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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Mauritius

by Theresa Rebeck

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Originally produced in New York by the Manhattan Theatre Club,
Lynn Meadow, Artistic Director, Barry Grove Executive Producer,
Daniel Sullivan, Acting Artistic Director
2007-2008 Season at the Biltmore Theatre on September 13, 2007

The following credit shall also appear at the bottom of the title page of the program for each production of the play:

Mauritius was developed at the Lark Play Development Center,
New York City
Mauritius was originally produced by
the Huntington Theatre Company, Boston,
Nicholas Martin, Artistic Director/Michael Maso, Managing Director

MAURITIUS had its world premier at the Boston Center for the Arts on October 6th, 2006. The production was directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman with set design by Eugene Lee. Miranda Hoffman was the costume designer, Paul Whitaker was the lighting designer, and Martin Desjardins was both sound designer and composer. Rick Sordelet served as the production's fight director. The production stage manager was Stephen Kaus with assistant stage manager, Maureen Lane. The cast was as follows:

JACKIE . . . . . Marin Ireland
PHILIP . . . . . Robert Dorfman
DENNIS . . . . . Michael Aronov
STERLING . . . . . James Gale
MARY . . . . . Laura Latreille

MAURITIUS had its world New York premier at the Biltmore Theatre on October 4th, 2007. The production was directed by Doug Hughes with set design by John Lee Beatty, lighting design by Paul Gallo, costume design by Catherine Zuber, original music and sound design by David Van Tieghem. The Stage Manager was Elizabeth Moloney. The cast was as follows:

JACKIE . . . . . Alison Pill
PHILIP . . . . . Dylan Baker
DENNIS . . . . . Bobby Cannavale
STERLING . . . . . F. Murray Abraham
MARY . . . . . Katie Finneran

CHARACTERS

JACKIE
PHILIP
DENNIS
STERLING
MARY

ACT 1

Scene 1

(*A shop.* **JACKIE** *stands in light, holding a book.* **PHILIP** *at the counter, reading a book. There is someone in the corner of the room, reading a newspaper.*)

JACKIE. Can you, excuse me, I was wondering, I need someone to look at this. I'm not sure what it is. It's quite old, and my understanding is that it could be, you know, someone told me that it was maybe worth a lot of money. I don't actually, I mean, it's mine, it is mine, but I don't know a lot about it.

(*Ignoring her,* **PHILIP** *picks his nose.*)

So they said that you could maybe look at it, that you have some expertise in this area and that actually you're really knowledgeable and you would be the person to ask.

(*beat*)

It's stamps.

(*She opens the book, to show him.*)

I know a lot of people collect stamps, I never did, but I know that it is a popular hobby with some people. Not just nerds, either, normal – oh. Sorry. Sorry.

(*beat*)

It's mine to sell, though. I mean, I do own it. It's been in our family for a long time, there's some, in there, eighteen-something. Which, I have no idea if they're real, I guess they could be fake. With my luck they probably are fake, but I'm trying not to, I'm trying, actually, to be positive, although I actually don't judge myself for

being negative more or less most of the time. Not that I'm defending negativity. And it's not like I think the stamps are fake, either. I don't think they are. They're real. No question. At all. That's so.... Anyway.

(*She nods. A beat.*)

PHILIP. Why do you think that?

JACKIE. What? Oh. Sorry. Sorry! What?

PHILIP. You said you don't think the stamps are forgeries, but you also admit that you don't know anything about stamps. So what makes you think your stamps are authentic?

JACKIE. I don't, uh –

PHILIP. Does this look like Antiques Roadshow to you? Do you want to be on television?

JACKIE. No, no, of course, I –

PHILIP. Do I know you?

JACKIE. No, But they –

PHILIP. They, they who?

JACKIE. Who?

PHILIP. Yes, "who?"

JACKIE. Well, you know, people –

PHILIP. People, what people?

JACKIE. (*flustered*) I talked to this person, this person, in this store –

PHILIP. You talked to a person in a store?

JACKIE. Yes, who said –

PHILIP. But you don't know who this person is?

JACKIE. Yes! I mean, I don't know his name.

PHILIP. Ah, that person!

