

DENNIS - #1

MAURITIUS

35

DENNIS. Did you just hear what I said? They're real!

PHILIP. I will tell you if they're real or not

DENNIS. That's what I was thinking.

PHILIP. Oh no. No. I'm not helping you. Forget it.

DENNIS. Philip, this is a free offer. Out of respect. I mean, I found them in your shop.

PHILIP. You didn't find them! She walked in!

DENNIS. Yeah, she did, and you wouldn't wouldn't even look at them. You're lucky I'm even talking to you. I didn't have to cut you in.

PHILIP. Cut me into what? You don't have anything!

DENNIS. Neither do you. What do you got here, a couple of Columbians and the rest is shit, Phil. You're off the map, in every way. Don't you even want to see them? I've touched them. Don't you want to do that?

STERLING. Fuck him; we don't need him. Let's go.

DENNIS. This is your chance, Phil; you're about to lose it.

STERLING. He's a has-been for a reason, Dennis!

DENNIS. He knows what he's doing!

STERLING. Yeah that's why he let her walk in and out without even looking at what she had. We don't need him. Let's go get my fucking stamps.

(He heads far the door.)

DENNIS. You're going to take my word on it, then? That they're real?

STERLING. I know people.

DENNIS, *(mad now)* I know you do! So do I. And we can take this girl, and her stamps to any of them; we can go see Julian or Stuart or Paulie; we can fly to London and have Richard fucking Dempsey himself validate those stamps and any one of those people will tell that girl what those stamps are really worth.

PHILIP. What makes you think I won't?

DENNIS. Intuition. So maybe we don't need him, Sterling. But we sure as hell could fucking use him.

MAURITIUS

PHILIP. So you actually expect *me* to help you rob that girl.

DENNIS. We'll pay her! I never said we wouldn't pay her!

PHILIP. Not what they're worth.

DENNIS. You don't know what they're worth; you haven't seen them yet! Come on Phil this is a gift, the skies opened yesterday, and the heavens shone their light upon us and that girl walked in here with a one penny and a TWO PENNY POST OFFICE, and it was a gift, a gift to me and a gift to you and a gift to our good friend Sterling here. This is happening! And it can be easy, or it can be hard. I vote for easy.

(Beat.)

PHILIP. For a fee. I'll do it for a fee.

DENNIS. A very good fee. She's bringing them over tonight.

STERLING. You just left them there?

DENNIS. She's not going anywhere!

STERLING. What's she asking for them?

DENNIS. We didn't quite get that far.

STERLING. And she has no idea what they're worth.

DENNIS. No.

(beat)

No.

STERLING. You don't think...

DENNIS. When she sees a suitcase full of cash, she's not going to ask a lot of questions about what she might get for them if she spent months on line trying to nurse a better offer out of some shithead in Tokyo.

Don't worry about it. You'll get a good price.

STERLING. She goes on line we're fucked.

DENNIS. I can handle the internet, please!

DENNIS - #2

MAURITIUS

DENNIS. WAIT. Wait, wait.

(beat)

A million.

(beat)

You want much more than that -

JACKIE. I know what they're worth, so yeah, I want more than that, and I can get it, too, fast -

DENNIS. We can go higher than that -

JACKIE. How much higher?

DENNIS. Higher.

JACKIE, *(sick of this)* How much higher, Dennis?

DENNIS. I don't know!

(She heads for the door.)

DENNIS, *(continuing; a little more urgent)* I told you, he's bringing cold cash into this, so I don't know how much higher than a million he can go. Come on. This is a negotiation! Come on, come on, you said yourself that you were willing to let me steal them. For a price. I mean, if that's where you're willing to start - you started there, Jackie, you said, steal for a price - so from my end you have to expect that I'm going to try to steal them for nothing! That's the only play available to me! Seriously, seriously, it's not personal. And it's certainly no reason to walk away. You said what you needed to say, and I did what I needed to do, and now I know that you're not going to let me do that, which is a good thing to know, a very good thing to understand about this situation, and each other. That's the way I'm looking at this, Jackie. I hope you are, too.

(Beat.)

JACKIE. So where is this guy?

DENNIS. Sterling? He's on his way.

JACKIE. Because this wasn't the deal. That I sit around and wait for him.

DENNIS. Trust me, he'll show up. Sterling is a highly motivated buyer. He's coming. With a big suitcase full of cash. I promise.

