

**THE BAY OF FUNDY**  
**AN ADAPTATION OF ONE LINE FROM**  
**THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE:**  
“She discovered that have, take, and keep were pleasant words”

a story about America  
set  
in a city by the sea

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## **CHARACTERS**

### **MAY**

A woman in her early 50's. A middleclass Midwesterner who married up by chance and then accidentally got seduced by her husband's old money. Perfectly lovely, elegant and vital, she carries off this affair with immense success, respected and admired by all in their community, where none of them suspects she is just a little middleclass Midwesterner, pretending to be someone and something she is not. Except: her husband knows she loves his money more than she loves him. And she knows he knows. But she just can't stop. She knows she should stop this affair, this decades long full court tilt social climb, she knows she should stop pretending...but she just can't. She doesn't want to. She has discovered that take, have, and keep are pleasant words.

### **PAUL**

Take, have, and keep are not pleasant words for Paul. He grew up with them, watched them ruin his family, and now he has watched them ruin his wife. Well, Paul has a plan. It just might work. He's used to getting, and having, and keeping what he wants, after all, and he wants to keep his wife. He wants to keep a world he believes in. Paul is a handsome man in his middle 50's, an Eastern Seaboard old family aristocrat with a huge shock of hair and a look that could blister paint right off the walls. Or charm it off, if he's in the mood. A fighter's sense of his body, alert, even at rest.

### **NANCY**

A woman in her 40's. A little bit of a beagle about her, a shade too eager to please, too quick to judgment. Falls in love easily. She's madly in love with the way May carries off her affair with money, for instance. She thinks everything that May does with her money is just divine.

### **HANK**

A man in his late 40's. A man who never asked questions of life, and so doesn't expect answers. He knows exactly what money is for: Keep the wolf from the door. Bring your up kids right. Live in a good enough house. Take pride in all the above. Play golf if you want to.

### **DEAD AND MYTHICAL CHARACTERS**

They'll be doubled by the actors playing Paul, Nancy, and Hank.

## **SETTING**

The dining room, stairway, master bedroom, and front doorway of May and Paul's stately home, in an American city by the sea.

Think opera set size for everything in this play. If a thing is mentioned, think of it as monumental, think of it as singular, think of it as existing in a world where its size represents everything there is to represent about it.

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE \* ONE**

MAY

(Lights up on the front doorway of May and Paul's home. The front of the house may be represented with a white door and a column or two.

May opens the door, and smiles graciously.

To the Audience.)

Hello, and welcome to my home.

(She opens the door wide, inviting everyone in.)

If it looks familiar to you, that's because the exterior is almost identical to Tara, Scarlet O'Hara's plantation in *Gone with the Wind*. It's Greek Revival, which was the preferred architectural style in America in the 1800's because Greece represented democracy and liberty and most of all, freedom. Plantation owners, with no sense of irony whatsoever, adored the Greek Revival style. Please come in. All of you. Come in.

(She welcomes them into her home.

Lights up inside the house, including on Paul, who is sitting in one of two Chippendale end chairs, reading a small well-worn clothbound book.)

Over here, you can see my husband. If he looks familiar to you, perhaps you were one of his students? He taught at the University for 30 years. And over here—

You can see my table.

(The light glows and goldens around her table.

She smiles at the audience. It is a smile as melancholy and knowing as a smile can be.)

If it looks familiar to you, then you aren't looking carefully enough. There is not another dining table like it in the world. But it does share that classic trait that all dining tables have: It is the place where, when people are hungry, they sit down to eat.

(To Paul.)

Paul? Are you hungry, Paul?

PAUL

(Looks up from his book.)

No.

MAY

You sure?

(Paul looks at her, exasperated, and goes back to his book.)

PAUL

I'm reading.

MAY

I see that. What are you reading?

PAUL

About the myth of King Midas.

MAY

(Back to the Audience.)

What a surprise. Greek mythology was his field. Funny the use of the word field, isn't it? As if your specialty were a hundred acres, as if my husband were sharecropping gods, and fate, and impossible winged things. He got award after award for his teaching. And he never made more money at it than he would have if he *had* been a sharecropper. Which frankly? I think he would have enjoyed more.

(Okay, the book Paul's reading is probably the size of a normal book. So don't think impossibly large, opera set size for everything in this play. There are knives and forks that should be normal size. Also fish. They should be normal size too.)

To Paul.)

Would you have enjoyed it more, Paul?

PAUL

(He gives her a withering glance.)

Being a sharecropper?

MAY

I guess not.

PAUL

No. I guess not too.

(He goes back to reading.)

MAY

(To the Audience.)

I have to agree. The hunger for knowledge is one thing. The romantic dream of the noble agricultural worker, planting and harvesting actual food

for actual hunger is not for my husband. And not because there is no money in it.

After all, Paul didn't go into teaching to make money. No, my husband went into teaching because making money had ruined not just everyone in his family, but huge portions of America's major waterways where his family's factories and mills were located, so he decided to make something else. Knowledge. Still, and I suppose this is where the word irony makes its inevitable appearance, as it does in every myth about money, he didn't take any less than his share of the family money in the end, oh no, in fact, through a series of *misunderstandings* with his brothers he *accidentally* managed to take it all. At least—that's the way he has written the myth of his money. Who's going to contradict him? No one knows that story but his brothers, after all. His family money wasn't *famous* old money, like Rockefeller or Getty money, but trust me. It was just as corrupt and abundant and old.

And in the end the money *didn't* ruin him. His strategy worked. No, his family money didn't ruin my husband. It ruined me.

(I bet it will be obvious what has monumental scale and what does not. Also, a few things change size, they—grow? No, that's for organic things, for things that are alive. These things are made things. They don't grow, but they need to appear bigger, and, because of the way the laws of our planet work, they probably have to be bigger to appear bigger.)

May has gone over to her table. She takes out a cloth and starts polishing it.)

I hadn't planned on being ruined by money. Who does? In fact I came from a nice Midwestern family that had planned on the exact opposite thing.

(May's mother arrives, carrying the silverware. She hands it to May.)

#### MOTHER

In the Midwest, wealth is viewed a by-product, not the point of a worthy life, and should a family accumulate a larger than necessary amount of it they should keep their mouth shut and live exactly the same as they did before they got so very much of it. The subject of money itself is a social taboo. The closest we ever get to talking about money in our family is when we talk about the fact that nice people don't talk about it.

(Through her teeth)

So. Why on earth are you talking about your money, dear?