(*The newspaper shifts. In the corner,* **DENNIS** *appears from behind the paper. He watches.*)

JACKIE. Okay. Could you –

PHILIP. Could I what? I'm working here. Do I know you?

JACKIE. This guy, in this store –

PHILIP. What store?

JACKIE. It was, I was there buying something else. And they were also, it was also a a, stamp store, and...

PHILIP. A stamp store.

JACKIE. Yes, it was for stamps and things like comic books, and, and Yugioh cards...

PHILIP. Is that what you were buying? Yugioh cards?

JACKIE. No. I was buying... a comic book.

(*She fades, depressed now.*)

PHILIP. Ah.

JACKIE. He's always, really, pretty nice to me. He said to call you.

PHILIP. The nice person in the Yugioh store said he would not look at your stamps, is that what he said?

JACKIE. He said –

PHILIP. It doesn't matter what he said. I will not look at your stamps, either.

JACKIE. Okay. Sure, okay.

(*beat*)

I mean, I just –

PHILIP. Thank you.

(*A beat.*)

JACKIE. (*a small flare of anger*) Okay, fine. That's fine, I don't. You know, these things are worth a lot. They are like, a treasure, they're like – you know. I'm just telling you. Okay?

PHILIP. If you know what they're worth, then why are you asking me?

JACKIE. Because I... need help.

(*She stands there for a moment, suddenly fighting back tears.* **PHILIP** *stares at her. She takes back her book.*)

DENNIS. I'll look at it.

JACKIE. Oh. Can you?

PHILIP. No, actually, he can't. He doesn't work here.

DENNIS. She needs somebody to look at it, Philip. What's the big deal?

PHILIP. The "big deal" maybe would be the fact that you are utterly unqualified.

DENNIS. Then why don't you look at it? You're not doing anything.

PHILIP. In fact I am doing something.

DENNIS. What?

PHILIP. I don't have to justify my actions to you.

DENNIS. "Justify your actions," stop being such an asshole and look at her stamps!

PHILIP. Listen. I tolerate you. I *tolerate* you. But if you think that means you have rights here –

JACKIE. It's okay, I can –

DENNIS. He's not doing anything, he'll look at it. Just look at it!

PHILIP. Fine!

(*beat*)

I'll look at it.

(*He gestures to her. Perplexed, she takes the album to the desk and sets it down. She waits. He continues to read his book. He turns a page. She watches him, more and more anxious and annoyed.*)

JACKIE. Are you going to...

PHILIP. I said I would look at it. You need to leave it.

JACKIE. You want me to –

PHILIP. My fee is two percent of the net worth, or two thousand dollars.

JACKIE. You want two thousand dollars just to look at it?

PHILIP. I am looking at it now. Looking is for free. Using thirty-seven years of experience and expertise to evaluate the specific worth of your property costs two thousand dollars.

JACKIE. I didn't, I didn't, um – I don't have two thousand dollars.

PHILIP. Well, that's a problem then, isn't it?

(**DENNIS** *stands, goes to the counter.*)

DENNIS. Philip, you know, you can be a real jerk. I will look at it.

PHILIP. That would be very useful to her if you actually knew anything.

DENNIS. I know plenty.

JACKIE. I just need to know, to, I just, because if it is worth something, then if I sold it –

DENNIS. Totally, I get it. People do this all the time. He's supposed to do it, but he's a little, don't worry about him. I'll look at it for you.

(*He starts to page through it.*)

PHILIP. This is not in any way a professional evaluation.

DENNIS. Relax, would you? You're not going to help her, what's the big deal?

JACKIE. How much, uh –

DENNIS. Nothing. This is free.

JACKIE. Great.

PHILIP. I cannot vouch for this man. He knows next to nothing.

DENNIS. Wow, look at this. Where'd you get this?

JACKIE. My mom had it. It's been in our family.

DENNIS. She's got an inverted Jenny, Phil. It's a little bit of a mess, the colors are compromised, unfortunately, by what looks like water damage, see this line here? That's not good. But it's a significant stamp.

JACKIE. Is it worth anything, even with the...

DENNIS. Hard to say. Maybe three thousand?

JACKIE. Dollars? Three thousand –

PHILIP. (*sneering*) An inverted Jenny. There are so many forgeries floating around out there people are starting to use them to mail in their absentee ballots. Besides which how would you know the difference? Tell me what the difference is. You can't because you don't know.