JACKIE. Sterling, what kind of name is Sterling anyway. What's his story?

DENNIS. What isn't his story? He's rich. He's a rich rich international businessman type of person. Named Sterling.

JACKIE. What kind of business?

DENNIS. Murky stuff. You know, real estate, corporate merger-type, governmental arms deals, that sort of thing.

JACKIE. He's an arms dealer?

DENNIS. He's a lot of things. I can never really keep track. Mostly we talk about stamps. He loves stamps, a lot.

JACKIE. You collect stamps, too?

DENNIS. Did. It can be a rather expensive hobby. As I think you learned from your road trip down the information freeway.

JACKIE. So what happened, you had money, and now you don't?

(DENNIS thinks about this for a moment, and half-laughs, at himself, as he considers how to answer that question.)

DENNIS, *(finally)* You know, Jackie, I'm actually not terribly interested in the past, what good is it, really, dwelling on the past?

JACKIE. I couldn't agree more.

DENNIS. Right? I mean, you know what they say about the stamps. It's the errors that make them valuable. That's kind of my theory on people.

JACKIE, *(a short laugh)* I like that theory.

DENNIS. Good. So what are you going to do with the money? I mean, a million bucks, more, I mean, more than a million, that'll buy a lot of comic books.

JACKIE - #1

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.)

JACKIE - #2

MAURITIUS

43

MARY. *I'm* sorry. Are you smoking? Inside the house?

JACKIE. Want to have a conversation about it? I so enjoy our conversations.

(She smokes, looks at the stamps.)

MARY. Look. Could I have my stamps, please? It makes me really nervous to see you just –

JACKIE. Just what? Smoking? In front of the stamps? Why, because it's bad for them to know that I smoke?

(She clicks on her lighter. Looks at it, thinks.)

MARY. All right, fine. I don't care what you do to your lungs. Just give me my stamps.

JACKIE. Fuck you. You come in here, this is so precious to me, those are my stamps, me and my fucking holy fucking grandfather, oh jewelry! You can have that Jackie! The only problem is it's not worth a FUCKING DIME.

MARY. I'm sorry, do you have to use language like that!

JACKIE. Yes, I fucking well think I do.

MARY. Okay. What you've gone through, both of us, but you especially, is upsetting and clearly, I think, you clearly need to take the time to calm down, and I will be upstairs, and give you the room to do that.

JACKIE. Calm down. That's not exactly what I was thinking of doing. More what I've been thinking about? Is finding some sort of plastic bag, you know, some sort of clear, strong plastic? And then I was thinking I'd figure out how to fasten that around your head, with some duct tape.

MARY. I'm sorry, but I'm, I'm I'm beginning to think some real questions have to be raised about your character.

JACKIE. My CHARACTER? I have no character. What I have is two tiny tiny slips of paper, so small that they barely exist, and I'm going to take them, and I'm going to stab myself in the chest with a pair of really sharp

scissors, and then I'm going to put those two tiny tiny slips of paper inside my body, right where my heart is supposed to be. And then I'm going to grow a pair of wings, big, blue and green scaly wings, not beautiful wings, BUG wings, the kind that move real fast. And then I'm going to go. Somewhere. Where they like tall girls, with bug wings. And then I'm going to lay in the sun and have a margarita.

MARY. Give me the stamps. Give them to me.

JACKIE. Yeah, I'll get right on that. 'Cause you know what I read today, on the internet? Something called the Three Skilling Banco got sold about ten years ago, for two and a half million dollars. The one cent magenta, some stamp from British Guiana which some zillion-aire has in some bank vault somewhere, they think that's worth maybe ten million dollars. Guess what else. Seven years ago a pair of uncanceled one and two penny post office stamps? Went for six million dollars. At auction. Can you believe that? Six. Million. Dollars.

MARY. Grandfather always said, they should be in a museum. But I had no idea -

JACKIE. Fuck museums.

MARY. You cannot say that. You can't - and you can't sell them. They're worth so much more than than mere money, they're -

JACKIE. "Mere" money? I'm sorry, what did you say did you say "mere" money did you actually say that?

MARY. I would like my stamps please.

JACKIE. You don't get it yet, but you will. Two little slips of paper. And I am born. "You're an interesting girl, Jackie." He has no idea.

(She picks up the stamp book.)

MARY. You are not walking out of this house with those stamps!

