her!

ILLY  
Because of whom?

OLD MAN  
My daughter!

ILLY

Your daughter?

OLD MAN

She killed her!

ILLY

She killed her!?

OLD MAN

She... she killed my wife!!

ILLY

Fenn! Fenn!!

MASTERSON rushes in from the kitchen  
with the wine glass and a cellphone.

MASTERSON

What is it? What's wrong?

ILLY

Mr. O'Malley! He spoke to me!

MASTERSON

What do you mean - "he spoke?"

ILLY

He spoke! He talked! I swear! He... he...

MASTERSON

That's not possible.

ILLY

You didn't hear him?!

MASTERSON

I was in the garden talking on my phone.

ILLY

Yes, but you must have heard his voice!

MASTERSON

(Gesturing to the TV.)  
I heard a voice, yes, but it was on the TV.

ILLY growls angrily, grabs the remote  
control, and turns off the TV.

ILLY

That voice wasn't on the TV!

MASTERSON

Please, Illy, you need to sit down and...

ILLY

He was rambling and he was talking about his daughter and his wife. He seems to be saying that his wife is dead and that his daughter is responsible and... and...

(Pointing at the OLD MAN.)

Look at how terrified he looks!

MASTERSON

That's because you're shouting.

ILLY

It's because of his wife and his daughter and...

MASTERSON

Maybe you should sit.

ILLY

I'm not a dog, Fenn!

MASTERSON

You're excited, Illy.

ILLY runs over to the OLD MAN.

ILLY

Please, Mr. O'Malley - tell Fenn about your wife and daughter!

The OLD MAN looks blandly and cluelessly at ILLY.

ILLY

Oh, but you must... please!

The OLD MAN looks back and forth - completely lost.

ILLY

(To MASTERSON.)  
He did speak - he did!

MASTERSON

Maybe you were dreaming.

ILLY

You... you don't believe me.

MASTERSON

Of course, I do, but... let's talk about this tomorrow. Perhaps Mr. O'Malley is a little disoriented after his long day.

MASTERSON smiles gently (but with veiled concern) at ILLY. ILLY stares at HIM and clearly wants to retort, but thinks better of it. HER face freezes into a gargoyle-like frown of frustration. MASTERSON gestures for HER to go upstairs, but ILLY turns away in defiance.

ILLY

I want to be down here with Mr. O'Malley tonight.

MASTERSON

Down here? But why?

ILLY

I want to make sure he's all right.

MASTERSON

We could bring Mr. O'Malley upstairs.

ILLY

He's asleep again and I don't want him disturbed.

MASTERSON looks towards the OLD MAN, who has indeed fallen asleep.

MASTERSON

All right, Illy - I'll bring down some blankets and some...

ILLY

I'll be all right.

MASTERSON

Are you sure?

ILLY nods cryptically. MASTERSON sighs, kisses HER on the forehead, and heads for the stairs - but just before HE is about to ascend them...

ILLY

He spoke.

MASTERSON nods and exits up the staircase. A pause ensues. ILLY suddenly turns and moves to say something - but no use. MASTERSON is already gone. ILLY frowns to HERSELF and looks at the sleeping OLD MAN. ILLY ponders HIM for a moment and then suddenly feels defiance flood over HER body. SHE rushes over to the OLD MAN and shakes HIM gently.

ILLY

(A frantic whisper.)

Mr. O'Malley?

No response.

ILLY

He's gone - you can talk now.

Still no response.

ILLY

I'm still here, Mr. O'Malley... are you?

ILLY waits a moment - but no change. SHE closes HER eyes in pain and wonders if the OLD MAN ever really spoke at all. ILLY looks at the OLD MAN lovingly again and suddenly feels a chill run through HER body. SHE slowly sits on the floor by the wheelchair and wraps herself in the overhanging portion of the OLD MAN's blanket. SHE leans HER body up against the OLD MAN's legs and closes HER eyes.

The LIGHTS fall.

END of ACT ONE, SCENE TWO.