DENNIS. She's got some nice stuff here, Phil. Couple of Zepplins. These are nice stamps.

JACKIE. Three thousand dollars? For one stamp?

DENNIS. What's your name?

JACKIE. Jackie.

DENNIS. You have some lovely stamps here, Jackie. This is a nice collection.

JACKIE. It belonged to a relative. He's dead now.

DENNIS. Well, this is a beautiful collection, he was an artist.

PHILIP. (*aghast at this bullshit*) Oh my god.

DENNIS. What do you care, Philip? She asked, I'm telling her. It's a shame to sell this, Jackie, I hope you have a good reason.

JACKIE. Well, I, you know, yes I do. I have a really good reason.

DENNIS. You want to sell the whole thing together or break it up?

JACKIE. Which is worth more?

DENNIS. Well, it depends on different, you know, different...

(*He stops paging, stares at one of the pages.*)

JACKIE. Whichever you think is better.

PHILIP. He is not qualified to give you anything resembling a legitimate estimate. This man is not a philatelist. He is not an employee of this store, this store does not endorse anything he has to say. I barely know him. He is an acquaintance, at best.

DENNIS. (*looking at* **JACKIE**) Where did you get this?

JACKIE. I told you my... what?

(*She watches him, alert now. He is staring at a page.*)

JACKIE. (*continuing*) What? Is it worth something?

PHILIP. (*annoyed*) This is ludicrous. Let me, let me, he doesn't –

(**PHILIP** *reaches over to take the book.* **DENNIS** *slams the book shut before he can.*)

DENNIS. (*friendly*) This is a nice collection. You got a few nice things, it's okay.

JACKIE. Yeah but is it...

DENNIS. No, it's nice, it's a nice collection. Like he said I'm not really an expert. That one stamp, it's a good stamp, the inverted Jenny is rare and a lot of people are looking for them? But yours isn't really in terrific shape. Besides, unfortunately he is right about those forgeries. There were a whole mess of forgeries that hit the market in the eighties, that's more than likely what your stamp is.

PHILIP. As if you know anything about forgeries.

DENNIS. You were right. There's not a lot here, for you, Phil. For her, this is I'm sure a treasure. Your relative had a lovely collection. But in his terms, it's not worth anything. You should take it home.

JACKIE. He said, but he said you don't know anything.

DENNIS. I know a lot.

JACKIE. He said –

DENNIS. (*gentle*) Go home.

(*He gives her her book. Blackout.*)

Scene 2

(**DENNIS** *and* **STERLING**, *in a coffee shop.*)

STERLING. I don't believe you.

DENNIS. I saw it.

STERLING. You saw it.

DENNIS. Yes. I touched it.

STERLING. You touched it.

DENNIS. (*firm*) Yes I did.

STERLING. I don't believe you.

DENNIS. I don't care if you believe me or not. I half don't believe it myself.

(*They think for a moment.*)

STERLING. It's a fake.

DENNIS. It's not a fake.

STERLING. You only saw it for a second.

DENNIS. He was right over my shoulder! What was I supposed to do?

STERLING. Shit. Fuck. I don't believe you.

DENNIS. Fuck you.

(*Beat.*)

STERLING. So this person just walked in, opened a book, and showed it to you.

DENNIS. Yes!

STERLING. What kind of shape was it in?

DENNIS. Uncanceled, It's mounted on one of those old Dennison things, the really good ones that peel right off? There might be the barest memory of an older mount along one of the borders but other than the sliver of a suggestion of that previous mount, I would have to say it is ... pristine.

STERLING. Fuck, that's...

DENNIS. I saw it!

STERLING. And then she went home?

DENNIS. She did.

STERLING. She walked in, and walked out, you let her just walk out with it?

DENNIS. Well, I followed her.

STERLING. Where'd she go?

DENNIS. She went home.

STERLING. Where?

DENNIS. Oh no no. No no no.

STERLING. This story is shit. You think I don't know when I'm being played?

DENNIS. I think you do know when you're being played, Sterling, which is why you're still sitting here.