JACKIE. You know that trick, with the plastic bag and the duct tape? Want to know how I know about that?

MARY. I will call the police. I will -

JACKIE. You will what, you will tell them that I took your stamp collection? That'll make a big impression.

MARY. YES, YES, I will tell them - you stole my, my -

JACKIE. It's not yours -

MARY. It is mine -

JACKIE. Yeah, I'll give you your fucking stamps.

(MARY reaches for them, sudden. JACKIE throws a punch, gets her right across the face. MARY backs up, stunned. JACKIE just looks at her, unmoved.)

JACKIE. You come in here, you act like you know something, like you have rights, you don't know anything and you have no rights. You left. The fucking apocalypse fell on this family and YOU LEFT. And as a consequence I've earned these fucking stamps and I'm going to sell them. And if you think you're going to stop me? You'll lose.

(She picks up the stamps and exits.)

(End of act one)

(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?

(beat)

MARY. 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. Because a lot happened. After you left. It wasn't just when she died. That wasn't the worst thing that happened.

MARY. Well, the part I was here for -

JACKIE, (*eager*) Yes! You were here for some of it. So you know about -

MARY. Yes.

JACKIE. And I got to be honest it was hard when you left. I know you had to, if I could've, but I was so little, but I would've, how old were you when you -

MARY. Sixteen was when I went to boarding school and -

JACKIE. And you didn't come back and I don't blame you. If I could've, I would've too. You had relatives who could, I didn't, and I was so little, and she, I don't know why she couldn't...

MARY. She made a lot of bad choices, obviously.

JACKIE. Yes she did. She made some shitty fucking choices.

MARY, (*offended but trying*) I mean it was no picnic for me either. Obviously I had to go. But I was very alone. I wanted to come back. To at least visit. But that wasn't really an option.

JACKIE. No no I know I just... I wrote you letters. I don't know if she ever sent them.

MARY. No. She didn't.

JACKIE. She should've. Because I wanted, I really missed you. And after you were gone, Dad, -

MARY. You know what, Jackie. Jackie you know what? This is just, I can see how much this is upsetting you. And we don't have to do this.

JACKIE. No, I want -

MARY. I know. You want to be a family. And that's what I want too. But we don't have to do it all at once. We can be friends now. And little by little, get to know each other. That's what I'm hoping for. Here, do you mind? I didn't mean to leave this just lying around.

(She steps forward to take the stamps. JACKIE stops her.)

JACKIE. We uh, okay. Okay. We don't have to talk about, we don't, it's okay. But we do have to talk about the stamps. Because that guy today - you liked him, right?

MARY. Dennis? Charming. Now, that man is a philatelist.

JACKIE. He seems to be that, yes, and some other things too. And he had a thought. After we all had that nice visit, you know, talking about the stamps, and calling those stamp dealers, that was fun, and when I walked him to the door? He mentioned something about the stamps. About selling the stamps.

MARY. We've already discussed this.

JACKIE. We have to discuss it again, Mary. I know you don't want to. But it would solve everything. Free and clear, you and I would both be free and clear from all of it, all the past would go away if we sold the stamps. We could pay off everything, everything would be gone, and we would both have something -

MARY. I do have something. I have my inheritance. From my grandfather. The only father I had.

JACKIE. Mary - we're the family. You and I are the family, that's why Mom wanted you to come back so that -

MARY. Is that what this is about? You want to be a "family," I guess it's pretty clear what that means.

JACKIE. It means -

MARY. They warned me, you know. They did warn me about this.

JACKIE. They, they who?

MARY. Everybody. They said, don't come. I mean, I know you're angry because I wasn't here earlier, but I almost didn't come at all, because I was afraid, people told me to be afraid, that there was probably some sort of financial quagmire, that that's really what this was all about. Getting me here to help out with the financial quagmire. People said that! But I didn't believe them.

I said, it's my mother and my sister, and I need to be there for them. It's not money! That's not why they're asking me! I told everyone that. And that's what I'm telling you. I came because I wanted to be here, to help you, and go to the funeral, and see her again, I really wanted that. But if what you're saying is that you had another motive, an ulterior financial motive? I am not a party to that. I wasn't even here! So. If there is a financial issue? It is not my responsibility. That is my position. Okay? Okay, Jackie?

(Beat.)

MARY. I'm sorry.

JACKIE. It's okay.

MARY. Can I get you anything? A glass of water?

