

DEAD N' GONE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

A small, shabby livingroom. MAURICE HAILEY (45, black, overweight) watches the television with his feet on an end table. His wife ALISA HAILEY (36, black) enter, she carries two big grocery bags.

MAURICE

Oh, hello Alisa honey.

ALISA

(angry)

Oh, don't you honey me Maurice, you big bum! You ain't doing nothing around the house, all you do is squattin' in your easy chair all day long watching soap operas!

Maurice picks up a newspaper on the table.

MAURICE

Honey, your accusations aren't justified at all! I looked up over 50 job offers in the paper and marked them with a red circle. ... You think any of them bothered to call me?

ALISA

Oh, don't be ridiculous! You'd never have the backbone to do a steady job anyway! The past year, you worked for 12 different companies, and 6 of them went bankrupt before they could get rid of you! You never stick to anything to the finish!

MAURICE

Well, how much more of a finish can you have than bankruptcy?

ALISA

Maurice, I am serious here! How are you ever gonna pay our rent the next month?

MAURICE

I thought you was an emaciated woman, why don't you look for a job if you're so crazy about it?

ALISA

You mean emancipated, and what I want is a man who can take care of me! I still wonder why I married you, back then when I was 21...

MAURICE

Well, maybe because you'd been 21 for 9 years already!
(laughs)

The door bell rings. Maurice gets up, walks over to the door. He looks through the fish eye.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

(panicked)
It's our landlord!

ALISA

Of course it's him, we owe him 12 months of payments.

MAURICE

(whispers)
Let's not open, maybe he won't know we're home.

MR. RADCLIFFE

(o. s.)
I know you're home, Hailey! Open the door!

MAURICE

(angry, quietly)
Dammit!

ALISA

(annoyed)
I'll handle this.

MAURICE

Good, tell him I've left... for China.

Maurice hides in another room. Alisa opens the door. MR. RADCLIFFE (55, white, bald) angrily waits behind it.

ALISA

(friendly)
Oh, hello Mr. Radcliffe. Would you like a cup of-

MR. RADCLIFFE

(rough)
I have no time for this, where's your husband?

ALISA
You mean Maurice?

MR. RADCLIFFE
Unless you've become a mormon...

ALISA
He's done left... He'll be back
next week.

MR. RADCLIFFE
Funny, when I came here last month
you told me he just died.

ALISA
No, I... I really mean it this
time. He left on the M. S. Gigantic
for Hong Kong this morning. He's on
a business trip.

MR. RADCLIFFE
Mmm... alright, Mrs. Hailey, I'll
believe you. But if this is another
lie, I'll have you outta here. Is
that understood?

ALISA
Understood. Goodbye, Mr. Radcliffe.

Radcliffe leaves, Alisa closes the door. Maurice returns.

MAURICE
Man, that was close... This, this
M. S. Gigantic, how'd you come up
with that?

ALISA
It's the name of a ship I done seed
down at the port.

MAURICE
Well, thanks a lot. You saved my
life.

ALISA
I'm tired of lying for you! You
need to get a job!

MAURICE
I know honey, and I will... right
after the Lakers game!

Maurice drops down on the couch again. Alisa looks annoyed,
then she takes the shopping bags and walks into the kitchen.

INT. LIVINGROOM - MORNING

Title: "A week later..."

Alisa, wearing a pyjama, picks up the morning paper at the door. She looks at the headlines in disbelief.

ALISA
(shouts)
Maurice! Come and look at this!

Maurice, wearing boxer shorts and a t-shirt, enters.

MAURICE
(yawns)
Yeah, what's wrong honey?

ALISA
You remember that lie we told Mr. Radcliffe, about that ship you took? The M. S. Gigantic?

MAURICE
Yeah... that one was even better than the one about me being kidnapped by the CIA...

ALISA
Maurice, that's not funny! Look what it says here, your ship is in the news!

Maurice looks at the paper.

MAURICE
Now wait a minute, I don't see no ship there!

ALISA
That's 'cause it's buried under that burning oil rig!

MAURICE
(impressed)
Gee, I wish I wouldnt have taken that ship...

ALISA
In here, it says nobody survived the incident. Everybody will think you're dead.

MAURICE
Now come on, only Mr. Radcliffe knows about it, and I'm sure he's forgotten all about it already.