MAY

This is my mother. She's a classic example of Minnesotan Revival. I say that because she is both an ideal example of her time and class, and, additionally, she is revived. By what agency, I have no idea, but my mother, who is dead, walks into my house whenever she pleases. And claims to be on my side.

MOTHER

If pushed, of course, we would admit it. We had money. But it wasn't at all like your husband's money, so dirty, so destructive. It was quiet money. And it didn't ruin any of us and it wouldn't have ruined you.

(Mother goes off to get the plates. May starts setting the table. She puts the silverware at each place.)

MAY

Money can also ruin you if you have too little, but then people don't say money ruined you, they say you're poor.

(Mother returns with a stack of plates, hands them to May.

May looks at the plates.)

Mother, this isn't the china I wanted to use. I was going to use my mother-in-law's Lowenstoff instead.

MOTHER

This was your grandmother's. Isn't it good enough for you? Mother! She doesn't think your china is good enough!

GRANDMOTHER

(Grandmother enters carrying more china. She puts it on the table.)

What's the matter with my china, young lady!!

MAY

Nothing, I just—

GRANDMOTHER

There isn't a set of china better than it in the world! I got it as part of my trousseaux. Your great grandfather bought it using money, incidentally, that did not dry up a single wetland, destroy a dozen neighborhoods in Pittsburg or Allegany or Lorraine, Ohio to build gargantuan smelters, or poison 7 waterways essential for the fishing income of a hundred thousand people and the Abenaki tribe. Unlike this Lowenstoff you're so fond of.

(Grandmother goes off in a huff.)

MOTHER

Now you've gone and done it.  
(Grandmother sticks her head back on stage.)

GRANDMOTHER

You're lucky you've got my china to leave to your granddaughter. So you won't have to give her all that Lowenstoff that's dipped in blood.  
(Grandmother vanishes, and Mother leaves too.)

MAY

All the women in my family believed that everything they had ever owned was as good and possibly better than anything anybody else had ever owned since the beginning of time.

On the one hand, this was kind of early example of 21<sup>st</sup> century self-esteem. On the other hand, it made them entrenched, irrational snobs. And to make it worse, they were all proud that we had good, quiet middle class Midwestern money that middleclass Midwesterners are so famous for. Money that was never made from or used to destroy the world. The kind of money that, instead of ruining people, makes them somehow...nice.

The type of money that the world has never seen before and probably never will again.

MOTHER

(Mother comes back with the silver bread and butters.  
Grandmother comes with the crystal on a tray but refuses to acknowledge or speak to May.)

In the Midwest, we know where our money came from and what money is for. We know what kind of house it builds, what kind of things should fill it. What's a house, after all, except a museum filled with things that are not museum quality.

(Mother hands the bread and butters to May and leaves.)

MAY

That's why I bought this table. I wanted something of museum quality to start the collection in my little museum. I was serving coffee at a charity auction, I was just a mousy little professor's wife one minute, and the next—I bought this table, and everything changed.

(She looks at her table. Now that it is set it is even more heartbreakingly beautiful.)

Isn't it beautiful? How could anyone resist it? Just look at it.

(Lights focus like the first day of creation on her extraordinary antique mahogany table. You have never seen a table like it.)

You have never seen a table like it. It is monumental, essential, and foundational. It is the most valuable table in the world.

(May lightly caresses the inlay on the table.)

This morning, my husband and I sat down at this table for breakfast, and he announced that he was selling it.

Paul has always had it in for my table. He was furious when the movers brought it in. He knew what his money was made of but I didn't have a clue. It seemed so innocent, so easy, so harmless, back then. His money, I mean. I had no idea what his family had done to make it, what any family does to make that kind of money. I had no idea what that kind of money could do.

He did. He had a plan for all that ruined family money he had stolen from his brothers, and he figured a Midwestern wife would not object. How could she? Why would she? Yes, he had married mousey and Midwestern for a reason. Imagine how surprised he was when a vast percentage of the crimes done in his family's name walked in—well, was carried into his house—on four legs. He had neglected to tell his wife about his plan. His brand new mousey middleclass Midwestern wife had gone out and spent more on a table than he made in a year. Then all of the faculty at his university—and it was a huge faculty—put together made in a year. In two years. In—well, you might as well know the truth. A hundred years. College professors made even less than they do now, but I had access to all his funds—an oversight, I know now, and I spent the equivalent of all their salaries and everything in their pension plans too for more than a hundred years. We'd only been married a month, and I was desperate to impress Paul's family, and his colleagues, and most of all—myself. I wanted desperately to be who I was trying to be.

(May puts out the last piece of china. The table is set.)

I had an image of married life before I married into money and got ruined by it, before I bought this table and sold my soul. And what I thought marriage would be like was sunset on a perfect beach.

(She picks up an old scrapbook, opens it, unsticks a brochure from it. A brochure of the Bay of Fundy.)

A beach like the Bay of Fundy. This brochure doesn't do it justice. Oh, the splendor of that beach, we took the children there when they were young. The tide leaves a blanket of pink shells at your feet. And the sea is full of leaping and flying fish, overflowing with fish, standing room only with fish, and killer whales rush in and devour them, a million kitebirds dive down to join the feast it's a banquet, the Bay of Fundy is a table big enough to feed everything that swims in the sea or flies in the air. And I am holding my husband's hand. And he's holding mine. And we aren't hungry for anything else. We aren't hungry for anything else, but this.

(I imagine that the light will feel like the sun is indeed

setting out over the back of the house, and there may be  
the sounds of the waves and the seashore.)  
BLACKOUT

SCENE \* TWO

PAUL

(May is standing, Paul is sitting. He's handing the brochure back to her.)

You want to go back to the Bay of Fundy.

MAY

Yes.

PAUL

You know we can't go back and you still want to.

MAY

Don't you?

PAUL

You can't step in the same river twice.

MAY

You can if some robber baron hasn't turned it into toxic sludge from a steel mill or diverted it for hydroelectric power for their pesticide covered cotton mills. But I'm not talking about a river, I'm talking about the Atlantic Ocean.

PAUL

No you're not. What I don't understand is why you want to keep it.

MAY

Keep what?

PARL

If you feel that way about the money that bought it, I'd think that—

MAY

People often have conflicting emotions.

PAUL

Conflicting emotions?

MAY

People can want to be on one side of things, they want to feel one way about something, but when it comes right down to it—they can't.

PAUL

They won't, you mean.

MAY

That's why I want to go back to the Bay of Fundy. To remember what life was like before I had to feel this way. Before I had to see the cost of every piece of clothing I put on my children's back or bite of food I put in their mouth.