STERLING. Fuck you, you little piece of shit. You bring me this fucking preposterous story about some girl with a – fuck you. *Fuck you.* Life is short my friend, and it's getting shorter, you bring stories like this to the table. You ask yourself, what do you want out of life? I advise you. At moments like this, you are stepping out over the abyss, for what? How much money is it worth to you, Dennis, to risk what will befall you, I don't say possibly, I say certainly, what will befall a person like you, stepping onto the highwire of complete bullshit that just came out of your mouth.

DENNIS. How much do I want? Is that what you just asked me? How much money do I expect you to pay me to make this happen?

(*beat, happy*)

A lot, Sterling. Really, quite a lot.

(*Beat.*)

STERLING. You're lying, or she is.

DENNIS. I'm not lying. And she doesn't know how to lie.

STERLING. Since you spent so much time with her. And you know her so well.

DENNIS. She reads comic books, Sterling. This girl is a lamb.

(*A beat, while* **STERLING** *considers.*)

STERLING. I don't believe you. I'm leaving.

(*He stands to go.* **DENNIS** *leans back in his chair, lets him get all the way across the room, then calls after him.*)

DENNIS. I didn't tell you everything.

(**STERLING** *stops, but doesn't turn.*)

DENNIS. (*continuing*) There are two of them. The One Penny *and* the Two Penny.

STERLING. Oh you motherfucker.

(**STERLING** *turns and looks at* **DENNIS**. **DENNIS** *shrugs, laughs. He is very happy. Blackout.*)

Scene 3

(**MARY**, *at home. She is surrounded by boxes.*)

MARY. Mauritius is a paradise tropical island in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Africa, east of Madagascar.

JACKIE. I don't need to know about the island. I was curious about the stamps.

(*She enters, carrying a box full of stuff, drops it on the floor.*)

MARY. But you have to know all of it, that's what's so fun! Mauritius, what do I remember? Volcanic in origin, surrounded by coral reefs, what else? The Labourdonannais orchards –

JACKIE. These are all the bills. Most of them I can't even read, to tell the truth. You look at it, there's so many numbers, I have no idea what we owe. Every time I try to figure it out my head starts to hurt. I feel so stupid.

MARY. (*off a box*) Oh, look, her jewelry! Did you bring this down?

JACKIE. Yes, I, yes, I did.

MARY. Let's see what else do I know about Mauritius. They have beautiful beaches. I dislike the beach, don't you? All that sand. Do you like the beach?

JACKIE. I've never been.

MARY. You've never been?

JACKIE. No, I've never been.

MARY. To the beach? Any beach?

JACKIE. No. I've never been to any beach.

MARY. You've never seen the ocean.

JACKIE. Oh god. You know –

MARY. I just find that –

JACKIE. I'm not –

MARY. What? Why can't I even comment?

JACKIE. Because there's nothing to comment on. I've just never seen it. I will see the ocean. I will, I'll see it, I'll see it some day. I'm young. I'm I'm *young*.

MARY. (*smiling at her, lovely*) Of course you are! Of course you are. We don't have to talk about it. Let's see, where were we?

JACKIE. The stamps?

MARY. Oh yes. They had this stamp, the Mauritians – Mauritians, that sounds like Martians, could that be right? Oh well, actually, it wouldn't have been the Mauritians, it would have been the British, they took it over back when they were you know, taking things over, and in 1847, they printed one of the first postage stamps on earth. The fifth country, I think. The head of the young Queen Victoria – oh, look at this! I remember this!

(*She holds up an ugly broach.*)

JACKIE. Take it. Take all of it.

MARY. I'm sure you want some of it.

JACKIE. It's not worth anything.

MARY. Maybe not to anyone else, but to us – oh, look at this!

JACKIE. (*off the stamp book*) So it's worth a lot of money then. This Mauritian stamp.

MARY. Both of them. The One Penny and the Two Penny Post Office. Together. They're considered the crown jewel of philately. It's quite a spectacular error.

JACKIE. Error?

MARY. Well, that's what makes it so valuable, the errors are what make it – well, you don't know anything about stamps, do you?

JACKIE. So what's the "error?"