The door bell rings. Maurice looks through the fish eye and heads for the other room.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Wrong again. You take that.

Maurice leaves, Alisa opens the door. It's Mr. Radcliffe. He looks sad.

MR. RADCLIFFE
Mrs. Hailey? I'm so sorry...

ALISA
Oh... Mr. Radcliffe... that's...
how nice of you.

MR. RADCLIFFE
You might wonder why I'm upset
about this... terrible accident...
You see, I put so much pressure on
your husband to pay his... his
rent, that I, in a way, forced him
into taking this job.

MAURICE
(o. s.)
That's right.

Mr. Radcliffe looks bewildered, Alisa winces.

MR. RADCLIFFE
Did you just hear that, it almost
sounded like...

ALISA
(fakes crying)
No, that was me... I'm just so...

MR. RADCLIFFE
Alright, Mrs. Hailey, I understand
perfectly. ... I hope you don't
mind, I already called the police.

ALISA
(gets scared)
The police... why, why would you do
that?

MR. RADCLIFFE
They were asking for assistance on
TV, to figure out the exact death
toll, because apparently the
passenger lists can't be found.

ALISA
Well, that's really... really...

MR. RADCLIFFE

Oh, don't thank me, I know that you must be having a hard time now. I know you're devastated, and depressed and-

ALISA

Well thanks a lot, Mr. Radcliffe, goodbye!

Alisa almost pushes Mr. Radcliffe out of the apartment and closes the door.

MAURICE

I never knew I meant so much to him. If I was still alive, we could be great buddies!

ALISA

You are still alive!

The phone rings. Maurice walks over to it, but Alisa grabs it before him. She looks at him, annoyed, then picks up the receiver.

ALISA (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Yes? ... Hello Mama... no, I mean, yes, it's really... hard to keep going. ... Yes, thanks... Okay, fine, I see you then.

Alisa hangs up.

MAURICE

What was that?

ALISA

My mother.

MAURICE

Yeah, I heard that. I mean, what does she want?

ALISA

Congratulate me.

MAURICE

Why? Is it your... birthday already?

ALISA

No, she's just happy that, and I quote here, "the lazy chiseler has finally gone belly up".

Maurice looks offended.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Maurice tries on a fake beard and a wig. Alisa holds a handheld mirror for him.

ALISA

This is never gonna work, Maurice.
They gonna know it's you.

MAURICE

Alisa, I can go wherever I want to,
even if it's my own funeral. I'm a
free man.

ALISA

You're a dead man...

MAURICE

(imitates her)
Nag, nag, nag...

The doorbell rings.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

If this is the mailman and he wants
a tip, remember you're a weeping
widow with no money on her hands.

ALISA

And one part of this wouldn't even
be a lie.

Alisa opens the door. LAURINE "MAMA" JOHNSON (85, black)
looks into her eyes.

ALISA (CONT'D)

Oh, hello Mama.

LAURINE

Hello darling!

They hug.

LAURINE (CONT'D)

Why aren't you ready for the
ceremony, darling? The funeral is
bound to start at noon and you
don't even have your veil on.

ALISA

My... my veil, yeah right. Um, may
I introduce somebody to you, Mama?

They walk over to the couch.

ALISA (CONT'D)

Mama, this is Ma-, eh...

MAURICE

(imitates deep voice)
 Marcus, Marcus Hailey. Hello,
 Ma'am. I'm uh, Maurice's cousin,
 you know.

LAURINE

What's wrong with your voice, do
 you have a cough?

MAURICE

Er... yes, exactely. Eh... nice to
 meet you.
 (fakes coughing)

Mr. Radcliffe enters through the still wide-open door. He
 carries a bouquet of flowers.

MR. RADCLIFFE

Good morning, Mrs. Hailey. I was
 wondering- Oh, good morning
 everybody.

ALISA

(whispers)
 Maurice, I swear you HE'll know
 it's you...

Maurice tries to keep his head turned away from Mr.
 Radcliffe.

LAURINE

Who's that white boy, darling?

ALISA

Mama, this is Mr. Radcliffe, our
 landlord. Mr. Radcliffe, my mother
 Loraine Johnson. And that's...
 Marcus.

Radcliffe and Mama shake hands.

LAURINE

So you own this...
 (looks around)
 place, is that right?