Do you remember? Do you? I do.

The tide went out so fast you could chase after it and not catch up. Of course, the signs said not to, the signs warned us that the tide could rush back in without warning like a tsunami, the tide could come in at breakneck speed and sweep us off our feet and carry us away. But we ignored the warnings. We chased after the water. We were young and we were in love and a tsunami sounded like an exotic thing, not like a constant threat everywhere you turn. We raced after the ocean and we laughed to think that we could ever be hurt by something as beautiful as the tide.

(She unfolds the brochure. She reads from it.)

"The Bay of Fundy has the world's greatest difference between high tide and low, a 53 foot high tide." Oh my but this is outdated. You can practically get a tide that high here in town these days. "These powerful tides act as a giant marine supermarket, capturing massive amounts of fish. Thousands of whales arrive daily to feed off this bounty."

(She holds the brochure out to him.)

Are you hungry?

PAUL

(Pause)

No.

MAY

You're sure?

(She pulls back the brochure.)

You used to be hungry all the time.

PAUL

I think I can be counted on to know if I'm hungry or not.

(Pause)

I suppose you're hungry.

MAY

Please, Paul.

PAUL

Your mythic hunger never stops.

MAY

It's not mythic.

PAUL

It's not an insult, the word mythic.

MAY

In this context, it most certainly is. But what it mostly is, I've come to understand—is forgetfulness. You're ruining our life out of forgetfulness. You've forgotten what it's like to be hungry.

PAUL

I haven't forgotten, May. I've made a choice.

MAY

The kind of choice only someone who isn't hungry anymore could make.

PAUL

Don't quote dime store philosophy at me, May. Did it ever occur to you that I'm hungry for something else?

MAY

You're hungry for something that's the opposite of hunger.

PAUL

Of course I'm not.

MAY

Then why does it feel that way? Why does what you want feel like the end of everything I want?

Let's go back to the Bay of Fundy. Let's remember who we used to be in the world the way it was. Let's pick a date. Make some plans.

PAUL

Okay. I'll pick a date. We'll go after Jeff brings the kids to visit.

MAY

That's not fair.

PAUL

It's absolutely fair. You're the one who turned him against me.

MAY

Me? You're insane.

PAUL

You turned him against me. What kind of a mother does that?

MAY

And what kind of a father tells his only son—

(She stops. Takes a deep breath.)

No. I promised myself I would not talk about Jeff. I don't want to make you upset. You know what could happen if you get upset.

PAUL

It probably won't kill me to talk about Jeff, May.

MAY

True. Maybe I'm the one it will kill.

(May carefully folds up the brochure.)

PAUL

What's happened to you, May?

MAY

You did.

PAUL

Why is it so hard for you to accept? I've had enough.

MAY

Nobody's had enough. That's how you know you're alive. Because you haven't had enough.

(He grabs the brochure from her.)

PAUL

You want me to be hungry, May? All right. I'm hungry for this.

(He rips the brochure in half.)

I'm hungry for the end of everybody pretending we can go back. We can't go back. We have to go forward. None of our old hungers matter anymore. We can't. Go. Back.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE \* THREE

MAY

(May, Paul and their friends, Hank and Nancy, walk onstage holding their plates of food and their elegant crystal wine goblets, and sit down to dinner at the table.

There is now a centerpiece--a magnificent, very old silver epergne with a large center crystal bowl, and four smaller crystal bowls extended on arms. These bowls are filled with fruit—grapes and apples and pears and plums. All the bowls are in the shape of seashells, but not hit you over the head shells—classic, cut crystal suggestions of shells.

And...they are made of ice, not crystal. But only you and I know this at this point, and you only know this because you are hearing the stage directions. At this moment, when the lights hit them, they sparkle and look for all the world like museum quality crystal.

They have to visibly melt, later on, when the table, and the epergne grow—well, they don't grow, exactly, but they get bigger and bigger, and bigger, later on, in the play, they get monumental, not in front of our eyes, of course, but when we return to the dining room, each time, they get bigger. The melt water that runs from them will create a substantial current. An out of nowhere high tide.

I should also point out that May and Paul and their friends don't have any idea that the crystal part of the epergne is made of ice. That it has the capability of melting. They think the bowls are cut crystal. They KNOW they're cut crystal. Even after the crystal bowls begin to melt it will take everyone a long time to understand that they are.)

MAY

More fish, anyone?

HANK

I'd love some.

MAY

(She passes him the fish platter.)  
I knew I can count on you, Hank. You're hungry, and you're not shy about it. Did you know that Paul used to be hungry, like you?

PAUL

May, please.

MAY

He could have written a myth about hunger—but he didn't. He said *that* myth had already been written. And I'll be honest—the entire history of western civilization seems to back him up on that one.

(Hank takes some. May picks up the fish platter.)  
Nancy? You've hardly had any--

HANK

(Mouth full.)  
Our Nancy's got an appetite like a bird.

MAY

Don't you like it?

NANCY

Why wouldn't I? It tastes just the way I make it myself.

MAY

Really? How strange! I just got the recipe last month when Paul and I went to Paris.

NANCY

(Snorting.)  
Oh, right, when you and Paul went to Paris.  
(Hank kicks her under the table.)

They all eat. Nancy uses her napkin constantly to wipe up real or imagined drops of water or brush away crumbs, especially around Hank. She tends to caress the table, too, a little more than might be normal. She likes to run her fingertips across its polished, gleaming surface, and follow the contours of the pattern in the carved edge.

(She sees Hank's glass. She's horrified.)  
Hank, oh, look, your glass is making a ring—how many times have I told you to be more careful with this table, Hank?  
(She picks up his glass and frantically wipes under it.)

May, I keep meaning to ask, do you want to do both days in the jewelry booth at the rummage sale?

MAY

Yes, both days.

NANCY

That's what I thought you'd say. You're so good at it. We're sure going to miss you next year.

MAY

Miss me? Why?

NANCY

Well, when you move away.

MAY

Nancy, we just put the house on the market—

NANCY

Yes, but—

MAY

And it's true, our neighborhood is on a hill, but the river is right there and it's rising every day. Who's going to buy now? Some people around here are taking their houses off the market altogether.

HANK

I wouldn't do that. That would be a mistake.

PAUL

Don't worry, I have no intention of making that mistake, Hank.

MAY

No, he has no intention of doing that.

NANCY

I'll pick you up Friday at 9.

MAY

At 9? What for?

NANCY

The rummage sale. The jewelry booth.