MARY. Alongside her face are the words "Post Office." The printer was supposed to print the words "Post Paid." Post *paid*. Of course once you know that it makes sense, why would you put "Post Office" on a stamp? I wonder that sometimes. What was going through that man's head. While he made the first postage stamp, and put the wrong words on it, out there in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

(*She thinks about this, moved.* **JACKIE** *thinks too, looking at the stamps.*)

JACKIE. So how much, a thousand, a hundred thousand? How much are stamps worth?

MARY. I have no idea how much it's worth, it's beside the point. I couldn't possibly sell it. Oh! Oh. I'm sorry. But you do realize that those are my stamps. Don't you? He was my grandfather. He wasn't your grandfather. Those are – my stamps.

JACKIE. Mom said, she gave the stamps to me, because she didn't know for sure but she said they might be worth something –

MARY. Well, but – these weren't *her* stamps.

JACKIE. She gave them to me.

MARY. If you want the jewelry –

JACKIE. I don't want the jewelry. I already said I don't want the jewelry.

MARY. But they were my grandfather's stamps, they're not part of the general, this isn't –

JACKIE. This isn't what? I mean, you weren't here –

MARY. That's not exactly –

JACKIE. Not exactly what, not exactly true? That you weren't here?

MARY. Not exactly relevant, I was going to say.

JACKIE. It was relevant to me. That's why I asked, so many times. You got my messages, right? We really needed you, I needed, you know –

MARY. Yes, yes yes but – I'm sorry but could we stay on the point please?

JACKIE. The point is when Mom was — even when she was so sick, she she she gave the stamps to me and you weren't here –

MARY. Look, I don't want to, we're just having a conversation. You asked about the stamps.

JACKIE. Yes I did, that's right I did –

MARY. So we're having a conversation! There's no will and it would be terrible if we had to probate anything, that would take years, and involve all sorts of legal issues, so it's great that we can talk about what is yours, and what

is mine. I'm really thrilled to have the stamps back. I I don't know how they ended up in mother's hands. Grandfather and I spent so much time with these stamps. Making catalogues, and lists. Corresponding with other dealers. Grandfather once, obviously this is long before I was born, but he actually had an extended correspondence with FDR about the Two Penny Post Office, he wanted to buy it but grandfather would never let it go. You just wouldn't. Let it go. You wouldn't.

(*Beat.*)

JACKIE. Wow. An extended correspondence with FDR. That's incredible. How much did he offer?

MARY. I don't know that they ever got that far.

JACKIE. (*beat*) Maybe you could look through these boxes, I cleared out that closet upstairs. It doesn't look like anything to me but what do I know.

(*There is a buzz at the door.* **MARY** *continues to page through the book of stamps while* **JACKIE** *continues to work.*)

MARY. Look, the inverted Jenny! This was one of my favorites. I used to pretend that grandfather and I were flying in the airplane, upside down!

JACKIE. Are you getting the door?

MARY. What?

JACKIE. The door, didn't you hear the door?

MARY. Oh, I thought you were getting it.

JACKIE. I'm working.

MARY. All you have to do is ask.

JACKIE. That's what I'm doing, I'm asking.

MARY. And I'm getting it!

(*She smiles and goes to answer the door. After she is gone,* **JACKIE** *is alone in the room for a moment.*)

JACKIE. (*to herself*) I hate her. I hate her so much. Oh god, I hate her.

(*She looks around, goes to the chair where* **MARY** *left the stamps, picks up the stamp book and moves it to her side of the room. Then she goes back to work.* **MARY** *reenters, with* **DENNIS**.)

MARY. Your friend is here!

JACKIE. (*without looking up*) I don't have any friends.

DENNIS. It's Dennis. Hey, Jackie.

(*She looks up. He smiles at her, reaches out to shake hands. She takes his hand and at the last minute he draws her in, kisses her on the cheek.*)

DENNIS. (*continuing*) Good to see you.

JACKIE. What are *you* doing here?

DENNIS. We met the other day, when you came over to Phil's.

JACKIE. I remember. What are you doing here?

DENNIS. (*to* **MARY**) Hi, I'm Dennis. What's your name?

MARY. I'm Mary, I'm Jackie's sister. Her half-sister. Her much older half sister, I'm afraid.

DENNIS. Yeah, yeah, Jackie mentioned you.

MARY. Oh, I'm sure.