JACKIE, *(beat)* A glass of water, would be great.

MARY. Good. I'm so glad we had this conversation. I feel a lot better.

PHILIP - #1

8

MAURITIUS

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 them -

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, \ 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.

STERLING. This is an olive branch, Philip.

PHILIP. Well, you know, I'm touched. I mean, that's terrific. All of this, what you just said, I feel a lot better, I mean you were right, you're right, I have been holding onto that silly little matter, how long ago was that -

STERLING. Eight -

PHILIP. Eight years! Is that how long? Wow, time flies doesn't it?

STERLING. You ever hear from her?

PHILIP. That's not - I am not -

STERLING. I'm asking as a friend.

PHILIP. I am not talking about her!

STERLING. Eight years, due respect, is a long enough time to contemplate that maybe there was a problem in the marriage.

PHILIP, (overlap) I am not talking about her!

STERLING. Just a casual observation. A casual, friendly -

PHILIP. What do you want, Sterling? You want to look at my stamps, is that what you want? Then look at them! No? Then shut the fuck up and get out of my shop. I mean it. I don't care about your money. I don't want you here. I don't... I...

(Exasperated, PHILIP starts to put his stamps away. Then he stops, looks at them, sad.)

PHILIP, (continuing; suddenly sad) Whatever. I have some nice... you know, there's a really lovely set of Columbi-ans, someone brought them in, I, they're canceled but the color is quite good, quite...

(Beat. PHILIP stops, sighs, looks at him, bracing himself.)

PHILIP, (continuing) Okay. What was in there?

STERLING. I was hoping you could tell me.

PHILIP. I didn't see it!

STERLING. I don't believe you.

PHILIP. What would I - what would I gain? If Dennis has told you about it already, what would I gain, by lying?

STERLING. I'm not saying you're lying.

PHILIP. I didn't see it. I didn't look.

STERLING. You didn't even look..

PHILIP. No, I didn't, How many times do we have to do this-

STERLING. HEY ASSHOLE.

(beat)

Don't misunderstand me.

PHILIP. I didn't look, Sterling! I don't know what was in there. Whatever Dennis told you, if you think he's lying, or trying to pull something, I can't help you because I didn't look. I'm sick of looking. Every day there's one more pathetic, look at my stamps. What are they worth. My great uncle told my third cousin that this stamp was so valuable, it's worth a fortune, buy my stamp, save my pathetic life, it's a miracle! A miracle that I just pulled out of a back drawer! They don't even look at ... they don't even see them. Fuck it. I didn't look.

(beat)

So whatever he told you, I can't tell you.

STERLING. He said it was a post office.

PHILIP, *(a short laugh)* Well, then he is a liar. **STERLING.**
You said you didn't see it.

PHILIP. If he told you she has a post office -

STERLING. He told me she has two.

PHILIP. That's insane. He's lying.

(a beat)

He's lying. They aren't out there. They're like a myth. Two post office stamps? Just lying around some old man's stamp collection? Maybe he's got an undiscovered Shakespeare sonnet in there, too. And you're actually checking this story out? C'mere, I have a bridge.

STERLING - #1

14

MAURITIUS

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.)

STERLING - #2

MAURITIUS

37

STERLING. This isn't a joke. I can feel them now.

The stamps. You know this about me. When I want some-thing? It happens.

DENNIS. I know that Sterling, that's why -

STERLING, (*overlapping*) You touched them. I can't stand that, that you touched them. You think I don't know what that means? Fuck you. The first time I touched a Columbian, I will never forget it. An 1892 four dollar, beautiful, a rosy pink, the perforations, pure, the head of Isabella and Columbus facing each other across time. This thing was gorgeous, I'm telling you, your Columbians are shit, Phil, this stamp was beyond reason, the perfection, everybody knows to look for the mistakes, that's a given and I love that too, the errors? But the perfection, people don't talk about. I got a Hindenberg crash cover, I paid sixty thousand dollars for it; I know its worth, historically, and I respect it, but am I moved? A one penny and a two penny post office. And they're good, huh? I saw them once, the Royal Philatelic Society had a fucking show, fuck them, the self-righteous bastards, putting a fucking piece of glass in front of those stamps. Their collection was shit anyway. It wasn't shit but it wasn't good. And they're good huh? You're telling me they're good?

DENNIS. Pristine.

STERLING. Fuck you. This deal doesn't make, you are fucked, my friend.