MAY

No, that's next Friday.

NANCY

No, it not, it's this Friday.

MAY

This Friday? Oh, what shame, I can't do it. Paul and I are going to the Bay of Fundy.

PAUL

May, please don't do this.

NANCY

But you always do the jewelry booth.

PAUL

May, stop it.

MAY

Paul and I went to the Bay of Fundy when the children were small. The tide was like a tsunami, but not a dangerous one. No, it was a tsunami the way they used to be. We were so happy then.

PAUL

May, we can't go back to the Bay of Fundy. The tides now are monstrous, the whales are all gone, the--

MAY

So happy. Nobody was talking about sacrifice all the time. Nobody was buying someone a big house, and then selling it out from under them, nobody was giving someone speeches about "what's mine is yours" and then taking it all back. Nobody was changing the way they thought about things, and expecting somebody else to do the same. No. Everybody was happy. So we're going back. Sorry.

(There is a painful silence. Hank, who must have TMJ, because we can hear him chewing, has stopped chewing.)

NANCY

No. You're doing the jewelry booth. Like you did last year and all the years before.

MAY

But I just said--

NANCY

No. I'm not going to go through this again. Every year you do this. Every year at the last minute you say you can't run the jewelry booth because you're going on a trip, and so I beg someone to fill in for you, and they get a baby sitter or change their gynecological appointment, they upend their life, and then of course you show up, and it's humiliating, because whoever I've begged to fill in is standing there, and here you come, and you push them out of the way—

MAY

Nancy, I never push—

NANCY

You don't have to push, you push without pushing. You're so pretty, and you haven't had a bit of work done, and everyone knows it, and if you're wearing a scarf it just completes the outfit perfectly instead of drawing attention to the fact that you're wearing a scarf, which is the way it always does when I wear one, and—

MAY

Nancy, what are you talking about—

NANCY

Your money.

(Hank kicks her under the table.)

Your old, old money.

(Hank kicks her under the table.)

Stop kicking me, Hank! I know I'm not supposed to say it but I'm tired of not saying it. Everybody knows how old Paul's money is, it's so old it's practically prehistoric, and *that* is what pushes Martha or Sissy or me out of the jewelry booth.

PAUL

(Beat)

More fish, Nancy?

(Paul tries to pass her the platter.)

NANCY

I do not want more fish. What I want is for May to stop lying to me.

PAUL

Hank, you look like you could do with seconds.

(Paul passes the silver platter to Hank, who forks himself a whole fish, head and fins still attached, and puts it on his plate. Maybe the fish *are* monumental. Maybe they're huge.)

HANK

Have some fish, dear, okay?

NANCY

I don't want more fish!

HANK

That's our Nan, always eating like a bird.

MAY

Aren't you hungry, Nancy?

NANCY

Actually, as a matter of fact I am. I'm hungry for an honest answer. I'm hungry for--

HANK

NANCY!!

(Pause, as Hank glowers at her.)

If my little bird is suddenly so hungry, maybe she should eat some fish.

(He holds out the platter. Nancy, grimacing with resignation, takes it.

She spears a huge fish with the fork and puts it on her plate.)

MAY

Oh, good, I'm glad you like it.

NANCY

OF COURSE I LIKE IT, it's MY recipe. I gave it to you last year, after you came over to our house and liked it so much you asked me for it.

MAY

No. You're mistaken. I got it the last time Paul and I went to Montreal. Or maybe it was Paris. Maybe it was Rome.

NANCY

(Overcome with frustration again.)

MAY! All the recipes you say you get on your travels are mine! Of course, there's some truth in that, because next door to our house is just about as far as you ever travel! You didn't go to France last year, or Bhutan the year before, or even San Francisco in the fall. You have not set foot outside a 25 mile radius since I've known you. It's not a secret, May, everybody knows it. But you keep pretending it isn't true. And you won't tell me why.

(She's really screaming now.)

I'm sick of it. I'm sick of not being good enough to share your secrets even when they aren't actually secret! And I am REALLY sick of eating food from recipes you got when you went BUT REALLY DIDN'T GO TO FRANCE!

(And in her anger, she slams the heavy two pronged serving fork with a thick handle, down on the table, near the edge.

The edge of the table splinters, and breaks off.

There is a horrible stunned silence.)

Oh my God.

(May begins to hyperventilate a bit, from the shock if it.)

MAY

Paul. Paul. What's happened—PAUL!!!

NANCY

OH MY GOD!

PAUL

Jesus CHRIST!

(He goes to inspect the damage.)

NANCY

HANK! HANK!

(Hank runs to her side. Nancy holds up the chunk. It is big. Almost a foot long, eight inches wide.)

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, HANK!!!

(Hank takes the chunk from her and hands it to Paul. Paul hands it to May.)

MAY

Oh. Oh no.

(Nancy hangs on to Hank like a drowning woman.)

NANCY

I was just eating dinner, like I always do, how did this happen to me!!!

HANK

Don't cry, my little bird, don't cry.

MAY

Oh my, oh my, oh my.

(May sits down in her chair, bereft.)

PAUL  
(In dismay over the damage.)  
Jesus H. Christ.

HANK  
Breathe, sweetie, breathe.

NANCY  
(Beginning to launch herself into hysteria.)  
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!!!!  
(Already, the sea shell cut crystal bowls are beginning to melt.

Nancy begins to wail, to keen, to sob, to scream.)  
IT'S NOT MY FAULT—except maybe it is--maybe my plates have been too heavy. Maybe I have piled them too high with food. Maybe I've been too hungry. HAVE I BEEN TOO HUNGRY?!?!?

MAY  
(Lying with every fiber of her being.)  
Of course not, Nancy. Everyone is hungry, that's why they come to dinner. Don't be upset. Anyone can see it's just a little...  
(She's holding the huge chunk.)  
...scratch. It's...hardly anything at all. It can be fixed.

NANCY  
How can it be fixed! It's the end of the world!!!

HANK  
Of course it isn't, it's just a table.

NANCY  
Just a table!? Just a table!? Are you insane! Have you lost your mind?

PAUL  
Now, Nancy, if May says it can be fixed--

NANCY  
She's just saying that because it's the polite thing to say!

MAY  
True, but it's still not your fault, Nancy.

NANCY  
It was my fork! It was my hunger!

PAUL

You are our guest, we gave you that fork. We gave you that food.

NANCY

Stop it! I know what I've done. I KNOW WHAT THIS TABLE IS WORTH!

(There is a stunned silence.)

