

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, sad)* 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, 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.

STERLING. Philip, I don't. I just offer you an opportunity. I know you've got a problem, you think I took something from you at some point, you can't get over something that happened so long ago no one gives a shit, I realize that. I'm coming in here and I'm being nice out of sensitivity to something I really, a rat's ass would be a step up, in my book, to what you're holding onto. We both know that. And it is an irritant to a person, let's say a person was stupid, at one time in the past, and I'm not talking about myself, but someone behaves in a stupid way, no one has to say anything about that except that that person needs to own his own stupidity and not wallow in some sense of blame or victimhood, you're so interested in victimhood? Go watch T.V., that is not a world that interests me. It's an irritant. So there is some question, in my mind? How long this attempt at civility is going to survive here. Under these circumstances. Because due respect, I'm better in a situation when I can just be direct.

(*beat*)

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. (*overlapp*) 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 Columbus, 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. Hey. Do I look amused? Because let me tell you something which has in fact occurred to me. If there's anyone in this situation who has the talent and the know how to pull off anything resembling a scam, it would be you, Phil. Dennis has the nerve, but you're the one would know how to do it. So when Dennis calls me and says 'meet me at Phil's, we have to talk about this stamp,' I'm wondering why that is. What you have to do with any of it. And I'm interested in hearing your explanation on that.

PHILIP. What?

STERLING. God, I don't want to have to hit you.

PHILIP. I don't want that either. What are you asking me? Am I cheating you? I'm just standing here. I just, I know nothing about anything you are talking about. As far as I'm concerned, you are completely out of your fucking mind -