DENNIS. (*a quick glance to* **JACKIE**, *sizing this up*) No, she did. She said you were the pretty one.

MARY. (*laughing at this nonsense*) So how do you two know each other?

DENNIS. We met, actually, at my friend Phil's store, just yesterday. She came in with this –

JACKIE. (*overlap, cool*) Mary, you know, listen, maybe Dennis would like some iced tea. Dennis, would you like some iced tea? Or lemonade, or water, maybe some cookies?

(**DENNIS** *looks at her. Beat.*)

DENNIS. Sure, that'd be great.

JACKIE. Mary? Could you bring Dennis some refreshments?

MARY. Of course. Iced tea? Maybe a beer?

DENNIS. A beer would be great, Mary. Thanks.

(**MARY** *nods and goes, leaving* **JACKIE** *and* **DENNIS** *alone.*)

DENNIS. (*continuing*) I know, it's kind of a little bold for me to just show up like this. I'm sorry. But I really needed to talk to you.

JACKIE. How did you know where I live?

DENNIS. Yeah, well, after you left Phil's the other day, I followed you home. Listen, do you mind if I...

(*He points and instinctively moves to the table, where the book of stamps sits, still open to the page with the One Penny and Two Penny Post Office stamps.* **JACKIE** *crosses swiftly and takes the book. He looks at her.*)

DENNIS. (*continuing*) Sorry. There's just a couple of stamps in there, that I thought were kind of interesting.

JACKIE. The One Penny and the Two Penny Post Office.

DENNIS. (*beat*) Yeah.

JACKIE. They're from Mauritius.

DENNIS. (*recovering swiftly*) Yes, that's uh, that's right.

JACKIE. It's in the Indian Ocean. Off the coast of Africa. East of Madagascar. It was only the fifth country in the world to issue postage stamps. The post office stamps are considered the crown jewel of philately.

DENNIS. Wow. That's pretty good. You know a lot. Because you didn't. Yesterday. Know much, I mean. Well. You're an interesting girl.

(*He sits.*)

JACKIE. Look. You can't stay here. If you want to talk about those stamps –

DENNIS. I do want to talk about them. Are you selling them?

JACKIE. Leave me your number and I'll call you.

DENNIS. Do you know how much they're worth?

JACKIE. I said, I'll call you.

DENNIS. She doesn't know, does she? That you're selling the stamps.

JACKIE. She doesn't need to know.

DENNIS. Is she the one I should be talking to?

JACKIE. They're not her stamps.

DENNIS. Does she know that?

JACKIE. Look. You talk to her, it's not going to get you anywhere.

DENNIS. Maybe I should find that out for myself.

JACKIE. You do, and you take yourself out of the running.

DENNIS. "The running?"

JACKIE. That's right.

DENNIS. Well, that's a very interesting thing to say, from a girl who is increasingly interesting. You have other offers?

JACKIE. Yes, I have other offers.

DENNIS. Really?

JACKIE. Yes. I contacted another dealer and I have a lot of interest. So if you're interested in buying them you need to speak up now, because...

DENNIS. Oh, buy them.

JACKIE. Yes buy them. Of course buy them.

DENNIS. It's not of course, of course is the last thing this is.

(*Beat.*)

JACKIE. Look, if you don't want to buy them –

DENNIS. I didn't say that either.

JACKIE. So make me an offer.

DENNIS. Oh, shit no.

JACKIE. Okay, thank you so much for stopping by.

(*She stands, to show him out. He stands, and blocks her.*)

DENNIS. You make me an offer.

JACKIE. You want me to make you an offer?

DENNIS. Is that a problem?

JACKIE. I own them! I don't have to offer you anything!

DENNIS. Tell me what you want for them.

JACKIE. Why don't you just tell me what you're willing to pay, and I'll tell you if that's enough.

DENNIS. Why don't you tell me what you think they're worth, and I'll tell you if I'll pay that.

JACKIE. Look. I know you think I don't know anything?

DENNIS. Yeah, I actually, I do think that. For a minute there I thought you maybe knew a few things, but I don't think that anymore.

JACKIE. I already got an offer on these stamps. I know what they're worth.

DENNIS. Then why don't you tell me what it is.

(*beat*)

You grow less interesting every second.