HANK

No, you don't, Nancy. It's none of our business knowing that. Paul, we have absolutely no idea what this table's worth.

NANCY

I'm tired of hiding it from you! I KNOW WHAT IT'S WORTH. One of those men from Sotheby's who are always sneaking around trying to see it, one of them told me.

HANK

I told you to stop talking to them, sweetheart.

NANCY

I know but they're so desperate to see it! They beg me and I can't help myself! I sneak them in!

HANK

Nancy! Sweetheart!

NANCY

I wait until May's working in the garden. Then I use my master card to jimmy the lock and we go in through the side door. They look at the table, and their eyes get glazed, the way a man's eyes glaze over when...you know, and they start to breathe really hard. Sometimes they grab me and rub up against me. While they're rubbing I usually look at the table too. The two of us look at the table. It doesn't take very long. Usually, after, they get very quiet and then they leave. But one of them, after he...you know...he remembered I was there. And then he told me.

He made me guess first. I guessed the annual budget for all the armed forces. Nope. The trade imbalance with China. Still too low. The national debt? No, no, no, he said, no. So he told me. It took my breath away. In my wildest dreams I never imagined...I couldn't imagine. What he told me.

(Nancy gets up, and walks around the table caressing it.)

HANK

Well Nancy, this is all very interesting. Isn't it interesting? But I'm tired. I think Nancy's tired too. So, I think we'll go home now—

(He tries to grab Nancy's arm, but she stabs her fork in his hand.)

Nancy!!!

(But she's in a trance, and won't come back.)

NANCY

It's one of a pair of tables made in 1835 from a single tree, the most perfect mahogany tree ever found in the Amazon. A tree with a name—the Red Mother, named because this tree was the central feature in a village of a tribe of Peruvian natives, who were all cut down in the raid that preceded the cutting down of this tree. The Red Mother, called this for her characteristic but exemplary red hue, was sent to America, where she was made into two matching tables each with 12 chairs, and two matching side boards, two matching breakfronts, and two small carving tables. All from this one, perfect tree.

These two perfect dining room sets were packed and placed on board a ship sailing for Liverpool in 1838, a special order for a Lord Harrington, who had two daughters of marriageable age, both of whom had expressed the desire for new world mahogany, no matter what the cost. The ship sank in a storm less than four days out. All hands were lost, naturally all cargo as well. Three days later, against all odds, one of the two tables was found standing upright on its legs, without a nick or scratch or blemish on a beach near Plymouth, washed ashore by the full moon tide. It was found by a young man who, taking advantage of the laws of salvage, carted it away and from its sale began one of the most lucrative furniture businesses of his day. It was bought by Samuel Gordon, of Philadelphia, and stayed in the family for 250 years, until Mrs. Mariah Gordon decided to punish her husband for his last and most humiliating indiscretion. She demanded the table in the divorce settlement, and then immediately donated it to an auction for a local charity. A young professor's wife, volunteering at the auction, was seized by an uncontrollable hunger to be someone who sat down to dinner every night at a table that was perhaps the most important and valuable table in the world. When the bidding began, she left the small area where she was offering coffee and petit fours, and in a matter of minutes, and to the amazement of the entire antique collecting world--the table was hers.

And now I've ruined it!

(She breaks into fresh sobs.)

MAY

(Sits down at her place, calmly.)

Stop saying that, Nancy. It can be fixed.

NANCY

I watch Antiques Roadshow! I know what happens to the value when you repair something. It sinks! This was a table that could swim, that could save itself, that could make it, upright, to shore! The American Miracle, that's what he called it. And I've destroyed it!

MAY

(May picks up the platter, smiling.)  
Would anyone like some more fish?

NANCY

I'll never eat again! If I hadn't been eating this never would have happened!!!!  
(And her wailing achieves new heights.)

PAUL

Hank? I think Nancy's ready to go home now.

HANK

(Hank, who has wrapped his bleeding hand in a napkin,  
asks her hesitantly.)  
Are you ready, dear?

NANCY

I'll never be hungry again.

HANK

(He takes Nancy by the arm, and tries to lead her off.)  
Come on dear, let's go home, come on—thank May for being the perfect hostess--

NANCY

(She stifles her sobs as best she can.)  
Thank you, May...

HANK

Tell her how delicious the food was—

NANCY

--everything was perfectly delightful.

HANK

And that you had such a nice time--

NANCY

I don't know when I've had such a lovely...such a lovely...such a...  
(She explodes into hysterical weeping. They're gone.)

PAUL  
Anybody who didn't know you would think you're not upset.

MAY  
I'm not upset.

PAUL  
Nancy has just ruined the thing you love most in all the world and you're not upset?

MAY  
It's not ruined, it's the American Miracle, the table that survived a storm, that swam to shore, that—

PAUL  
We're still selling it.

MAY  
But it's worth half of what it was this morning.  
(She touches the broken part.)  
It's worth so much less now, in fact, that I'm sure you won't need to sell it.

PAUL  
You think, now I'll let you keep it.

MAY  
Fortunately I have the name of a restoration team who can fix anything.

PAUL  
It can't be fixed. You know it. Everyone knows it. Even poor Nancy knows it.

MAY  
First thing in the morning I'll give them a call. And then, in a year or two, who knows, maybe the value of the table will re-adjust itself. We'll talk about selling it then.

PAUL  
We've been talking about selling the table for--

MAY  
No, *you've* been talking about it. I just listened.

PAUL

Well you didn't listen very well.

MAY

And that makes you angry?

PAUL

Of course it makes me angry.

(In a brief rage, he kicks a chair over.)

MAY

Be careful. It's not good for you to get angry. Remember what happens when you get angry?

PAUL

I wish to God you'd never bought the table, May. If you just hadn't bought it we...we...

MAY

You're saying, if I'd never bought this table, we'd still be happy?

PAUL

(Quietly)

Maybe.

MAY

You think the table ruined me, don't you?

PAUL

Don't you?

MAY

So it wasn't your money that ruined me, but the things I bought with it? You can't step in the same river twice. We don't get another life where you had ordinary, unruined money, and I didn't buy this table. Or, maybe you want to step in a river where you married a different woman.

PAUL

I did marry a different woman. A woman who didn't care about my money.

MAY

That's true. But your money changed that women. That's what money does.

(She climbs the stairs, holding the chunk of the table in  
in her hand.

Lights fade.)

## SCENE \* FOUR

MAY

(May goes to the front door, opens it. She takes a step out. An elegant, rich breeze blows through her hair, ruffles her clothes. She takes another step. The light changes, it's golden, like sunset. Another step. Leaves blow across the stage, swirl in eddies around her. Another step. The wind gets stronger.