MR. RADCLIFFE

Well, yes, as a matter of fact I
 do.

LAURINE

Fine, how much is it a month?

Maurice is in shock.

ALISA

Mama, you want to move here?

LAURINE

Of course, I can't leave you alone now. Besides, I'm getting tired of my farm in North Carolina anyway. Onliest friends I got out there are the woodworms in my furniture. I'm moving!

MR. RADCLIFFE

Sure. Why don't we discuss this at church, it's getting kind of late.

ALISA

Hey,... Marcus. You coming?

MAURICE

(imitates spanish accent)
Sí, sí, Alisa.

Maurice tries to cover his face as much as possible as he walks past Mr. Radcliffe and leaves the apartment.

MR. RADCLIFFE

I've seen this man before... Just he wasn't spanish back then. But where...?

Mr. Radcliffe leaves.

LAURINE

Why is Marcus suddenly speaking in this stupid accent, darling?

ALISA

He watches "Los Ricos Tambie'n Llor". Let's go, Mama.

They leave and close the door.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Maurice and Alisa return home. Maurice rips off his beard and wig.

ALISA

And... how did you like your funeral?

MAURICE

Well, the coffin looked kinda nice. Even if it was just symbolic.

ALISA

Did you have climb in it immediately?

MAURICE

Hey, legally it is mine!

ALISA

You have to be careful about your disguise, Maurice.

MAURICE

That from somebody who told her mother I was watching spanish soaps. Like I would, these latino-folks just can't think up any logical storylines.

ALISA

I'm still impressed you managed to tell my mother about it for three hours over dinner anyway.

MAURICE

Big deal... I took "Days of our life" and changed the names, okay?

Alisa sits down in an armchair.

ALISA

Maurice, we can't go on like that. We need to find a way out of this, Maurice.

The doorbell rings. Maurice scrambles to pick up his costume.

MAURICE

(hectically)
This place is a bus...

Maurice runs to the other room. Alisa opens. It's Mr. Radcliffe, carrying a bottle of red wine.

ALISA

Oh, good evening Mr. Radcliffe.

MR. RADCLIFFE

Don't you remember? It's Howard.

ALISA

Alright,... Howard. What do you want at this time? It's late.

MR. RADCLIFFE

I just found this 1998- Bourgogne in my cellar, and I thought maybe you'd like to join me enjoying it, if you know what I mean...

ALISA

Well, actually, I was just-

MAURICE

(o. s.)

She was with me, okay?

Maurice has his beard and his wig back on.

MR. RADCLIFFE

Oh, Mr. Marcus. Good evening, what a pleasure...

MAURICE

I don't think her husband would've wanted her to get involved with another man so quickly, don't you think so too?

MR. RADCLIFFE

I guess...

MAURICE

That's why she done decided to marry me on the spot!

MR. RADCLIFFE

Oh... is that true, Alisa?

ALISA

Well, yes, we just... couldn't help it.

MAURICE

Good night,... Howard.

Marcus slams the door close.

ALISA

(angry)

What do you think you're doing, Maurice?

MAURICE

I ain't lettin' nobody steal my gal away!

ALISA

We can't afford no wedding.

MAURICE

Oh, don't worry, honey. Do you really think I'd make such an announcement without thinking it through throughoutly?

ALISA

Yes.

MAURICE

Well... then you're wrong. Because I got something that will solve all our problems. Life insurance.

ALISA

Well, so what, you're...
(thinks about it)
Your dead...

Maurice takes a letter out of his pocket and unfolds it.

MAURICE

Well, in this letter it says they gonna give us 10.000 dollars.

ALISA

Let me have a look there... "Dear Mrs. Hailey... blah, blah, blah... would pay you 10.000 dollars. However, since you didn't pay your instalments regularly, we are sorry to inform you that you have been disqualified..."
(angry)
Maurice, why didn't you pay the insurance company when you had to?

MAURICE

Well, I always figured it was a waste of money, since I'd be gone anyway... in case they'd have to pay.

Alisa looks at Maurice, furiously.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Um... why you looking at me like that?

ALISA

(enraged)
You know what's great about this situation?

MAURICE

No... what?

ALISA

That I can kill you now and nobody will even care!

Alisa grabs a baseball bat from the rear end of the room. Maurice opens the door and runs off. Alisa runs after him.

FADE OUT.