JACKIE. Oh yeah? Because it seems to me, as long as I'm holding the stamps and you're not, I'm still pretty fucking interesting.

MARY. (*reentering*) Here we are! Oh, you're not leaving are you?

JACKIE. Yes, sadly he has to go.

DENNIS. Actually I can stay. You know, that thing I had to do, I don't really have to do it. I'd love to stay. Thanks, Mary.

(*He takes his beer from her, and sits.*)

JACKIE. Well, I'm actually, I have a lot to do, I'm working right now, so this isn't a great time for me. For a visit.

DENNIS. You go ahead. Mary and I can hang out.

MARY. Oh!

DENNIS. Jackie was telling me about the stamp collection.

MARY. Really?

DENNIS. Does that surprise you?

JACKIE. Listen.

MARY. Well, she was just – she doesn't –

DENNIS. Know anything about it.

MARY. (*laughing*) Well –

JACKIE. Hey. Dennis.

DENNIS. It's okay. I could tell. You're the stamp collector, I'm betting.

MARY. My grandfather.

DENNIS. What was he like?

MARY. He was wonderful, he really was. My father died when I was quite young, so he was the only father I knew.

DENNIS. Your father's father.

MARY. Yes.

JACKIE. Mary, maybe this isn't the best time.

DENNIS. And maybe it is. You don't want to talk about it. But maybe Mary would like to talk about it. It seems like she and her grandfather were close.

MARY. Oh, he was everything to me.

DENNIS. You should talk about it. You too, Jackie.

JACKIE. Would you stop using my name, Dennis? I find it increasingly unnerving having you talk to me like this, Dennis; I really do.

DENNIS. Is she always like this, Mary?

MARY. Well...

DENNIS. Oh, you poor thing.

JACKIE. Yes, that's hilarious, Dennis –

DENNIS. Oh, chill out, would you? I'm trying to be nice here. I mean, I can see you've both been through something, I'm just trying to – I don't know –

MARY. She didn't tell you?

DENNIS. She won't tell me anything, Mary.

JACKIE. It's very personal, Mary, and I don't think, I really prefer –

MARY. Our mother. Passed.

DENNIS. Oh.

MARY. It was very sudden.

JACKIE. Okay, that is not strictly true, Mary, she was sick for a long – . Hm. You know, Dennis, I'm sure you understand that it's just not a good time, today –

DENNIS. It seems like it's a good time for Mary.

JACKIE. But it's a terrifically terrible time, for me.

MARY. (*under her breath*) It's always a terrible time for you.

JACKIE. We are not talking about this, Mary!

MARY. Why not? Why not?

JACKIE. (*snapping*) Because I don't want to!

MARY. Why? Why is it so hard for you to understand, I didn't have the time you had, to to to get used to what was happening –

JACKIE. (*overlap*) Stop acting, it's your own fault! She asked you to come, she begged you, and you stayed away. That was your choice.

MARY. It had been so long since anyone was interested, years, what was I supposed to do? Oh now she's dying, she wants to see you now. I had feelings about that. I don't apologize for that. What, she only wants to see me when she's dying?

JACKIE. She was dying! She wanted to see you!

MARY. Well I needed a little time to work that through, all right?

JACKIE. Yes, that's a terrific point, except there wasn't any time! She was dying!

MARY. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get into this. You've been so kind to me, Dennis. I really appreciate it. It's been hard, going through what we're going through. I'm sure that's what you sense with Jackie.

DENNIS. Absolutely.

(*beat*)

Do you want a glass of wine or something?

MARY. I'm fine. I'm fine. I shouldn't have just erupted like that, I'm so sorry.

DENNIS. Please don't apologize. The death of a parent, that's huge.

JACKIE. You know it really is and I really really think that Mary and I need a little privacy right now, Dennis. Please.

DENNIS. How did she die?

MARY. Cancer.

JACKIE. Oh my God.

DENNIS. (*to* **MARY**) And you lost your father as well?

MARY. Oh well, that was years ago.

DENNIS. That's rough, Mary. I mean, that's just tough.

MARY. Thank you.

DENNIS. (*putting it together*) And so Jackie's your half sister, but you have the same mother – well, had, I'm so sorry – so, that means Jackie's father – where'd he go?