The light grows, the leaves are a whirlpool around her. She has brought a chair with her, and a small radio. She sits down.

She puts on her driving glasses.)

Driving glasses.

(She turns on the radio. She may not exactly pantomime driving, but she indicates driving a little bit, and the wind blows her hair the way it does with the windows rolled down.)

I love to drive. Do you? I play music as I drive, never going further than a 25 mile radius, with the windows rolled down.

(She turns the music up so loud you can barely hear her as she says, three more times:)

And I think about my husband.

(She turns off the radio.)

This is what I think about him.

(She gets up from her chair.)

Imagine—abundance. Imagine a supermarket, with a hundred foot high, mile long wall of perfect produce. And you're standing in front of the apple section. A hundred foot high wall of apples, fragrant and shining like giant juicy rubies of a thousand different hues.

Now, people like you and me, we've heard about this abundance but we've never seen it. It's hidden from us by an unseen, impermeable barrier that divides abundance from the world we live in day to day. It's true that once in a while an apple falls down off this display, rolls through the barrier, and someone, rejoicing at their good luck, picks it up, and eats it, and even though these apples are often bruised, or have already begun to decay, these apples are what we call luck. Windfall.

(The breeze is lovely, and the leaves swirl around her tenderly in the golden light.

She gets out of her chair.)

My husband never had to wait for windfall. Not him. He just stuck his hand through the unseen barricade, and pulled out the perfect, round, ripe rosy next moment. He had a whole wall of perfect moments to pick from. It was a marvel to watch him. He took his time.

Watching him stand in front of the bounty made me think I could reach in there and pick out my own life too. Which was my mistake. Because I was just the bounty that he picked. I was carefully crafted, his desire had shaped and polished and crafted me. I was a museum quality thing.

(She sits back down in the chair. She starts driving again.)

But only for a moment, you see.

(She turns the music up. Suddenly, Mother appears in front of the car, wearing a spring coat, carrying her purse and a chair. May hits the breaks.)

MOTHER! What are you doing here!

(Mother puts her chair next to May, getting into the front passenger seat.)

Drive me to the bank. I want to check my safe deposit box.

GRANDMOTHER

(Grandmother appears, wearing a pastel knit suit, gloves, and carrying her purse and a chair. She gets in the back seat.)

May, can we stop at Church's fried chicken? I get so hungry for their wings.

MAY

No, we can't go to the bank, mother, and even if we could, your safe deposit box is long gone.

MOTHER

We could visit your safe deposit box and I could pretend it was mine.

GRANDMOTHER

What about Churches? Wouldn't it be sweet of you to eat some Church's fried chicken and think of me and how much I used to like it?

MAY

No.

GRANDMOTHER

But I came all this way because your mother said you were in trouble. That you needed my help. And now you can't go a little out of your way and eat some fried chicken for me?

MAY

There's no Churches in a 25 mile radius.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh. Right. I always forget about the 25 mile radius thing.

MOTHER

But there is a bank just around the corner. With money that used to be mine in it, money I gave you. So if you went and looked at your money, it would be like I was looking at mine.

MAY

I spent most of it on riding lessons for Jeff and the piano so he could have piano lessons, and summer camp in the rockies and--

MOTHER

But surely Paul had enough to spend on those things?

MAY

Yes, but after I bought the table, he...cut me off.

MOTHER

The table, the table, it always comes back to that table.

GRANDMOTHER

Here's what *my* mother told *me* about money: your husband's money is your money. And your money is your money. Oh, you poor, poor thing. I had no idea. May, what your husband is doing, it makes me so mad I could spit. Let's poison him.

MOTHER

Mother, don't encourage her to be a complainer. What's done is done.  
(Mother takes out a cigarette and starts smoking.)

GRANDMOTHER

I am not encouraging her. I merely suggested a sensible solution to an otherwise unsolvable problem. Or, let's back over him with the car.

MOTHER

STOP IT. This is the life she chose, and just because it has not turned out the way she wanted it to--

MAY

(Turning on her mother)

Why are you so unforgiving! Why can't you show me some compassion! Some people don't choose!

MOTHER

You did.

GRANDMOTHER

True, I hate to side with your mother, but you did.

MOTHER/GRANDMOTHER

You chose to marry a rich man, and you pretended you didn't notice he was rich.

MAY

I knew he was rich but I didn't know what rich meant, okay? I didn't know.

I didn't know.

When people get ruined, they make the wrong choice, and then, when the moment comes when they need to make the right choice, they don't know how, because that is the definition of being ruined. Being ruined means you can't ever make a choice that will unruin you.

GRANDMOTHER

May, my precious—you are not ruined. Turn this car around.

(May does.)

Emily, put out that cigarette.

(Mother does.)

Take us back to your house, dear. And repeat after me. I am not ruined.

MAY

I am not ruined.

GRANDMOTHER

It would be careless to be ruined.

MAY

It would be careless to be ruined.

GRANDMOTHER

Good china must be washed by hand, and linen must be spotted immediately after dinner, and wine glasses must never be left on the table afterward no matter how exhausted you are because the acids in the wine will etch the crystal. Each choice we make keeps our world from being ruined.

MAY

But Nana, I did all those things and it didn't save me.

MOTHER

The world is different, mother, than it was when you were May's age.

GRANDMOTHER

The world may be different but the pillars that hold it up are the same.

(May drives.)

The world may be different, but a woman whose house is in order knows who she is. She has firm ground beneath her feet. She has made the choice to know who she is.

(Fade to blackout.)

## SCENE \* FIVE

MAY

(The dining room table is twice the size that it was before. The chunk that is missing is like an eroded cliff, easy to see.

The epergne is three times its former size, and looks very much like a tall silver tree with four branches. The crystal shells are continuing to melt, and now it is clearly visible that they are.

The melting water is dripping down the table, a rivulet that is taking a path directly to the eroded gash in the table, then cascading down to the floor. It looks a bit like a waterfall, I think.

I imagine that the lighting will help make this read, and also make it remarkable and beautiful.

The fruit inside the bowls of the epergne has gotten larger as well.

A light change. May enters, carrying a huge platter of fish. She puts it down on the table carefully.

Then Paul, Nancy, and Hank enter, carrying their plates. They sit down at the table. Light change. Dinner is in progress.)

Some more fish, anyone?

HANK

Thank you, yes, please. You've outdone yourself this time, May.

MAY

It's my grandmother's recipe this time. Passed down from her mother. I hope you like it.

