DEAD N' GONE

Written by

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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 wouldn't 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. LAURAINE "MAMA" JOHNSON (85, black) looks into her eyes.

ALISA (CONT’D)
Oh, hello Mama.

LAURAINE
Hello darling!

They hug.

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

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

MAURICE
Er... yes, exactly. 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.

LAURAINE
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.

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

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

LAURAINE
Fine, how much is it a month?

Maurice is in shock.

ALISA
Mama, you want to move here?
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.

LAURAINE
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.