JACKIE. (*a real eruption*) Mind your own fucking business! That is none of your – you know, you need to get out of here. Just GET OUT OF HERE.

DENNIS. Whoa. Jackie. I am so sorry. Did I step into a sensitive subject?

(*There is a pause.* **JACKIE** *takes a breath. She reaches over and takes the beer from* **MARY**, *drinks.*)

JACKIE. It is a bit of a sensitive subject, Dennis. I really apologize. To you too, Mary. I'm clearly just not myself these days. You know, Dennis, I am so glad you stopped by and I think you and I have a lot to talk over and I'm hoping we can do that.

DENNIS. Oh, good.

JACKIE. Yeah. I'm more than willing, I really want to hear you out, and talk things over and things like that. But right now, really, really – it's such not the right time.

DENNIS. I totally understand. Look. Let's talk about something else. What can we talk about? The stamps. Why don't you tell me about them, Mary?

(*He hands her the album. She touches it, reverential.*)

DENNIS. (*continuing*) You know, Franklin Roosevelt collected stamps.

MARY. (*laughing a little*) Of course I knew that. My grandfather actually corresponded with FDR. He wanted to buy one of our stamps!

DENNIS. Did he?

MARY. My grandfather had both a One Penny AND a Two Penny Post Office. From Mauritius. They're very very rare.

DENNIS. The crown jewel of philately.

MARY. You know stamps?

DENNIS. A little.

(**DENNIS** *smiles at her, friendly, while* **JACKIE** *watches this, appalled. Blackout.*)

Scene 4

(**PHILIP**'*s shop. He is at the counter, reading again.* **STERLING** *stands in the doorway.*)

STERLING. Hey.

PHILIP. (*glancing up*) Yes?

STERLING. How you doing?

PHILIP. Oh.

STERLING. Yeah, hi.

PHILIP. He's not here.

STERLING. No, I know. I mean, I see that.

PHILIP. Well.

STERLING. You talk to him today?

PHILIP. No.

STERLING. Yesterday?

PHILIP. (*a sigh*) Yes. He was here yesterday.

STERLING. Yeah? How was that?

PHILIP. How was it?

STERLING. Yeah, you know, anything going on?

PHILIP. Not that I know of.

STERLING. Yeah?

PHILIP. Do you want something, Sterling? Do you want to look at something, or...

(*He thinks for a minute, then remembers.*)

STERLING. Or what?

PHILIP. Nothing.

(*beat*)

Did he ... tell you something?

STERLING. Is there something to tell?

PHILIP. No. There isn't. He just sat here. That's all that happened, that's all that ever happens. If anything shows up, my understanding is he'll tell you, but nothing ever does. Okay? Nothing ever does.

STERLING. That's not what he says.

(*There is a beat.* **PHILIP** *thinks about this, then shrugs, laughs a little.*)

PHILIP. You want to look through my case? I'd be happy to have you look through this stuff. I don't know why you'd want to, I'm pretty sure this isn't going to mean anything to you, and I don't know why you think, whatever it is you do think –

STERLING. I don't think anything.

PHILIP. Okay. Okay then, let me show you what I got, maybe you'll get lucky and I'll get lucky and retire on the vast sums of money you'll shower on my unworthy head.

STERLING. I don't need to do that.

PHILIP. (*beat*) What do you want? Sterling? Just tell me what you want, okay?

STERLING. I want to hear about the girl.

PHILIP. What girl?

STERLING. You really want to play it like that, Phil?

PHILIP. Oh my god. Does this actually get you things, talking like this?

STERLING. Yeah, actually it does.

PHILIP. Well good because frankly it seems kind of silly to me.

STERLING. That's fine. That's fine, Phil. Now why don't you tell me about the girl.

PHILIP. Was there a girl who came in here yesterday, that Dennis talked to who had some stamps, is this the question you're asking me? Yes. The answer is yes, there was a girl who came in who had some stamps and Dennis talked to her. Now can I ask you something? Did Dennis tell you this, that he saw a girl in here and she showed him some stamps?

STERLING. Yes he did.

PHILIP. Then why are you asking me about it?

STERLING. I'm asking about it because I'm trying to be polite.

PHILIP. Hey, don't strain yourself.

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