HANK

Oh, it's delicious, delicious.

(He takes some more, and eats for a second.)

Nancy? Nancy has something to say, don't you, Nancy?

NANCY

May? I just—I'm so sorry about the table, and Hank and I want to pay to have it fixed.

MAY

Thank you for the offer, but we wouldn't dream of it.

NANCY

Promise me you'll send us the bill, May. Have you called the restoration team?

MAY

Yes.

NANCY

Why aren't they here yet?

MAY

They're trapped by flooding in the Midwest, Maryland, and New Jersey. The entire North Carolina coast is gone. But they're assembling the very best crew they have and they'll be here as soon as they can.

NANCY

But every day they delay it gets worse—

MAY

There's a great deal of discussion about how best to accomplish the repair, Nancy. Surely you can understand. The table is worth more than any three developing countries. It's not something to be undertaken lightly.

NANCY

Yes, you're right. You're right.  
(Nancy returns to her meal.)

HANK

And the other thing you wanted to say?

NANCY

(Nancy feverishly wipes away a smudge on the table with her napkin.)

About—about your...your trip the Bay of Fundy...I don't know why I made such a big deal about it, and I'm sorry.

MAY

Don't be silly, I was glad I was able to work the jewelry booth after all. We can always go to the Bay of Fundy later. Hank, more fish?

HANK

Absolutely.

MAY

(May gets up and walks over to him to bring him the platter—the table is too big to pass anything now.)  
It's a pleasure cooking for you, Hank, you're always so appreciative.

NANCY

He's always so hungry.

HANK

Don't make me sound like a hog, Nancy.

NANCY

Well, are you sure there's enough for THIRDS, Hank? Are you sure there's enough?

PAUL

Of course there is. Eat! May always makes sure there's enough. She's a marvelous hostess. Two guests or two thousand--she would never let anyone go away hungry from her table.

MAY

You used to have such faith in me.

PAUL

I always have faith in you.

(They look at each other for a moment. Then the moment passes.)

HANK

Nancy— isn't there one more thing you wanted to say? Nancy?

NANCY

(And this is terribly hard for her.)  
May, this fish is so delicious—and I am so h...h...hungry.

HANK

How hungry?

NANCY

I'm as hungry as two thousand guests. Do you think I could have some more?

(Nancy reaches for the fish, and overturns her water glass. The water spills, she tries to sop it up with her napkin, her shirtsleeves, anything. And of course, she begins to cry.)

Now look what I've done—

MAY

Don't be silly, it's just one little glass of water—

(May wipes the table with her napkin too, then wrings it into the glass. Nancy does the same thing. The glass overflows, there is much more water spilling on the table than there was in the glass.)

NANCY

Then why is there so much of it? Where is all this water coming from?

(Nancy starts sobbing again.)

HANK

Nancy, my little bird, you were doing so well.

NANCY

I know, but this water might hurt the table--

HANK

If you keep crying, we'll have to go home, and then you won't be able to sit here at the table...you won't be able to see it, or touch it...

NANCY

(Trying to stifle her tears.)

Okay.

(She bucks up.)

HANK

Good girl.

(Hank resumes eating.)

PAUL

What's that noise?

MAY

What noise?

(There is the faint sound of water rushing the way it does in the Bay of Fundy.)

NANCY

That's Hank, chewing. He's so hungry, he's worn out his jaw with chewing.

MAY

No, that's not it.

(They listen. Hank keeps chewing.)

Then we can all hear it. The rush of the waterfall created by the melt water from the epergne, augmented, as it splashes on the floor. Everyone looks at the drip, the splash, the puddle.)

Look at all that water. Hank, hand me a couple of your business cards. (Hank stops eating long enough to hand over a small stack of business cards.)

PAUL

You're retiring next month, Hank, what do you still need business cards for?

(May begins deftly fashioning a little masted boat with 3 or 4 business cards and perhaps a couple toothpicks.)

HANK

Retiring doesn't mean I'm not still doing business. Are you retired from the myth business, Paul?

PAUL

Greek mythology is not a business.

HANK

Just because you don't make money at it--

PAUL

I *did* make money at it, and it still isn't a business.

HANK

Power's the name of the game, Paul. Money's just for keeping score. Now, you were in the teaching business. That's the thinking-and-remembering-things-that-have-been-thought-and-remembered-before business, right? Are you retired from thinking and remembering just because you don't sit behind a desk at the university anymore?

PAUL

I'm working on a book.

HANK

I knew it! I can see the light on in your study, I can see it from Nancy's azalea beds.

MAY

Paul's working on a retelling of the Midas myth.

PAUL

(Another warning)

May, please stop saying it's the Midas myth. You know I'm working on a *new* myth.

HANK

Boy, did I want to be King Midas when I was a kid! But the myth needs work. It starts out happy—the Gods give him the golden touch. Ends badly—the Gods take it away.

PAUL

No, it ends happily.

HANK

The Gods tell him to go bathe in the river and that takes away his power to turn everything he touches into gold, right?

PAUL

That's the point of the myth, Hank.

HANK

Yep, ends badly, like I said. Glad you're rewriting it.

PAUL

Hank! When he tried to kiss his children they turned into golden statues.

HANK

That'd be an improvement over at our house.

(He laughs at his own joke. To Nancy)

Rosemarie would be a lot less work if she were gold bullion, wouldn't she? At least for the teen years. And a man could afford to send them to college that way! Solid gold children.

PAUL

Very funny, Hank. But Midas was starving. If everything you touch turns into gold, how can you eat? You get hungrier and hungrier, and the instant you try to eat something it turns into gold.

HANK

Well, you'd lose a lot of weight that way.

(Epiphany)

The Midas diet! We'll do a spin off from your myth book—The King Midas cookbook!

(Hank laughs at his own joke and continues eating.)

PAUL

I am writing a book about how to understand my choice in a classical context. It is not the Midas myth, it is an entirely new one.

HANK

Do you think there's a market for new myths, Paul? Isn't the myth business, by definition, about old ones?

PAUL

Well, if it makes it easier for you, you could think of it as a sequel to the Midas myth. What it was like for him, in the years after he asked for the golden touch to be taken away.

HANK

I'll tell you what it was like for him in one word: De--pressing.

PAUL

I believe there is a hunger for new myths, and that mine is one that people will recognize that they need. And I will, of course, donate all the profits I make from the book--

HANK

A-HA!!!!!! Profit! I rest my case. New myth or old, the myth business is still a business.

MAY

There.

(May launches the business card boat on the river, near the source. It quickly flows down the river and off the table, down the waterfall.)

There's quite a current, isn't there.

(May takes her fork and spoon—these might be a very large, monumental fork and spoon—and puts them along the path of the water, to channel the flow.)

Everybody, give me your napkin. This should channel the flow for awhile.

(She rolls up the napkins, and places them in a row to dam up the flow. Then she takes everybody's fork and spoon, and places them upstream of the napkins, to divert the flow into the napkins.)

There. That should do it.

May? NANCY

Yes, Nancy? MAY

(Scared)  
It's coming from the epergne. NANCY

What? MAY

The shells are melting. The crystal sea shells are melting!  
(She starts crying.) NANCY

(Everyone looks at them. It's obvious they're melting.)  
But that's not possible, they're glass. MAY

Why is this happening!!!! NANCY

(She dips her finger in the water, tastes it.)  
Salt. It's salt water. Here, everybody should taste this.  
(She puts her goblet under the dripping epergne.)  
Nancy, here, taste it.  
(Nancy is now sobbing hysterically, Hank is consoling her. May offers Nancy the goblet, Nancy cries harder.)  
Nancy, really, it's refreshing. Taste it. MAY

That is enough, May. PAUL

Enough what? MAY

Stop it. You're upsetting Nancy. PAUL

Nancy's perfectly fine. MAY

PAUL

She's crying.

MAY  
She's sensitive. She likes to cry.

PAUL  
No one likes to cry, May.

MAY  
Some people do. Some people have a hunger for it.

HANK  
I'll just take Nancy on home, then.

NANCY  
No! I want to stay with the table.

HANK  
You know if you cry we have to go, sweetheart. That's the rule. Let's go.

PAUL  
Sorry, Hank, but maybe that's best.

NANCY  
(Sobbing as she goes.)  
I don't know when I've had such a lovely evening...thank you May...  
(They are gone.)

Paul and May stare at each other.)

PAUL  
You should be kinder to her. She's your only friend.

MAY  
She doesn't need me to be kind to her, she needs me to be who I am.

PAUL  
And who is that? Exactly?  
(May turns, and walks away.)  
May. May!

(The sound of the dripping, running water increases.

The sound of the incoming tide grows and grows  
and grows.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE \* SIX

GRANDMOTHER

(Lights up on May clearing the table after the dinner party. Nana walks on.)

Well? How did it go? Did they like the fish?

(She starts crumbing the table, helping clear the table.)

MAY

Everyone loved your recipe.

GRANDMOTHER

Naturally.

MAY

Dinner was going well. I was doing well. But then, the oddest thing happened. Your epergne started to melt.

GRANDMOTHER

Melt?

MAY

The cut glass crystal shells. They started melting. See?  
(They both look at the epergne.)

Did that even happen to you?

GRANDMOTHER

Of course it never happened to me! Cut crystal can't melt! Glass is fused sand! It is practically eternal! It can't melt unless it's 2300 degrees Celsius in your dining room!

(Terrified)

Was it 2300 degrees Celsius in your dining room, dear? Oh my I've heard about this global warming, but 2300 degrees Celsius! And so much sooner than they thought it would happen, too!

MAY

It's a different world than when you were my age.

GRANDMOTHER

Does your husband imagine that the temperature will go down, if he gets his way about the table?

MAY

Yes. I think so.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh dear oh dear oh dear. Do you imagine that it will as well?

MAY

I—I don't know. It might. It's possible. I don't know. I--

GRANDMOTHER

There, there, don't upset yourself dear.

But still, I was wondering. Do you really need this table? Oh, it is lovely. And it's true, a woman does need a table. To gather her family together for Thanksgiving, to celebrate birthdays, to serve the dishes friends have made and brought over after funerals. Why, in my grandmother's day people laid out their dead on their dining room tables. So yes, you need a table. But you don't need this specific table. Do you?

MAY

I agree with you, in theory, but I just can't change, I've tried and I can't. This table makes me safe. This table makes me who I am.

GRANDMOTHER

I'm afraid for you, May, because when your husband isn't trying to sell it your neighbor is busy smashing or drowning it. You won't change, but the table's changing. I terrified for you May. You're going to wake up one morning, and that table will be gone.

MAY

But it will come back.

GRANDMOTHER

Maybe it will, maybe it won't. What will you do then?

MAY

I have faith in my table, Nana. I believe that the table will always swim to shore and save me, no matter how fast or high the tide

BLACKOUT

## SCENE\* SEVEN

MAY

(Lights up on May, wearing her driving glasses, sitting on her chair in front of her front door, with her radio playing softly, driving.)

When I was a young woman, I used to do a lot of volunteer work. I had a job, of course, but I read to children who were poor and old people who were blind and volunteered at the hospital. And while I was there, I met a man who had come in for a heart transplant.

You had to be very lucky to get a good heart transplant back then. When the donor heart of someone young and healthy arrived on a silver platter, the waitress looked at all her orders—she had hundreds of hungry customers dying for that heart—and your name had better be on the top of the list. I saw that the nice man I'd been flirting with was not on the top of the list—in fact, his name was on the bottom. And I cried a tear about that—I was young, I had tears to spare—but somehow, the day after he put in his order and put his name on the list, they served him up a perfect match. It seemed like a kind of magic. I fell in love with that magic. I decided I could do a lot worse than marry a man who could make an entire healthy heart materialize inside his chest.

I was so naïve. It hadn't been magic that had put his name on the top of the list and a heart in his chest. It was money. Oh, you can say, well, money is a kind of magic, but that just means you're under its spell. I hadn't noticed that his family's name was on three wings of the hospital. Here I was, thinking I'd fallen in love with a man's mythical powers, and what I'd fallen in love with was his money. I was ruined from the start. Oh, I thought, as my father walked me down that aisle, that I was walking into a fairy tale. But I was just walking into a bank account. Into a safe deposit box. Into a vault.

(She stops driving, stands up.)

I'm having trouble getting in touch with the restoration team. No one's heard from them, just this week there were 3 tornadoes, and I've lost count of the hurricanes. Still, I have faith that they'll come.

Paul says they aren't coming. Paul says they have more important tragedies to deal with, whole cities flooding, hundreds of thousands of people stranded and starving, the entire bread basket of the nation picked up by storms and scattered to the winds. Paul says the days when you called for help and it came are gone. But I say, this table's too important for them to ignore. I still believe. I believe that help will come.

(She sits down, puts on her driving glasses. The wind picks up. She drives on.)

BLACKOUT

END ACT ONE